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“YOUTH IN PUBLIC LEADERSHIP”

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Entre Nous means “between us” and serves as the official publication for members of the Wisconsin Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals.

Articles should be submitted via e-mail, either in ascii text or in an attached Microsoft Word document. The e-mail should be addressed to Merry Klemme, Editor, at merry.klemme@ces.uwex.edu.

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From the Heart of the Editor: Youth in Public Leadership

Merry Klemme, Kewaunee County

I am so very happy that so many of you felt the urge to express your ideas about Youth in Public Leadership. We have some great articles in this issue about that topic as well as other topics. I have enjoyed reading the articles and think you will too. I also have been learning my job as the Editor of *Entre Nous*, so I am glad to be able to rely on others to do the bulk of the writing so I can *LEARN BY DOING*.

“This (youth) group would put many adult groups to shame.”

M. Klemme

I am a member of the Youth in Public Leadership state team, which I am convinced must be the BEST state team. We have members of every color (matrix colors, that is) which makes our discussions interesting and our decision making challenging, but also of a very high quality.

I have been working with a group of youth in our community who are planning a “Youth Center Without Walls” for 7th and 8th graders. This group would put many adult groups to shame. They are always on time, come prepared and their meetings are never more than an hour long. They also understand program planning better than most adults I know. They started planning by creating a purpose statement: “To create a safe, fun environment to get teens off the couch, off the streets, out of the house, and together with friends.” Then they took the time to survey all 800+ 7th and 8th graders in the county before they began planning activities for them. They went to every classroom, explained the goals of their program and conducted a short written survey about favorite activities, best time of the week and what keeps them from attending planned activities. The planning team, mostly high school students, were surprised by some of the survey findings. In their words, “I guess I don’t remember what it was like when I was in middle school.”

They are a great group to work with. They won’t let me do any of the work. They want the work and the rewards, which is fine with me. They plan to have a resource table at our February Conference, so you’ll be able to learn more from them when you are there.

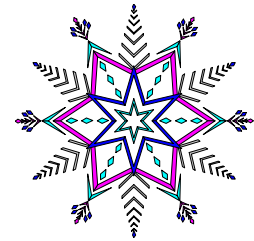
The Next Issue of *Entre Nous*

The Winter issue of *Entre Nous* will focus on Strengthening 4-H Project Support, so start writing your articles now. The final due date will be February 1, 2001. But you don’t have to limit your articles to the focus theme. The *Entre Nous* is your newsletter. Express yourself! Share personal and professional concerns and triumphs.

Are You Ready to Decide?

This issue of *Entre Nous* is being mailed and sent electronically. If you are ready to choose to receive your copy electronically only and not by mail, please contact me and we will take you off of the snail-mail address list. Obviously that would save the Association postage and printing costs. The choice is still yours.

The Power of a Snowflake



Wayne Brabender, Past, Past Editor

Just to be is a blessing.

Just to live is holy.

—Rabbi Abraham Herschel

“It was a year after Mike’s death that I struggled with my own thoughts of suicide”.

W. Brabender

I’m writing this on Nov. 1, the anniversary of Mike’s death. Mike was a friend. On this day several years ago, Mike put a rope around his neck in the basement of his condominium in Madison and jumped out of this life.

All he left behind was a dispassionate note about how his things were to be divided and how some bills were to be paid.

I had seen Mike only a few days before. He was his usual self, joking around and calling me “Brother Wayne” when we passed on State Street near his store. There wasn’t a hint of despondency or desperation in his voice.

It was a year after Mike’s death that I struggled with my own thoughts of suicide. Though Mike didn’t tell me, I knew that a recent divorce, a family business that was suffocating him and some chronic health problems were sucking the life out of him. For me it was not anything specific that was driving me to the brink. I just suffered from an awful feeling of mid-life-crisis malaise. I can only describe it as a deep sense of guilt for taking up space in this world, a desperate feeling that I wasn’t worth much because I had not done much with my life.

Dumb, right? But it seemed real at the time. What was even dumber was the source of my depression. When I was young I had dodged three sure-death experiences by the smallest of margins, and I came to believe that anyone so blessed must be destined for great things, world-beating things.

I was 13 when I had my first close call. Each day after school in the fall, one of my farm chores was to fill a flatbed wagon with corn silage from a make-shift silo behind our barn. Our stone silo was rather small so my dad erected a second silo of snow fences wired together into circles, with one circle stacked on top of the next. Each day I would pull the wagon next to this triple-decked contraption, hop off the tractor to the ground, toss a 12-tined fork into the silage above me, then scale the fencing to the top.

On this crisp fall day I was in a hurry. When I tossed up the fork, it must have hit the top of the fencing. It then must have done a neat flip in the air and dived back to the ground where I was standing. I didn’t see any of that. I had just tossed and turned to start my climb. Then I felt a “whoosh” of air behind my head and felt a “thud” on the ground behind me. When I turned I saw the razor-sharp tines embedded two inches into the soft soil, a fraction of an inch behind my left heel. Without that mini-step forward, I would have been left behind, wearing a fork in my head. I remember shuttering, shaking my head and thinking, “I should be dead.”

“Once again I shuttered, shook my head and thought, ‘I should be dead.’”

W. Brabender

Only weeks later I was hunting rabbits on our farm with my brother’s .20 gauge shotgun. I was walking alone along a fence row, thick with brush, tall grasses and tree stumps. A rusty wire fence still separated our land from our neighbor to the east. A rabbit darted out ahead of me. I instinctively released the safety and brought the shotgun to my shoulder. But the rabbit veered left into the brush. I followed quickly into the mangled briars and caught a glimpse of the rabbit squirting through the fence to the other side. As I reached for the wires to squeeze myself through, a blast roared in front of my face, ripping away the bill of my baseball cap. The branch of a bush had pulled the trigger on the shotgun, which was pointing almost directly up my nose. Once again I shuttered, shook my head and thought, “I should be dead.”

