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EXTENSION PROGRAMS IN YORK COUNTY, VIRGINIA

*York County Extension Staff**

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! 188 years ago during the month of September the American War of Independence came to the town of York. The combined French and American armies numbering over 16,000 marched from Williamsburg and laid seige to Yorktown.

With the winning of independence the concept that government should be created by and remain subject to the will of the people became a reality.

In the years that followed, the United States built a series of institutions structured to develop the nation by assisting the individual. Just four years after the War of Independence, young America gave high priority to education in the Land Ordinance of 1785. The setting aside of one section in each township for maintenance of public schools must rank as legislation of the greatest national significance and as a prime example of early national leadership in institutionalizing a concept of human development for the national good. This concept led the way for the development of land-grant colleges and extension programming as we know it today.

EXTENSION WORK COMES TO YORK COUNTY

In 1922 H. S. Lippincott, the first extension agent, came to the Peninsula area. Most of his early work was conducted on an individual basis with frequent visits to farms and rural people. He loved children. The major portion of his time was spent organizing and working with 4-H Clubs and developing adult leadership to work with the youth. He used to load his car with 4-H'ers and go on field trips and picnics. This included trips to the Jamestown 4-H camp where the 4-H'er really camped out, sleeping in a tent.

FAMILY LIVING PROGRAMS

Home demonstration clubs were organized in the late forties with the first home demonstration agents working on an area basis. In 1954 the first full-time home demonstration agent for York County was employed. During those early years, the home agent gave demonstrations to each club each month on homemaking skills such as cooking, canning, and sewing.

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As the years rolled by, the number of clubs increased, and the variety of programs desired by the members mushroomed. At the same time, some of the women were feeling the need for the program to reach out, to help solve some of the community problems. There were no more hours in the day, but more and more work to be done.

It became evident that if more members were to do more things, the members would have to assume more responsibility in making the plans and carrying them out. Leadership skills would have to be developed in these women. But where to start, that was the question!

Finally, a really workable idea began to emerge! The home agent decided she would *modernize* her program by having meetings to train leaders. If each club would send two members to her, she would train them to give the demonstrations in their clubs. Our agent was not surprised when her idea met with some resistance. Some people asked, "You expect *me* to give a demonstration?" and "What are you going to do with all of your time?"

But the idea caught on. Women found that they *could* give demonstrations, and they were pleased that skills and confidence learned this way carried over into other areas of their lives. This became a major means of developing leadership abilities for many years.

In more recent years, as the county has become more urban, problems in the areas of family relations and human resource development have increased. This has led to an in-depth training program in the dynamics of group action. When this was followed by meaningful leadership experiences, a profound influence on the entire community began to manifest itself.

Family life style changes, brought on by new technological developments and changes in our total society, are causing women to look at the role of creativity in their lives. A six-session leadership seminar was recently arranged by the extension home economists for women of York County. Topics discussed were: "What Makes a Woman Creative," "Developing Creativity in Children," "Woman's Search for Her Identity," "Finding Your Identity," "Should a Woman Be Active in Politics?" "Concern of Women in Community Problems," "What Volunteer Work Has Meant to Me as a Wife and Mother," "What Participation in My Political Party Has Meant to Me as a Wife and Mother," and "How a Career Has Affected My Role as a Wife and Mother."

This type of home economics programming is a far cry from the days of "cooking, canning, and mending." But, with changes coming fast and furiously all about us, changes in home economics education are necessary to meet the needs.

EMPHASIS ON HOME HORTICULTURE REPLACES TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE

As a result of urban growth in the metropolitan area, York County has become a residential area. With more and more new homes being built, program emphasis was necessarily shifted from traditional agriculture to home horticultural programs—basic landscape design, pruning ornamentals, fruit and vegetable gardening, and fruit trees in landscape and home gardening. With the cooperation of home demonstration, garden, and community clubs most of the programs are hosted on a community basis.

4-H CLUB AND SPECIAL INTEREST YOUTH PROGRAMS

The 4-H Club work in York County is organized on a community club basis. Emphasis on leader recruiting and training in 1965 and 1966 helped double the number of adult leaders and was the major factor in the development of a county leaders' association. With the assistance of the association and the additional leaders, new project activities were added.

We find in an urban area that it is difficult to overcome the rural image of 4-H Club work. During the past two years the staff has made efforts to organize special interest groups so that more youth might become better acquainted with 4-H programs. Working with York school personnel, we organized special-interest groups in photography, entomology, and career exploration. The school system also gave assistance in introducing the TV Action series and nearly 8,000 youth who had no previous experience with 4-H participated. This program has also generated interest in community clubs.

In 1968, a committee began developing a comprehensive Natural Resource Conservation program to be included in the elementary natural science curriculum. Over 600 sixth graders were involved in a pilot program this past spring. When development of the program is complete, there will be a potential of 5,000 children of 4-H age.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The population of York County has increased 54 percent during the past eight years. The county faces many problems like those of other rapidly expanding areas. Rapid development of numerous separate communities makes it increasingly difficult for county government to communicate with the people.

In 1968 the county extension staff conducted a county leadership and problem analysis survey. The identified leaders throughout the county were invited to review the survey results, and a study group was formed.

The objective of the group is to determine feasible alternatives to major county problems.

The study group has concentrated on those problems related to community appearance and natural environment. In placing this first in order of priority, the group cited the American Revolution Bicentennial as a goal for timing.

Study has been focused on the following problems: (1) Bicentennial and York County, (2) litter and dumping, (3) substandard housing and old buildings, (4) conservation of natural beauty and open land, (5) air and water pollution, (6) high density population areas, and (7) barrow pits.

