"4-H CELEBRATES THE FAMILY" by Sheila Urban, Assistant Professor
Department of Youth Development
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Marathon County

and

Diane Banitt, Instructor
Department of Youth Development
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Wood County

and

Susan Grasse, Instructor
Department of Youth Development
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Lincoln County
April 1984

SITUATION

Four-H families as a part of the general public are faced with family fragmentation and stress. These are the result of limited resources, extensive and multiple time demands, lack of viable communication and a lack of problem solving skills.

To help people deal with these stresses and recognize their strengths is the main focus of the program "4-H Celebrates the Family." As a result of this program, participating families will have a stronger feeling of self-worth about themselves and their family. Participants also will have an increased understanding of the home helpership concepts.

Dr. Nick Stinnett of the University of Nebraska researched unifiers present in "strong" families. Dr. Stinnett's research showed that there were five components present in families which were defined as "strong."
Strong families appreciate each other and have positive ways of expressing their appreciation to family members. Family members value each other and set time aside to share family activities. Strong families are able to communicate their thoughts, feelings and needs with each other. They also can listen effectively. Strong families are committed and concerned with each other's welfare. They do activities together and put each other first. Finally, strong families exhibited healthy problem solving skills. These skills enabled the family to cope with family stress and address the problems.

OBJECTIVES

Through participation in "4-H Celebrates the Family," 4-H families will:

1. Use the home as a 4-H learning center.
2. Use natural family activities for 4-H learning.
3. Use the family members as natural helpers in 4-H learning.

IMPLEMENTATION

Participants were rural and urban 4-H families from north-central Wisconsin. The family units reflected today's population: single-parent families, traditional families, extended families and retired adults. "4-H Celebrates the Family" was designed as a workshop to help these families strengthen their day to day experiences.

For each workshop presentation the host county was responsible for facility arrangement, promotion, registration, greeters and cleanup. Upon arrival participants were welcomed and divided into age and sex groups (mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents and significant others). From these groupings new families developed. These families reflected today's population, i.e. single-parent, traditional and extended.

To reflect the concept that the dinner table is a naturally communicative area, newly formed families dined together potluck style. Dishes, utensils and beverages were furnished by the host county. During their dinner, the new family's first task was to devise a family name. Their family name was to show a common family element. After dinner each group introduced their family members and shared their new name with all participants.

To set the evening mood, the slide/tape series "4-H in the Family" was shown. This slide series deals specifically with the home helpership concepts. After the slide series presentation, a discussion followed on individual family applications of the home leadership concepts. The discussion also encouraged the families to maximize the educational interchange between ongoing family activities and 4-H project experiences. An awareness was created regarding the use of the home as a natural 4-H learning center. It stimulated participation interest for the remaining parts of the workshop.
CLOCKS, CALENDARS, and the 4-H CLUB

Planning the 4-H Family Way

Clocks and Calendars: At Home

DIRECTIONS:

As a family, make a 24 hour clock for each person.

Each person should decide how their typical day is spent (not a weekend) and mark it on the clock. Avoid listing anything that takes less than ½ hour to do. Combine the little things under one heading.

A certain amount of time is spent doing fun activities—recreation and the things you like to do when there is nothing else to do. List those items in the section beneath the clock.

As a family, exchange clocks and compare.

Does one person have an "easier" schedule than someone else?
Is there a difference between working and non-working members?
How does school affect your time?

As a family, share how weekends are spent. List in appropriate sections.
Are Saturday and Sunday just another day?
Does the family do anything unusual?
What takes up most of the time?

Finally, decide how much time and help your family has to give to 4-H.
Is there time to organize one meeting/event?
Can you help in other ways? (Carpooling, calling on the phone, etc.)
Do you really want to get involved?
What are the benefits of 4-H and how does it affect your family?

The Club: One Year Plan

DIRECTIONS:

Devote one club meeting to the sharing of the family clocks and calendars. Talk about what is important to the family; about the realities of time and work; about financial limitations. Help each person to understand that no family is identical to the next and that every family has the right to be as involved as they wish. Each family, too, has a certain responsibility to the club . . . this should be stressed.

Determine how much time each family wants to give and what club activities are the most important.

Prioritize the activities.

Ask for volunteers to help organize and plan the activities.

Do the top-rated activities first and only the activities the families want to help with.

At the end of the 4-H club year, re-prioritize the completed activities, evaluate the programs and what might be done again. Exchange plans and begin again for the upcoming year. Keep building on experience!
Family Vacation

One of the important activities found in many of our families is the family vacation. It has gone through changes as money became tighter and more women started working, but today's families are still planning vacations.

This is an activity that families should be planning together. By planning it together, they can meet the family's needs as well as the needs of individual family members.

During this part of "4-H Celebrates the Family," each family spent half an hour planning a vacation for their family. They discussed when they would leave, where they would visit, how they would travel, what they should take with, how much it would cost, as well as other necessary plans.

Each family then shared their vacation with the other families. A group discussion followed which covered the importance of planning a family vacation together. Family members were encouraged to expand this idea to other family situations.

Clocks, Calendars and the 4-H Club (See Appendix A)

This 45 minute activity is designed to help family members focus on their time usage and how it relates to family events as well as club events. The group begins by listing all the 4-H activities a club might plan for a year and how much time it takes to carry out the activities. Next, individuals complete a personal time clock, then share it within their family circle. Awareness of what siblings and parents are daily involved in is heightened. The third step is for each family to choose a 4-H activity listed in the beginning. The selection will involve determining who will carry what responsibility and how much time the family will put into the event. Finally, a master chart is constructed, listing all the activities that have been volunteered to be organized for by each family. A wrap-up includes thoughts and plans to take this activity back to the home and to the club.

Family Contract

New family units were dissolved at the end of the program using individual sharing circle concepts where family members shared their feelings about their "new" family. Families of origin were reorganized and time was given for them to share their experiences. Each family was requested to develop a family contract. This was to reinforce their commitment to each other and the family unit. As families they were challenged to acknowledge their strengths and to be home helpers.

RESULTS

"4-H Celebrates the Family" was a presentation which stressed the home as a learning center; to use natural family activities for 4-H learning; and to use family members as natural helpers in 4-H learning. Results indicate:
1. A positive correlation between family involvement and 4-H involvement.

2. A family's understanding of the amount of time it takes to organize activities.

3. An increased awareness of the home helpership concepts.

4. The recognition that all family members need to have input into family decision making.

Leader's comments included:

--- "I thought that it was a great program and I sure wish more families were involved in 4-H. I really like 4-H."

--- "I think the kids enjoyed having different families for the night. Makes them all think of how everyone has different situations and they found out maybe they weren't as bad off as they thought, for example, other kids have work, too."

--- "Presenters were energetic, enjoyable, involved all of us. Made us feel welcome and comfortable and made it fun for kids."

--- "I think it would be nicer to return to the real family half way through the program and enjoy your actual family, their ideas, their dreams on vacation, even to be made more aware of their time clocks and their extras and how they previewed the evening."

--- "We enjoyed just being a family. It was our 10th wedding anniversary and I wanted to celebrate with our children."

--- "I certainly plan to give my families more responsibility to plan different activities."

IMPLICATIONS

Many family activities provide an opportunity for natural educational exchange between members. This occurs in a variety of settings and with a variety of topics.

Family styles may vary but common denominators are present. These include: appreciating each other; spending constructive time together; communicating thoughts, feelings and needs; a commitment to each other and the family purpose; and the ability to utilize problem solving skills.

This program was designed to help 4-H families recognize their strengths even though family unit styles vary. This program would work well as a joint effort between 4-H Youth Development and Family Living in county situations.