1951

Home Demonstration Work in Arkansas

Mrs. J. Howard Crawford

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.uark.edu/jaas

Part of the Agricultural Economics Commons, and the Agricultural Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Crawford, Mrs. J. Howard (1951) "Home Demonstration Work in Arkansas," Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science: Vol. 4 , Article 27.
Available at: http://scholarworks.uark.edu/jaas/vol4/iss1/27

This article is available for use under the Creative Commons license: Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-ND 4.0). Users are able to read, download, copy, print, distribute, search, link to the full texts of these articles, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without asking prior permission from the publisher or the author.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact scholar@uark.edu, ccmiddle@uark.edu.
HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK IN ARKANSAS

MRS. J. HOWARD CRAWFORD, President
Arkansas Council of Home Demonstration Clubs, Arkadelphia

A commission on Rural Life, appointed by Theodore Roosevelt in August, 1908, observed in its report that "the underlying problem is to develop and maintain on our farms, a civilization in full harmony with the best American ideals. To build up and retain this civilization means first of all that the business of agriculture must be made to yield a reasonable return to those who follow it intelligently; and life on the farm must be made permanently satisfying to intelligent, progressive people!"

There is an ever increasing desire to improve rural living. To do this we must first educate and improve rural people. How can we expect intelligent, ambitious, young men and women to remain on farms and make farming their life's work if farmers and farm homes cannot be held up as an ideal to be attained? Why can we not vision a rural home and a rural life as the most attractive home and the most attractive life of all ages? A home where intelligence, hospitality, culture and happiness abound?

It was to achieve these ends that Home Demonstration Clubs came into being. The Home Demonstration Club Woman's Creed reads thus: "I believe in the open country, and the rural life in the country. I believe that through working together in a group we can enlarge the opportunities and enrich the life of rural people. I believe that the greatest force that molds character comes from the home and I pledge myself to create a home which is morally wholesome, spiritually satisfying, and physically healthful and convenient. I believe in my work as a home maker, and accept the responsibilities it offers to be helpful to others and to create a more contented family and community life so that in the end farm life will be most satisfying."

This creed is used not only in Arkansas but throughout the Nation. Most clubs repeat it at the opening or closing of each meeting.

Home Demonstration work in Arkansas had its beginning over 36 years ago. We boast of the first Home Demonstration Club in the nation, organized at Mabelvale, in Pulaski County, March 1914. The influence of these early demonstrations has been widespread. Today there are 1,641 Home Demonstration Clubs in Arkansas, with a membership of about 40,000. Some 400 farm women, leaders in their communities, attended the annual four day meeting of the Arkansas Council of Home Demonstration Clubs on the University of Arkansas campus last August. Around 55 club members attended the National Council in Colorado Springs in October.

The teaching staff for this adult education program is composed of a State Home Demonstration Agent, four district agents, nine specialists, and of course the county home demonstration agents. There are also many well trained local leaders who assist the county agents. Home Demonstration Clubs were organized to enable rural women to keep up with science
in agriculture and psychological trends in family living and to further extend adult education in agriculture, home economics and family living, through the program of the cooperative extension service of the University of Arkansas and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Mr. M. L. Wilson of the U. S. Department of Agriculture says: "Although some differences occur in methods for carrying on home demonstration work, club programs generally deal largely with fundamental problems having to do with foods and nutrition, child care and family life, health, home management, and financial security, housing and household equipment, clothing and the management of the wardrobe, and the production, conservation and utilization of all home grown foods."

But the program is a changing one; the scope of home demonstration work has expanded, at the request of rural women to include wider fields of training, such as citizenship—local, national, and international.

The plan of work for 1950 adopted at the State Council meeting last year closed with this paragraph. "In order to live up to our responsibilities as citizens of the world, we need to have for our own discussion and thinking unbiased information on world affairs. We realize that we cannot live to ourselves. We want to study the problems of other people. We want to play a part in helping to develop an international mindedness. We need to have made available to us the best possible printed information, concise, honest, and interesting to use in our club and community discussions on International Relations."

Home Demonstration Clubs are organized on a community or neighborhood basis. There are no dues and no membership regulations. Mothers with small children attend and take the children with them. Club meetings are always open to visitors.

Since many rural churches, as well as rural schools, are moving to town the Home Demonstration Club is the only organized group in many rural neighborhoods of Arkansas. It is not only an adult education program, but serves also as the only social activity for the women of many communities.

C. B. Hutchison, Vice President of the University of California and Dean of its college of Agriculture, said in an address at the annual meeting of the American Home Economics Association: I quote: "Through their extension services, the land grant colleges and universities have the most effective means yet devised for bringing the results of research to the people and teaching them to make use of that knowledge, both as individuals and as groups, in meeting the problems of the day. It would be difficult to over estimate the value which has accrued to American rural life from the home demonstration program."