In cooperation with the county government, extension conducted public meetings on the problem of litter with the result that the York Community Appearance Group was organized. News articles and public focus on the problem have helped create awareness and concern. Antilitter programs have been conducted and community organizations are planning and developing beautification projects. The extension agent even held a pruning demonstration at the county courthouse.

A strong awareness program has been directed toward adults and especially children on conservation and community beautification. This prompted the creation of the Natural Resource Conservation special interest program for youth.

The problem of substandard housing created great concern about unsanitary living conditions of low-income families. Consequently, volunteer organizations conducted a house-to-house survey to determine the extent of the problems of these families. Extension has worked with a number of families in trying to obtain home loans through the Farmers Home Administration. The need for a county housing authority is also being seriously considered as a result of the efforts of concerned leaders and citizens.

Attention to the barrow pit problem helped bring about better site use regulations which encourage development of pits into recreation or housing sites.

The study group is presently concerned with those problems that will have the greatest financial impact on the county during the next ten years. At the same time the County Planning Commission has begun work on needed capital outlay. These discussions will have an impact on a \$25 million capital needs program for York County.

The study group approach has brought about much better communica-

tion on county-wide problems; however, action oriented people are still somewhat impatient with the problem analysis process.

THE YORK COUNTY VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION

In 1967, a group of dedicated citizens organized the York County Volunteer Association to help families in distress find solutions to their problems. To finance its many projects, a used clothing store is operated by volunteers five days a week, and profits are \$600 to \$1,000 a month. With these funds the association gives assistance to an average of 100 different families each month—paying back rent for one, a hospital or doctor's bill for another, helping an unemployed father get his tools out of hock, transporting a deserted mother to apply for public assistance, buying shoes so a child can go back to school.

All of the ten children in one family were prohibited from attending school due to a severe parasitic condition. Volunteers spent a Saturday cleaning, disinfecting, and, when necessary, burning the family's belongings. At sundown the house had all new interior walls, floors, and ceilings. New bedding was moved in, and ten clean children slept on freshly laundered sheets for the first time in their lives. The school nurses then initiated the medical treatment which would have been useless before. A year later the house is still clean, neat, and obviously better cared for.

A family development program was initiated by the Volunteer Association for 16 mothers and their 60 preschool progeny. The extension staff has provided training classes two mornings a week for nearly two years to help these mothers acquire skills in home management, clothing repair, meal planning, and child care. The agricultural agents helped out by teaching classes in wood refinishing, chair seating, and tomato growing. The volunteers provided nursery school experiences for the three- and four-year olds and kindergarten programs for the five-year olds while the mothers were attending classes. When these children went into Head Start classes, every one of them proved to be six months to a year ahead of the average in language and social skills.

The local public school system has been so impressed with this program that it has offered the volunteers and extension the use of four classrooms. It will also provide transportation on school buses for families from all parts of the county, making it possible to extend the program to many additional families. The Department of Labor will be cooperating by arranging for two women in their "Green Light" program to assist extension in the work with mothers.

Since so many problems of disadvantaged families are connected with poor housing, the volunteers soon found themselves going into this area of work. A family of eight was found living in a small trailer. A family

of fourteen has been living until last month in a dilapidated shanty. Thanks to the Volunteer Association, these families have now been moved into much better housing. Other families in similar circumstances have been assisted in finding better rental housing. Through the efforts of both extension and the volunteers, five families in York have applied for Farmers Home Administration loans, and two families have recently had their loan approved.

Many lives in York County are now touched with hope, thanks to these volunteers who care about their fellow men and are willing to lend a helping hand. Extension has had a significant part in their efforts.

EXPANDED NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Expanded Nutrition Program for York County went into full operation in February 1969, with eight extension technicians. Training and individual conferences between technician and agent are on a weekly basis.

Each technician has been responsible for giving a foods demonstration at the beginning of each weekly training session. The primary purpose of these demonstrations is to share new ideas for foods which are easy to prepare, economical, attractive, nutritionally sound, and require little or no cooking.

Each technician has worked in a concentrated way with more than twenty families. Among the most rewarding experiences are some early successes in assisting homemakers with food buying and making the most of what they have through wiser choices in the market place.

Technicians frequently accompany homemakers to a used clothing outlet, The Bargain Box, operated by the York County Volunteer Association, to assist them in their shopping for used clothing. The technicians are able to point out places needing repair and to help the homemaker learn how to make those repairs.

Frequently a technician will find several mothers quite willing—and sometimes anxious—to meet together in small groups for food demonstrations and lessons in nutrition. Occasionally, a technician will reach a mother in this setting who would not accept her initially in an individual home visit situation. Small neighborhood groups mean a great deal to these mothers. Most of the mothers also look forward each week to the technician's visit and to their idea-sharing sessions together.

To date, the results produced by using nonprofessionals in the Expanded Nutrition Education Program have exceeded expectations. The role of nonprofessionals in extension will probably expand.

AGENCY COOPERATION

Feeling that much can be gained by strengthening cooperative efforts, the staff organized the York Interagency Council this summer. The purpose of this council is to help county agencies and volunteer organizations become better acquainted with the services and work conducted by each, to concentrate on county problems, to evaluate the resources available, and to foster cooperative effort between organizations and agencies.

The York County Extension Program and the methods being used are not revolutionary, but the extension agents have pride in the role they are fulfilling in a growing and changing community.

PART II

*Inflation and Economic
Growth*