My third brush with death happened while driving a car six years later. I was 19, going to college and working on Saturdays at a department store called Treasure Island. It was a beautiful fall day and my attention was immersed in the colors around me. I was only two miles from work when I was further distracted by a group of golfers teeing off to my left. By the time I turned my eyes to the road again, I found myself barreling towards a car that had stopped dead in the road, only yards ahead of me. I slammed on the brakes, frantically jerked the wheel to the left, somehow managing to miss the rear left bumper of the car filled with four gray heads, and jerked it back hard to the right careening past the car in the road . . . and then I heard the roar of the train plowing past my rear bumper. Those old folks had stopped for a passing train that I never saw. I was grateful that I hadn’t killed them. But yes, I thought, I should have been dead.

From then on there was hardly a day that passed that I didn’t think about those three fateful times in my life. I felt charmed and blessed. So when I was nearing 50, coping with my own past divorce and struggling to get the minutes of the latest meeting out, much less the great American novel, I thought, “Was Mike right after all?”

I got my answer.

It was a cold December night. I hadn’t been sleeping well for several weeks, and once again I woke up in the middle of the night. Two o’clock. Three o’clock. By four o’clock I was sobbing from exhaustion and depression. I got up, dressed slowly in the dark, and then quietly wandered out our front door and onto the sidewalk. A light snow was coating the roads and trees. I’m sure the ice crystals glistened under the street lights, but I didn’t see them. I just trudged ahead, hands in my pockets, looking at my shoes, not knowing where to go or what to do.

For 10 minutes I numbly shuffled along. I’m not a praying man, as they say, but at that point I felt a powerful urge to get help. “What am I supposed to do?” I mumbled to myself. “What do you *want*? I need help. Show me the way. Show me a sign!”

I lifted my head. It was then that I noticed the change in the snowfall. The flakes had turned the size of huge, white fluffy golf balls, cascading straight

down, plopping on my head, face and shoulders. The most beautiful snow I had ever seen!

“Show me a sign!” I demanded, louder this time. “What do you want from me? What . . .” but I never got the rest of the words out. Just as I was saying the word “what,” I inhaled one of those monster flakes into my mouth. It was so big and took me by such surprise that I choked and gasped for my next breath.

I started to chuckle. I had my sign and it was so appropriate, too. It took a big old snowflake to tell me: “Life itself is extraordinary. Just to be is enough.”

Just live. That’s what I’ve been trying to do ever since. And I’ve had only one regret . . . that Mike hasn’t been there to share it with me.



Big Questions about Youth Leadership

Linda Kustka, State Staff & Co-Chair of the Youth in Public Leadership Team

“We’re doing a scholarly role that is important ground work for action.”

L. Kustka

What are the essential youth leadership skills? How do youth view leadership? What are the best ways for youth to develop their leadership skills? What does the research about youth leadership tell us? How does youth leadership development differ from adult leadership development?

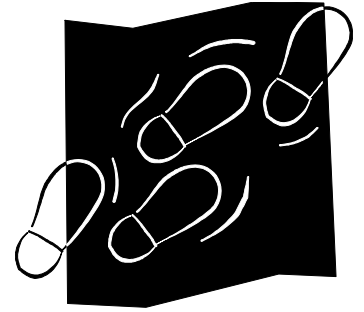
The Youth in Public Leadership state committee members are asking themselves hard questions like these. We’re reading articles and books and looking at existing curriculums to find the answers. It’s exciting, overwhelming, and stimulating to read and discuss youth leadership work. We’re learning that much has been written. We invite our colleagues to share relevant resources that

You might be thinking: “Why doesn’t this group just plan and do something! What are they accomplishing now?” I’d answer that “We’re doing a scholarly role that is important ground work for action.” Almost all of us have done lots of youth leadership work in the past. This work is often based on our practical experience of what the situation and youth seem to need. Many of these efforts seem to be great successes. A few undertakings seem to have “fallen short.” Now, we want to be more deliberate in designing future educational work that is truly research grounded.

Stay tuned to our committee’s work. We’re looking forward to doing quality seminars at the upcoming February 2001 staff inservice. We’ll be sharing answers to the hard questions then and in the future. We need “talk time” with our colleagues to engage in the scholarship of youth leadership.

One Small Step for
Marquette County, One
Giant Leap for Youth!

*Myrna Rhinehart, Marquette County, Entre Nous
Assistant Editor*



Marquette County is getting more youth in Public Leadership, thanks to the inquisitiveness of a few youth in our community.

“Courtney inquired of her mom, ‘Why aren’t there kids at the Leaders Association meetings, considering that the programs the 4-H Leaders Association sponsors are for youth?’ Good question, Courtney!”

M. Rhinehart

Courtney’s mom is the President for the 2nd year on the Marquette County 4-H Leaders Association Board of Directors, and she has been attending the Leaders Association meetings for a number of years now. Courtney inquired of her mom, “Why aren’t there kids at the Leaders Association meetings, considering that the programs the 4-H Leaders Association sponsors are for youth?” Good question, Courtney!

So, Courtney’s mom asked me that question after the 4-H Leaders Association Banquet this fall. It just so happens that there is a clause in the 4-H Leaders Association bylaws that allows for two youth to serve on the Board. This clause has apparently been there for a number of years, but for whatever reason, it hasn’t been carried out. Regardless, a call was put out for any youth wishing to attend the meetings and volunteer as a Youth Director. Courtney attended her first 4-H Leaders Association meeting as a Youth Director last month.

Marquette County also has youth members on their Fair Board. There are two representatives from 4-H, and two representatives from FFA. Christa attended her first fair board meeting about two years ago. She sat next to me as the board discussed the schedule for the following year. Christa leaned over to me and very quietly asked if the Youth Meat Animal Auction could be moved. I encouraged her to ask, but she giggled and said, “You do it.” So I raised my hand and after I was addressed I smiled and said, “Christa has a question.” Christa paused and bravely asked her question. She also added that it was very hard to finish, in one day, all of the judging that needed to be done before the Auction and that it is very hard on the kids to have to run back and forth between concurrent livestock shows. The board was very open to what she had to say, but had reasons to leave the Auction where it was in the schedule. However, they did concede that judging was too close together and took steps to give the youth more time in between shows. Christa had accomplished a big step!

A few years ago, one of the Extension Education Committee members asked why the youth members were only allowed input and were not allowed to vote at the Fair Board meetings. His son, Eric was a youth member of the board and was frustrated that he could attend the meetings, but not have anything to say about final decisions. We brought this concern to the Fair Board. It was dismissed initially, until about a year later when a recommendation was made from the Extension Education Committee to the Fair Board that the youth

members be allowed to vote. Now our youth board members are consistently making motions and voting on many fair board matters. They are highly respected equal members of the fair board. Eric since graduated from High School and is no longer on the board, but his steps are still contributing to positive change!

