Idea Sheet

METHODS TO INCLUDE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED YOUTH INTO 4-H PROGRAMS

By: Edward G. Heinle
Associate Professor
Department of Youth Development
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Langlade County

OCT 27 1981

Department of Youth Development

UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX requirements.
Idea Sheet

METHODS TO INCLUDE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED YOUTH INTO 4-H PROGRAMS

By Edward G. Heinle
Associate Professor
Department of Youth Development
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Langlade County

The 4-H program is open to all youth. However, some developmentally disabled youth may not be able to participate fully in 4-H because of certain disabilities. Therefore, 4-H programs may need to be modified to try to meet the needs of these youth.

In Langlade County, certain modifications in the 4-H program were made over the years. Those youth who could not keep record books because of a disability were exempted from keeping a record book. They would still be eligible for first-year pin and graduate pin provided they attended at least one-half of the club meetings and showed at least one project at the fair or a club meeting. For all other awards the members needed to complete a record book.

In 1980 a 4-H leader suggested that some other type of award be available for these youth. The agent discussed the award idea with 4-H leaders and parents who had disabled youth in 4-H clubs. The result was a new award called the 4-H Spirit Award. The requirements were that any 4-H leader may submit a one-page form to nominate a disabled youth for the award. The one-page form would have the following information: name of youth, club, number of years in 4-H, listing of 4-H projects, committee help, how the member has developed, and qualities of leadership and helpfulness. The 4-H Awards Committee would select up to six youth to receive the trophy at 4-H Achievement Night.

Youth with disabilities utilized current 4-H project materials. Some of the youth were in plays and music events. They attended project training sessions. Where disability was not severe the youth attended 4-H camp.
IDEA SHEET
METHODS TO INCLUDE DEVELOPMENTALLY
DISABLED YOUTH INTO 4-H PROGRAMS

Schools have special classes for developmentally disabled. In Langlade
County the Antigo Unified School District has a class and the two para-
professionals working with the youth asked if a 4-H club could be started.
The para-professionals were former 4-H leaders, which helped a lot. The
club was started in 1979 and all youth in class enrolled in 4-H. Because
the youth were handicapped, the para-professionals, who became the 4-H
leaders, decided to have all the youth enroll in the same projects. The
members took house plants, foods, and woodworking. Six of the 12 members
exhibited at the fair.

The 12 members, ranging in age from 10 to 20 years old, elected officers
and voted to name the club "Happy Days". The club meets during school once
a week for about one hour. The members say the pledges. The leader writes
the minutes and news releases of club activities with members' names in the
articles. The news article is sent to the newspaper once a month. The
leaders have the members work on projects. Afterwards, the leaders have
members take turns in leading recreational games. This helps youth develop
leadership skills.

During the year some of the members attend county-wide project training
and the 4-H Music and Drama Festival.

Another 4-H club, Wislango Riders, set up a horse acquaintance day for
the disabled youth in the school club. The school transported the members to
the farm during the school day. The disabled members were given information
on horses. They also had rides on horses, ponies, or in a pony cart. Youth
and adult leaders from the Wislango Riders club and adult leaders from the
Happy Days club coordinated the meeting.

The Wislango Riders has acted as a sister club to the Happy Days club.
The Wislango Riders members presented some programs on horses and other
projects to the Happy Days club as well as their 4-H musical. They plan to
hold another horse day for youth in 1981.

Through the modifications in the 4-H program, disabled youth may join
4-H and gain useful experience.