As the clubs in Arkansas increased in numbers County Councils were set up. Then so as to further strengthen the program and to coordinate it more fully with county and state program-planning procedure the State Council of Home Demonstration Clubs was organized in 1929. On August 8, 1929, at Fayetteville 125 farm women, representing 27 counties, met and
perfected a state Home Demonstration Council organization. Later the name was changed to "Arkansas Council of Home Demonstration Clubs."

The County Council is a part of the home demonstration organization of the state and works with the home demonstration agents in planning and promoting the programs.

There is one agricultural extension program in the state. It is for white and Negro people. The Negroes have their own community clubs and have a setup very similar to that of the whites. The theme of the Negro State Home Demonstration Council for 1950 is: "A community can be no better than its people."

Its goals are to promote:
1. Better rural and urban homes.
2. Supervised recreation.
3. Safety practices in the home and on the farm.

As rapidly as possible, Negro county extension personnel is being employed in counties having sufficient Negro farm population to warrant its employment.

But what are some of the results of all this organizing, planning and teaching which began in 1914? It is not possible to tabulate all the results. As in any long range educational program a yard stick for measuring progress is hard to find.

But there have been changes in rural living, not only in Arkansas, but throughout the South. Many things, of course, have been responsible for this better life on Arkansas farms. Certainly, nothing has been more important than the accomplishments of rural homemakers. What could be more helpful in attaining better farm living than good food and plenty of it? Arkansas' rural people are eating better today than ever before, not only in quantity, but from the standpoint of proper nutrition. Extension agents have assisted farm women, through an educational program, to improve selection, preparation, and serving of foods. In 1949 some 37,000 families followed the Extension food supply plan; and 175,000 farm families grew home gardens.

Here are a few statistics taken from the 1949 annual report of the Arkansas Extension Service.

We have 79 white and 26 Negro home demonstration agents. We have 14 assistant home demonstration agents. Home demonstration agents, white and Negro made 27,670 visits to 15,231 different farm homes. Membership in both white and Negro clubs totaled 53,000 in 2,182 clubs. Through these groups agents held 1,339 adult training meetings, with 21,897 attending. Method demonstration meetings numbered 15,461 with 225,267 adults attending, and there were 4,375 result demonstrations conducted at 1,278 meetings, attended by 18,279 women. Families influenced by some phase of the Home Demonstration Program number 75,042 farm and 21,723 others.

In 1949, 16,791 families were assisted in improving kitchens, 16,175 in repairing or refinishing furniture; 41,586 in improving diet; 40,318 with
food preparation; 61,238 with food preservation; 44,320 with health prevention measures, 25,880 with safety measures in the home; 5,727 in developing home industries as supplemental income; 39,431 with clothing construction; 27,735 with clothing and textile selection; 27,317 with care and remodeling of clothing; 13,161 with child development and guidance; and 20,843 with improving home recreation."

Understand I've left out a lot of the statistics, but I think this should be enough to convince us that something is being done.

Here are a few more—from the same source—that I would like to add. Almost 10,000 farm families are living in better homes today than a year ago. Many were constructed with Extension Service plans. Water systems were installed for the first time in 2,188 farm homes, and 1,443 sewage systems were added. Twenty-nine thousand families added labor saving equipment. In addition to the home canning, which for many years has helped solve the food problem in Arkansas, has come the quick-freezing method of food preservation. Rural families preserved approximately 2,000,000 pounds of food in this manner last year.

But there are so many kinds of progress that cannot be reduced to figures and counted.

Arkansas Home Demonstration Clubs have been actively engaged in a health program since 1945. At this time a State Health Chairman was appointed. An active campaign was launched to make rural women health conscious. Programs on foods and nutrition as related to health, improved sanitation and a more general understanding of disease problems, were presented all over the state. Community surveys were made, results were tabulated, panel discussions were held at county and state meetings. A direct result of this aroused interest in health problems on the part of rural women was the employment, by the Extension Service, of a health education specialist. Now, we have a health chairman in each of the 79 county councils, and almost all the community clubs have health committees.

Today the Arkansas Council of Home Demonstration Clubs is having constructed a 4H Cooperative House adjacent to the campus of the University of Arkansas. This house will cost approximately $150,000. It will house forty girls. These girls will live in this house at a cost which will be much less than could be had in any of the dormitories. We feel that this will enable girls who otherwise could not do so, to attend the University. The house represents the joint effort of the Extension personnel and the Home Demonstration Club members of the entire state.

Thus the home demonstration program moves on, and rural women are gaining a broader concept of their responsibilities as citizens. We are more concerned about community health problems, schools, libraries, and other phases of community welfare. We realize our responsibility in the formation of a proper foreign policy. We strive to become more willing to accept the challenge of the world in which we live.
No matter by what name we call it, there must always be a channel through which the results of research in agriculture, home economics, and social science can reach the rural home maker. Today this channel is the Home Demonstration Club.