4-H'ers As Active Citizens

Denise Retzleff, Fond du Lac County

“We actually did something that made a difference and we, the youth, were actively involved in the process from beginning to end,” added Sarah.”

D. Retzleff

“This is probably the best project 4-H has to offer,” said Sarah Theisen, when she was being evaluated at the fair on her involvement in the new 4-H Public Adventures project. The judge leaned forward intently and asked Sarah to explain.

“We actually did something that made a difference and we, the youth, were actively involved in the process from beginning to end,” added Sarah.

Each of four youth, Sarah Theisen, Andy Koffman, Julia Potter, and Thomas Jones (TJ) expressed similar sentiments on their involvement in the process.

Julia said, “I learned how to request donations from businesses. I never did that before. I learned what type of businesses to ask and what type not to ask for donations. It has built my self confidence.”

TJ said, “Each of us accepted and carried out responsibilities to ourselves and the group. We each had different aspects of the project that we had to carry out in order to make the whole thing work. We contributed equally in decision-making. And it was fun doing it!”

“I learned more about other cultures, and I have a clearer understanding of the difference between “public” and “private” interests,” added Andy.

So what happened in order to bring youth together in this public adventure and what exactly did they do?

To start the 4-H year off, each of these members enrolled in *Public Adventures*, a project described as an opportunity to improve the world around you. The first meeting of the group involved generating a list of issues important to the participants as well as to the community. Topics ranged from poverty to tolerance, and racial acceptance to a cleaner environment, the desire for a public perception for teens to be seen as valuable resources, healthy lifestyles, world peace, and hunger. After discussing what was of importance to this group as well as to the community, and what the youth thought they could make a difference doing, they decided on tolerance as an issue. Their mission was stated as, “*We are the Fond du Lac County 4-H Public Adventures group whose purpose is to increase awareness of each person’s uniqueness and therefore increase respect for each other. This would mean a decrease of stereotypes and negative behavior toward others. We believe that this is important because we*

see lack of respect for others as a common problem in our schools and communities. To accomplish this we will develop activities to increase awareness of stereotypes, acceptance and respect.”

The next step involved actually planning a project to carry out the mission. “Jeopamillion” a game show format combining the popular game shows, Jeopardy and Who Wants to be a Millionaire was created. Categories for questions were developed to reflect the mission of understanding and accepting others. Topics included religion, disabilities, bullying, food of various cultures, holidays and celebrations of other cultures, gender, Hmong, Native Americans, African Americans, and Fond du Lac County questions on demographics and cultural history. Youth dug into a variety of resources to develop appropriate questions and correct answers.

Andy and Sarah approached the Fond du Lac County Agricultural Society to receive permission to hold the game show on the Expo stage on four different days during the county fair. After receiving enthusiastic support, all the youth worked together in contacting businesses to sponsor prizes for the contestants. They developed news releases for local papers, promoted the event on two radio stations, and developed a flier that they hung up in businesses and distributed at the fair. These efforts were done to attract people to be a part of the game show as well as to be in the audience.

Eventually the game days arrived with enthusiastic participants and Libby Koenigs, Fairest of the Fair, serving as host for the game show. Questions covered civil rights, Americans With Disabilities Act, discrimination, gender inequity, cultural beliefs and celebrations. All participants were awarded prizes. They had fun and learned about tolerance toward others. Many participants encouraged the organizers of the game show to come back next year.

The first year of Public Adventures came to a close, and in the process youth developed skills in planning, organizing, communicating in public, working with others and being accountable. They developed a commitment to the community, feel more confident in their ability to participate in and contribute to public life, and have a better grasp of the concept of citizenship. Julia wrapped it up nicely by saying, “It went well. It was a good experience.”

An Interview With Gena Cooper, State
Youth Leader Council President
Linda Kustka, State Staff
Gena Cooper, President, State Youth Leader Council, Waukesha County

1. What leadership roles are you currently doing in 4-H in your club, county, state?

Currently, I participate actively as a leader in Waukesha County and state activities. I am a member of the Waukesha Co. Summer Camp staff. We work together to plan, organize, and run a summer camp for county youth. It is an awesome experience and really teaches leadership qualities. At the state level, I serve on various committees. I am the President of the Youth Leader Council (YLC) as well as a member of the 4-H Conference Planning Committee and 4-H Foundation. At Conference, the YLC plans a seminar on get acquainted games. I have helped to plan this class for the last two years. I truly enjoy working with people from different areas of Wisconsin because I learn a great deal from their individual perspectives on 4-H topics.

2. What kind of hobbies, school groups, and other community groups are you currently involved with?

Outside of 4-H, I participate in school activities and other hobbies. I am an active member of my school's Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Key Club, and the Letterwinners' Club. I am also the Vice-President of our National Honor Society. My athletic participation includes cross-country, track, and cheerleading. High School athletic participation has allowed me to find the sport I really love, running. Outside of school, I serve on my church's youth committee, and I am a member of the Walworth County Cloggers. Clogging is an ethnic dance that is very popular in the South. I have been dancing since I was eight, and now I help teach clogging!

3. What leadership roles have you done in the past in 4-H and other groups?

Leadership has served as a major part of my 4-H past. I began as a Junior Leader and officer in my local club. I learned responsibility and organization early because of different club activities I planned. I now work on the county level as a camp staff member. I help to plan and run summer camp. This has been an amazingly challenging but rewarding experience. Other leadership positions I have held are Vice-President of NHS, a captain of cross-country, and Youth Director of my church group.

4. Can you remember any experiences that gave you skills and confidence to try new leadership roles?

My early club work really gave me the confidence to reach out and try new leadership roles. By actively participating in our club meetings (i.e. giving demonstrations and speeches) I became confident in leading groups. My club leader encouraged me to take part in committee work and help organize club events. This strong base really allowed me to build leadership skills and confidence.

“There have been two key people in my leadership development: my mom and my club leader, Kathy Wilson. Both women encouraged me, sometimes pushed me, to participate in numerous 4-H activities.”

