Idea Sheet

4-H JUNIOR MEMBER EXCHANGE ACTIVITY

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SITUATION:

Many county 4-H programs provide a wide variety of activities for 4-H older youth ages 14 through 18. However, very often there are few "out of club, or out of county" activities for the 4-H junior members. Junior 4-H members with several years of experience are expected to wait until they reach the age of 14 before they are allowed to apply for such things as State 4-H Congress, Interstate Exchange Activity, Camp Counseling, etc. In addition to the concern for junior member activities, there is the ever present need to involve more families in 4-H activities.

As a result of attending the National 4-H Leader's Forum in Washington, D.C., several Walworth County leaders came up with the idea of a Junior Member Inter-County Exchange Activity. Following are the program objectives and procedures which resulted from their idea.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

The Junior Member Exchange Program was established to meet the following objectives:

- to provide junior age 4-H members with an opportunity for an educational experience outside of their local club or county 4-H program,
- to provide 4-H families (members and their families) with a cultural exchange experience. Parents and youth are expected to learn about their host family and the 4-H program in the host county,
- to provide an intensive experience with minimal cost to either 4-H family or the county program.

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to provide families an opportunity to plan and conduct an activity which would be of benefit to those involved, while at the same time keeping UWEX staff involvement at a minimum.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION:

To get the program started, a committee of parents and leaders developed some guidelines. These guidelines were used to inform prospective exchange counties and prospective 4-H families about the program. The basic guidelines which were established included:

1. The program will be open to any 4-H member ages 11 through 13, and will not be a competitive event.

2. The host county should be located within one hour driving time to facilitate the involvement of families and eliminate the need for extensive travel arrangements.

3. The program will last about 1 week, and be complete at the end of that period, except for future informal arrangements made by the families. Members will spend part of the week in each county.

4. Parents will provide all transportation during the exchange activity.

5. Except for the initial reception and introduction of exchange families group activities will be planned by the families involved.

6. Each county will be responsible for its own activity insurance.

Once these guidelines were set up, it was not hard to find a neighboring county which was interested in such an exchange. Each county announced the activity in their monthly 4-H family newsletter and sent special notices to club general leaders. The number of interested families from each county was similar, therefore neither county had to search for additional hosts. Each group of families met independently to discuss dates and schedules. The agents communicated the group's needs until a suitable week was selected. Each group of families planned on activity for their half of the exchange period. A picnic was planned for the Wednesday of the Exchange. This was to get all of the families together, and arrange for the transfer of members from one host to the other host family. Except for the Wednesday picnic and the one county activity for each half of the exchange, the members spent their time in home and family situations. The parent made their own arrangements for the return of all members to their respective homes.

This activity was evaluated as a very positive experience for both the members and their families. It was easy to plan and inexpensive to conduct. Other counties may consider exchanges with more distant counties or with more detailed programs. Our leaders feel there are many benefits to a program which is geared more towards the family and homelife experiences.