G. Cooper

5. Have there been any key people (person) who encouraged and supported you in trying new leadership roles?

There have been two key people in my leadership development: my mom and my club leader, Kathy Wilson. Both women encouraged me, sometimes pushed me, to participate in numerous 4-H activities. They expected me to lead groups confidently and to plan group projects. My mom always reinforced the importance of public speaking abilities and a kind heart. Mrs. Wilson has always taught me to work hard at my 4-H projects and to be confident in my abilities as a leader. Without their support, I would not be the same person I am now.

6. What are the rewards and challenges of being in a leadership role?

Leadership roles do bring both rewards and challenges but the rewards generally outweigh the challenges. The biggest reward of leadership is the friendships I have gained through my work. I have developed personal friendships with third graders as well as retirees, all due to my 4-H work. This feeling was really epitomized when a young camper told me she hoped that one day she could be as cool as I am! That's quite a compliment. Some challenges of leadership include instructing large groups, maintaining respect in group work (especially with the younger kids), and balancing all my time conflicts.

7. What do you think adults can do to help other youth develop and use their leadership abilities?

Give older youth endless leadership opportunities and encourage them to participate in the activities! . Be there to support the youth as they try new things. New leaders have tons of questions, ideas, and problems that seem overwhelming. If an adult can assist the leader in discovering the answer to their question, they will be better equipped to handle future problems. Adults need to serve as role models for youth and as support systems.

8. Is there any advice you'd give Extension staff or adult volunteers to improve the 4-H experience?

The 4-H experience could really be improved if more youth were given the opportunity to participate in leadership positions. Often, for convenience sake, adult volunteers plan 4-H events. Youth should be taking an active role in planning these activities because it provides excellent training for future leaders. 4-H is a beneficial program to large numbers of Wisconsin's youth. Continue making it such a wonderful experience.

Focus on Youth In Public Presentation Roles

Steve Wagoner, Dane County

“Youth learn leadership skills through experience and observing adults; sometimes they need a little push to get involved... Adults need to serve as role models for youth and as support systems”.

G. Cooper

“What do I need to do to properly prepare a young person for a public presentation?” That’s a question I often ask myself. In my role as Dane County Community Youth Development Educator, I recruit and place young people in public presentation roles A LOT! Call it craziness, living on the edge, or just plain enthusiastic youth development work...however you refer to it, I do it just the same...and the question haunts me every time!

“Because I love the challenge and the fun of it, I work with young people in a variety of public presentation roles. The question ‘What do I need to do to properly prepare them?’ is ALWAYS there”.

S. Wagoner

Because I love the challenge and the fun of it, I work with young people in a variety of public presentation roles. The question “What do I need to do to properly prepare them?” is ALWAYS there. Whether I’m putting together interactive youth panels or jointly planning and teaching with young people workshops on a variety of topics, the question is endlessly on my mind. Maybe I’m preparing 4-H members to address politicians, working with masters of ceremony for the county awards program, or supporting youth stage announcers at the Dane County Fair...it doesn’t matter what the task is...the question is still there.

Even when I recruit young people for more informal public presentation roles such as representing 4-H at interactive walk-by promotional displays or serving on inter-agency youth program planning committees, the question still haunts me. I have an important role to play in preparing young people for an array of public presentation roles.

It is up to me to do it right...because if I don’t, I risk causing young people embarrassment, frustration, and backward movement in their personal growth and development. I may even lose them as enthusiastic risk takers and diminish a strong support base of energetic and talented youth leaders in the county 4-H youth development program. I DO NOT want any of these things to happen!

When I begin plans for work with each new young presenter or group of presenters, then, I consider five main points. Keeping the points foremost in my mind helps me answer the question “What do I need to do to properly prepare them?”

Here are the points that work for me:

1. Consider the job at hand: Before I decide to recruit and work with young presenters, I first need to consider what it is that I need done. It must make sense for young people to assist me in the task. I think about the audience who will view or interact with the presentation. I think about the message that needs delivering and who the most effective messenger is—and I work to communicate the information to those I recruit.

If a group of adults is not ready to listen to young people, I may be setting youth up for failure by asking them to present to that group. I may need to first work with the adult attitudes toward young people, or I should at least carefully select assertive and strong public presenters.

Resistant groups can move a great ways once they see a success. It is my responsibility to properly prepare the presenters for the resistance they may

“Practice is definitely the key!”

S. Wagoner

encounter. I practice with the presenters role play scenarios, ‘what if this happens’ situations, responses to difficult questions that may come from the audience, and where they turn for support during and after the presentation. Practice is definitely the key!

The Dane County 4-H Awards and Recognition Committee, for example, was resistant to listening to young peoples’ perceptions of the Member Evaluation (ME) form. After considerable discussion with the committee, they finally agreed to invite some older youth to a meeting to discuss their ME perceptions. I recruited some active 4-H members for the discussion—both those who had filled out the ME form many times and those who did not even know the form existed.

A planning meeting was spent with the recruited young people preparing them for the committee discussion. The purpose of the ME form and the benefits of completing it were explained. Those who had never before seen the form consequently better understood the bias the committee would have toward its use. Sample questions and committee member comments were also posed to the young people so I could prepare them for the projected atmosphere they would most likely experience during the meeting. I also stressed to them how important it was for the committee to hear each of their opinions as participants in the county 4-H program.

The discussion went well, and it was helpful for the committee to hear directly from young people on the issue. The greatest benefit, though, was probably the image created in the minds of the committee members as they listened to ‘real’ members talking about the ‘real’ ME process. Committee members still today refer to that image.

“The greatest benefit, though, was probably the image created in the minds of the committee members as they listened to ‘real’ members talking about the ‘real’ ME process. Committee members still today refer to that image.”

S. Wagoner

Sometimes it is politically incorrect to include young people in presentations. If it hurts the cause or does damage to a relationship, don’t include them. Since I am a strong advocate for involving young people, though, I have a hard time NOT including them if they are properly prepared.

2. Pinpoint the proper time to bring young people into the process:

A good general rule of thumb is to include them EARLY in the development of an idea...but not too early if it is a complicated venture. Young people are pretty busy these days, and if they are involved in lots of planning meetings, their interest and enthusiasm can falter. They seem to be more productive if they are presented a clear explanation of the goal of the project, and a simple process is followed to figure out how they can and should contribute.

If I need to put together a panel of young people for a conference, for example, I start the first conversation with them by explaining who the audience is at the conference and what the panel is expected to discuss there. It is my role to explain the parameters and the structure of the presentation—including details such as the time allotment, the size of the room, and how large the audience is. The panel can then exercise their creativity in deciding the content for the presentation and how they want to present their message.

3. Carefully think about who the presenter(s) should be: There are many things to keep in mind when recruiting young people as presenters. Consider the difficulty of the presentation, how critical the audience is of young people and of the message being delivered, when and where the presentation is, what role (if any) you or other adults play in the presentation, and whether the audience has previously witnessed young people as presenters. Your goal is to properly assess the ‘environment’ for the presentation before you do recruitment.

When I recruited 4-H members to present a seminar at the Galaxy Conference in Ohio, for example, I knew the audience would be Extension professionals. I knew they would probably be receptive to youth panelists as presenters, but they might ask very difficult and challenging questions.

For the task, then, I recruited some of my most involved and most articulate 4-H Ambassadors. I knew they would be able to tap into their many years of 4-H involvement while still being creative in their presentation. I also knew they would be able to handle hard questions, hold up their end of impromptu discussions with the audience, and basically be up to the task. I did not have to ‘prepare’ them much, but I did have to set the stage for them so they had a clear picture in their minds of the environment.

To this day, I am proud of the four young people I hauled in a van to Ohio because of what they did there. Although they are all gone from the county 4-H program now, their success stays in my mind and serves as a motivator for me to aim for that level of ‘youth professionalism’ every time.

A special suggestion here is that, if inexperienced youth presenters are recruited, it is important to identify appropriate roles they can play. Roles need to be challenging but not so difficult they fail at them. It is also important they clearly understand what is expected of them, and adequate time is spent practicing and talking about their role.

4. Don’t forget aspects of diversity that should be included: When deciding who to recruit, keep in mind aspects of diversity important for you to include. That seems so routine to me, but it can be a touchy issue. The last perception you want out there is that the presenters are not representative of your program or that you have recruited a diverse group of young people just to be politically correct.

To help with this, remember diversity is a very BIG word. It means much more than just race. Consider age, presentation skill level, gender, rural and urban, ethnicity, types of 4-H involvement...even how multiple presenters will ‘look’ together. That may sound strange, but it IS a ‘public’ presentation where the audience can become easily distracted. The look and the composition of the presentation group can make or break a presentation!

“My example here is not a success story but the other kind.”

S. Wagoner

My example here is not a success story but the other kind. I recruited three 4-H members to serve on a planning committee for a countywide youth leadership conference. I knew the committee would be extremely ethnically diverse,

mostly female, mostly early high school age, and mostly from the city of Madison. (Historically, that is what non-4-H planning committees look like here locally.) I consequently recruited two genders, three races, three grades, three geographic locations (urban, suburban and rural), and three presentation experience levels (inexperienced, moderately experienced and advanced). Whew...how much more diversity is there!

After one planning meeting, though, the trio stopped attending additional meetings. When I finally rounded up enough courage to investigate what happened, I learned from one of the females that they did not 'like' the male 4-H member. They also felt the meetings were extremely poorly facilitated and a waste of their time.

I had not properly prepared the three 4-H members for their planning committee experience. A meeting with them rather than individual telephone conversations to provide orientation probably would have accomplished multiple things—(1) I could have seen firsthand the conflict between the two genders and could have reemphasized why each of them were recruited for the committee; (2) we could have jointly ironed out their role on the committee both in representing Dane County 4-H and in helping the meetings run more smoothly; and (3) we could have outlined a process for them to communicate to me how the experience was going for each of them.

4-H was co-sponsoring the conference so our reputation was now at stake. From there, then, I had to rebuild our representation. I visited with the agency representative who was serving as convener of the group to pass along the constructive feedback on how the meetings were being facilitated. I also recruited three new 4-H members to serve on the committee—all Caucasian but diverse in many other ways. Lastly, I had a frank discussion with the young people about the nature of their responsibility and did a better job 'preparing' them for the experience. It worked out well, but it took a second attempt to find the right mix of young people to serve on the committee and to figure out more succinctly my role in supporting them through the work.

5. Create ownership of the presentation role: This last point happens when the other four points have been met. I need to have ownership of involving young people in a public presentation. I need to feel it is the right thing to do, I need to anticipate bumps in the road, and I need to be organized on their behalf.

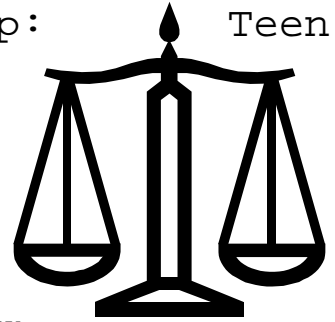
Young people develop a sense of ownership of a public presentation role when they realize why their involvement as young people is vital. They also need to be involved in the development of the presentation. It is important to communicate why they were specifically recruited for the role and to share what special and unique talents they bring to the effort.

Lastly, diversity needs to shine. People with differences can't be forced to get along, but they can learn to value their differences. Providing high quality orientation, group and individual opportunities to share concerns, plenty of practice in a safe environment, and support throughout the presentation will help foster that appreciation for differences!

Youth in Public Leadership: Court

Nancy Anne Livingston, Vilas County

One of the most effective programs for empowering youth in public leadership is to involve them in Teen Court. The Teen Court initiative proves that our youth can have a vital part in the youth adult partnership that works towards reducing juvenile crime and or delinquency.



“The Teen Court initiative proves that our youth can have a vital part in the youth adult partnership that works towards reducing juvenile crime and or delinquency”

N. Livingston.

There are over 700 Teen Courts established throughout the United States with more than 100 in the development stage as reported to the National Youth Court Conference attendees this past October 2000 in Albuquerque, NM. The state of Wisconsin has been involved in the Teen Court initiative for four years now, with approximately 25 Teen Courts established and ten in the development stage. The Vilas County Teen Court joined the movement in 1998 by hiring a University Wisconsin Extension Youth Development Agent full time, with Teen court listed in this Agent’s specific job description. In June of 1999 the first Teen Court sessions were held in Eagle River. The youth serving on Teen Court here in Vilas County take their role seriously and have taken upon themselves the burden of responsibility that this public service holds.

There is no comparison to the energy level Teen Court teen workers bring to the courtroom. The positive peer pressure impacts not only the respondent and his or her parent(s), but also the victim(s), and the entire community. The sanctions that are used in Vilas County from which the panel can select from are as follows: Community Service, letters of apology, restitution, written reports, presentations to a group of students who are younger than the respondent, educational classes for underage drinking, tobacco, and shoplifting, a pre-employability class, anger management book reading and reporting, Prison Youth Awareness Program trips, etc. This allows the respondent to find an educational component to their consequences instead of the “fine norm” that is frequently the sentence for such fractions of the law by youth.

Teen Court Panel members are trained in not just the process of Teen Court but also in listening and communication skills, and how to deliberate amongst themselves when it is time to decide on the proper sanctions for the respondent. In the process of questioning the youth and or the parent(s) the panel members are better informed so they have the ability to create sanctions that meet the specific needs of the youth and his or her family. This allows for the respondent to work towards correcting their wrong behavior and moving forward towards positive actions in the future.

The educational benefits are far reaching for all youth involved in the Teen Court process. The youth who are trained to take leadership roles in Teen Court hear cases and then provide the appropriate consequences for the juvenile offenders have gained an understanding of what happens when one wrong

choice is made and how they too need to be accountable. They are placed in a leadership role that is one of lasting influence and visible by the entire community. The Judge who empowers these young people to take such a role can only do so if he or she places full confidence in the ability of youth to take on such a task and be successful for the betterment of the community. The respondents who choose the Teen Court option leave the courtroom hearing that the panel believes in what he or she can do if allowed to correct a wrong choice and start on a path of proper law abiding choices. The Community Service sanction forces the respondent to get out into the community and provide a service for them. Working with supervisors who are in place to reinforce the positive assets that are needed to “build” up that juvenile’s positive bank account. Allowing the child to see that they need to invest in their community instead of destroying it through wrong choices.

Is Teen Court successful? If you look at the recidivism rate in the State you find that the average is only 13% with Vilas County reporting 8%. Why does this work? I believe it is because of the beauty of being able to create it to fit the needs of your community and to best service the youth involved. As an example, some do not take underage drinking as an offense where others do for whatever reason an offense is accepted or not is up to the advisory board for each court system. The respondent has pleaded guilty or no contest to their offense and comes before a panel of their peers for sentencing. That dynamic is indescribable. You have to experience it yourself. An example of that fact is when you take a group of youth and have them hold a mock teen court session. Observers walk away amazed at what the students are able to accomplish. This has just happened with five of our panel members performing a mock trial in another county. After the session the judge had changed his mind to starting a Teen Court in his jurisdiction. You will find that there aren’t two Teen Courts that are exactly alike!

Teen Court is not some “mock court”, it is truly justice for youth by youth. These students are making decisions that are supported and enforced through state sanctions. What they decide is upheld in a court of law! Everyone who is involved in the Teen Court movement would have to agree that this is a powerful way to involve youth in public leadership.

Charting Community Connections

Mary Ellen Bell, State Staff

Connie Abert, Waupaca County

In most Wisconsin communities, no one expects to see young people participating in city council meetings, serving on city committees, or serving on the board of the United Way.

Why not?

That question got people in Waupaca thinking about integrating young people into community life. Now, with the assistance of the Innovation Center of the National 4-H Council, the Ford Foundation and the Healthy Community/Healthy Youth Coalition, adults and youth in this 6,000-person central Wisconsin city are finding ways to give youth meaningful roles in the community. Their project, called Charting Community Connections, brings youth and adults together to create community change.

"Our goal was to become a place where young people could voice their views and opinions."

C. Abert

In this project youth and adults meet on an equal footing, and each subcommittee has an adult and a young person serving as co-chairs. There are no token members.

"Our goal was to become a place where young people could voice their views and opinions," explained Connie Abert, Waupaca County 4-H youth development agent. "To do that, we needed to tap into the assets for youth that exist already in the community and encourage youth to be involved in creating positive change here."

Carolyn Edlebeck is a seventh grade student who has been involved in the project since the beginning. Poised and confident, she has made public presentations about the project at conferences in Orlando, Fl., and Denver, Colo., as well as Madison.

"When things affect youth, youth should have some input," she said. "We're trying to have equal voices for youth and adults with both youth and adults in all leadership positions. We are setting an example of youth and adults working together."

A lot has changed since this effort started last year.

... The mayor appointed youth to a city committee assessing existing community recreational facilities such as the parks and youth recreation center.

... People organized a community resource fair and timed it so middle and high school students could come in the afternoon to check out community service opportunities. Parents came after work to enroll children in youth organizations.

... Young people are working with their computer teacher to develop a community resources website.

... They've started a family soccer program. No parents on the sidelines; everyone plays.

... The Kiwanis Club is partnering with the middle school jazz band for a community dance and fundraiser for youth scholarships. The school jazz band will open for the professional big band hired to provide the dance music.

... People are developing a school mentoring program and investigating needs for an after-school program

"Involving youth means changing the way a group does business."

C. Abert

Involving youth means changing the way a group does business, Abert added. Adults may be willing to sit around a table for a two- or three-hour meeting. Most young people are not. To keep youth engaged, the group used a variety of activities, encouraging people to get out of their chairs and move around.

For example, in one exercise, a participant lies down on a long sheet of butcher paper and others trace his or her outline. Then all the participants, armed with markers, note community resources or assets for youth. If it's something the adult community does for youth - organizing a basketball camp or offering a story hour at the library, the note goes outside the figure. If it's something the adult community does with youth, organizing events at the youth center, or service opportunities where youth are involved in planning and carrying out the program, the note goes inside the figure.

"This was an interesting exercise that helped everyone understand where youth are already playing an active role and where they could, if adults let them have more opportunities for leadership," Abert said. "The adults enjoyed it as much as the young people did," she added.

The coalition has completed a survey to learn what youth in the community want and need. They discovered the biggest need is for more places where young people can get together informally.

Currently a highway truck stop is the only place that stays open all night. It has become the place where students gather at night to have a cappuccino and study together. The high school math teacher stops by twice a week to tutor anyone who needs a little extra help. The other places where kids gather are church parking lots - the only places in town that allow skateboarding. The community coalition now is backing creation of a city skateboard park.

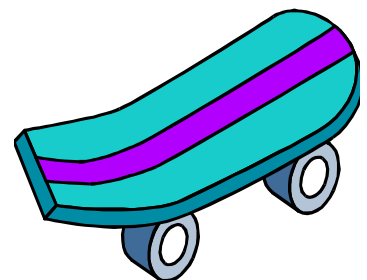


"We've come a long way," Abert said, "There are still a lot of things we would like to do. This was a community that did not consider encouraging youth to be involved, but now we do."

Building Citizenship in an Unsuspecting Way

Jim Winkler, Green County

In August, 1999 this faculty member was contacted by an angry parent whose son had just received a fine for skateboarding. She wanted a park for her child and others so they would not be ticketed anymore. (Of course, not having a thing to do, I agreed to help). Actually, I had



been working with a local police chief and our county sheriff on a similar issue that involved local youth who were "hanging out" on our local town square, and who skateboarded. (It is interesting to note that these youth think that just because they want a facility, it should just happen. As one youth said: "Let's just build one, now.")

I knew that getting a skateboard facility created would involve making presentations to the park board, city council and other governmental agencies. I also saw this as an excellent opportunity to help youth learn about citizenship. With the blessing of our Ag & Extension Education Committee, I created a plan, which is outlined below.

“Committee met several times to gather information and develop some visuals for making presentations. They also created a name for themselves: Monroe Area Skateboard Enthusiasts.”
J. Winkler

1. Did a web search to learn about skateboarding- terminology, facility plans, etc.
2. Met with the parent and several youth to discuss ideas
3. Put an article in the newspapers announcing an informational meeting - 65 people attended.
4. Formed a committee of interested youth and adults from the meeting to act as a planning group.
5. Helped the youth successfully write a grant for \$4362.00 toward the construction of a facility.
6. Unsuccessfully pursued a facility site on the existing county property.
7. Committee made a presentation to the city park board asking for a site for the development of a facility. Although the specific site was denied, the park board asked for further information and agreed to be open to other alternatives.
8. Committee met several times to gather information and develop some visuals for making presentations. They also created a name for themselves: Monroe Area Skateboard Enthusiasts (MASE).
9. The city park board accepted a presentation from MASE to formulate plans for a park. The recommendation was sent to city council.
10. MASE youth and 6 adults attended the city council meeting. MASE youth presented the proposal to city council and gave them a check for \$4400 toward the development of the facility. City Council approved and deferred the proposal to the city Finance Committee.
11. MASE attended the Finance Committee meeting. The proposal was deferred back to the Park Committee for further study and recommendations.
12. MASE members attended the Park Committee and gave input into the proposal. The proposal was again sent back to Finance Committee.
13. MASE members attended the Finance Committee, at which the OK was given to get bids from an architect and bring costs back. A debate broke out with FC on how much the city should budget and how much the kids should raise.
14. Contacted local service organizations and made arrangements for MASE to make presentations.
15. MASE members attended a Kiwanis Club board meeting and presented an appeal for funds.
16. MASE members attended a Optimist member breakfast meeting and presented an appeal for funds, (Note that 3 youth presented at 6:30 a.m. on a morning when there was no school.)

17. In November, 2000, MASE members will present to the Optimist board for a final appeal.

Above, I outlined a rather involved and lengthy process for a group of individuals who have been deemed in our society as "high risk" youth. These youth have a desire to have a place to call their own, where that can board without fear of fine. The process is far from over. The youth will make more presentations to groups asking for donations. They probably will make presentations to park, finance and maybe city council again. I would like to make comments on this unfinished process at this time.

1. When I first met with this gang in 1999, I said that if they wanted a facility, they were going to have to do some work to see it happen. I emphasized I could help them with the process, but they would need to be willing to have some meetings and make some presentations.
2. I suspected that youth would get frustrated and some would drop out (which they did).
3. I suspected that I would need to help them when they got down, re-motivate them as necessary.
4. I also suspected that none of these youth had ever engaged in any sort of civic activity.
5. I have seen a lot of growth in these individuals. I have seen them become more respectful around adults. I have seen a great increase in their presentation skills.
6. I have had several admit that they never thought this process was so involved and that it would take so long.
7. I even had a couple of them admit that they learned about how to talk to adults in authority in a non-threatening manner.

Yes, these young people and parents are engaged in citizenship. They are learning things that they may not realize for years to come. In the meantime, we will continue to pursue this process of positive youth development. In the end, hopefully, there will be a skateboard park for them and others to enjoy.



Personal and Professional Peaks
54th Annual Conference of the
National Association of Extension 4-H Agents
Denver, Colorado
November 5-9, 2000

Memoirs of a First-Timer
Annette Bjorklund, Washburn County

Saturday, November 4

What a beautiful, sunny day to arrive in Denver! Having never been to Colorado before I was quite anxious to get my first glimpse of the mountains that can be seen to the west of Denver International Airport. Unfortunately, the smog above Denver gave a distorted view of the massiveness of the mountains.

Having the day free provided an opportunity to walk Denver's downtown mall area and do a bit of shopping with an afternoon snack from Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory. (I even found almond bark-dipped dog treats for my three dogs at home!)

In the evening several of us met and had dinner at a quaint pizza joint at the end of the mall. (Hey! I even got carded!) Dessert was from the Cheesecake Factory. Yum! Yum!

Sunday, November 5

Today I attended a Pre-Conference Forum on Camping and Environmental Education. This was my first opportunity to interact with 4-H staff from other states. In the afternoon, I attended the First-timer Orientation where we visited with members of each of the national committees. We also received disposable cameras so we could record our experiences.

In the evening, all conference attendees were bussed to the National Western Complex for the conference's Opening Event, the Flavor of the West. We enjoyed a western buffet, craft fair, and a wonderful horse show, featuring "Sacred Indian," a 15-year-old paint horse.

Monday, November 6

The first full day of the conference began with the NAE4-HA business meeting. Attending the business meeting really gave me a better understanding of how the national association functions as well as seeing in person the people I've read about in *News and Views*. We also heard speeches from the candidates for association offices that we would be voting for at the regional breakfast later in the week. The keynote speaker, Mark Sanborn, provided an entertaining way to view our leadership experience. He left us with several ideas to think about including "boxing up our lives carefully."

There were so many great seminars to choose from that I was still trying to narrow down the one I would attend in the afternoon. So many of them related to the programming in my county that it was hard to choose just one. Each seminar related to one of the 4-H PRK domains: Youth and Adult Development; Learning Strategies; Organizational Systems; Partnerships; and Volunteerism. Personal Development was also included. After my afternoon session, I attended the NAE4-HA Member Recognition Committee Meeting. This is a committee that really works hard to provide many opportunities for recognition of the efforts of the association's members. As the Chair-elect of our state's Awards & Recognition Committee, I felt this was the best committee for me to be part of.

"Each seminar related to one of the 4-H PRK domains: Youth and Adult Development; Learning Strategies; Organizational Systems; Partnerships; and Volunteerism."

A. Bjorklund

It had been a long day but we still had State's Night Out. Dinner at the Trinity Grille was outstanding and we had an opportunity to honor our state's award recipients. We ended our time together with a reception to thank Tamie Koop for the great job she did as North Central Regional Director. To top the day off, the Packers beat the Vikings in overtime on Monday Night Football!

Tuesday, November 7

Another day quite similar to the first: NAE4-HA Business Meeting, engaging seminars, committee meetings, and poster sessions. Our keynote speaker today was Opalanga, a storyteller, who got us all involved in her presentation. She encouraged us to tell our own stories. The evening's highlight was the National Awards Banquet. We had a fantastic meal and shared in the accomplishments of many of our colleagues from Wisconsin and across the nation.

Wednesday, November 8

We awoke to find that we had no winner from yesterday's presidential election. Our early start brought us to the Regional Breakfast. This was our opportunity to vote for regional director, vice president and treasurer. Highlights of the breakfast were the silent auction and the dollar auction. Proceeds will help fund the North Dakota conference next year. Karen Sipple made a Wisconsin basket that was actually auctioned twice (thanks to Frank Ginther for donating it back). The day continued with more educational seminars, poster sessions, and committee meetings. The afternoon's keynote speaker was Richard Santana who challenged us to look beyond the outer appearance of the youth we work with, not to make assumptions about them and get to know them on the inside. We never know what affect we will have on someone.

Thursday, November 9

This was the last day of the conference. The morning included the final business meeting and a seminar. After lunch on our own, we found our way to Union Station where we boarded the ski train for a two-hour trip to Winter Park and the closing event. As bad luck would have it, the train track was being repaired and we were on the train for 2 ½ hours before it finally left the station. All that time really gave one a feeling of being closer to all who were on the train! A quick Mexican buffet, some shopping, and a closing speaker completed the evening before we headed back to Denver.

Many conference attendees checked out tonight for late night or early morning flights back to their home states. I returned to Washburn County feeling much more informed about NAE4-HA. The seminars I attended relate very well to the programming I am doing here and I look forward to implementing many of the new ideas I gleaned from participating in the conference. Finally, I value the experience I had to be part of the Wisconsin delegation and the collegial support and friendships enhanced as a result.

Thank you to WAE4-HYDP for your support by awarding me a first-timer scholarship. I'm already looking forward to the 2001 Conference in Bismarck.

If you haven't been to a national conference yet, don't wait any longer. Apply for the first-timer scholarship and join the fun! Mark your calendars for October 21–26. I hope you all will join me in Bismarck!

Roc-ky Mouuuntain Hiigh, Col-o-ra-do

Katie L. Wagner, Adams County



I'm not a country music fan, and this certainly sounds silly, but I couldn't stop John Denver's song...you know the one... "Roc-ky Mouuuntain Hiiigh, Col-o-ra-do" from cycling through my mind as I attended this year's NAE4-HA conference in Denver, Colorado.

With the Rocky Mountains as a scenic backdrop for the Personal and Professional Peaks Conference, I worked my way through the events of each day mentally humming John Denver's ode to an amazing view.

My impressions of the conference from a first-timers perspective ranged from a feeling of being overwhelmed by the choices and opportunities to the admiration during ceremonies for recognized colleagues to gratefulness for the chance to represent Wisconsin on the National level.

National conference offers up an opportunity to meet colleagues from across the country, to experience program seminars as an introduction to new programming possibilities, and to enjoy the atmosphere of a new city with events coordinated by the host state(s).

As a first-timer scholarship winner to National Conference, I had the responsibility to take part in a national committee. My choice for participation – the Public Relations and Information committee with its taskforce, Marketing the Profession. I had the opportunity to listen to the goals of marketing our profession and some of the steps which have been made in years past. As a member of this committee I offered my recommendations to the tasks at hand and have taken on roles toward completion of the goals.

You may be wondering why I decided to choose this particular task force. Well, for one, there weren't that many people that stepped up to help out. Secondly, I think that it is great that we work so hard to promote the 4-H program to those who we hope to serve, but someone – some group – needs to promote our career to potential, future agents. Why not me? I believe that this career is very worthy of my time and efforts towards promotion...and we all know how low the applicant pool has been so why not be a part of a pro-active effort?

So what's to be done about Marketing the Profession? Well, last year the task force created a flier that they sent to land grant university personnel departments. This year, we will expand that mailing (or emailing) to Career Planning and Placement programs at colleges and universities throughout each state (that is our goal) and hope to include student advisors in mailings in the

future. In addition, we will be posting the information to the Association website and we are researching the possibility of having direct links from various other site locations – hopefully even a site like Monster.Com or HotJobs.com.

The task force discussed many other opportunities to promote the profession, but one can only do so much in a year.

I could go on for some time discussing all that happened during conference, but I will end by saying thank you to the Association for the privilege of attending conference on the national level. I learned a great deal in sessions, from keynote speakers, and from my colleagues in other states in general. I encourage each of you to consider participation in future National Conferences. I am fairly certain you will see me there.

***“First-Timers” at
NAE4-HA
Conference:***

***Ellen Shiflet, Cathy
Duesterhoeft, Connie
DeCorte, Annette
Bjorklund, Katie
Wagner, Deb Ivey,
Jennifer Tabke.***





200-2001 WAE4-HA Board of Directors

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