

# idea corner

## “Women’s Lib” and Extension

Can Extension play a role in the “women’s liberation movement” without becoming entangled in bitter disputes and hot political issues? Involvement by agents in Walworth County, Wisconsin, indicates Extension can provide a valuable educational service to local people.

In December, 1975, the Wisconsin Governor’s Commission on the Status of Women recommended the establishment of local commissions to better serve specific community needs. A local women’s group invited county women’s organizations to meet and review the recommendation together, then to develop a plan of action. Extension helped locate women’s professional, civic, service, and social organizations.

Fifteen women from various organizations and I attended the meeting and determined that a countywide commission, appointed by the county governing body, could best serve the needs of a rural county. A resolution was drafted and presented at the following county board meeting. It was referred to committee for further study.

During this study period, Extension helped the women’s committee plan and implement a program on educating women and their various organizations, county officials, and the public on the background, goals, and structure of the proposed commission. Special effort was made to eliminate the threatening aspect of such a commission to county officials who were predominately male. Emphasis was placed on the positive contributions to the entire community.

In March, 1976, the county board—with only one negative vote—adopted the resolution to form a women’s commission, making Walworth County the first county in Wisconsin to establish a countywide women’s advisory group like this.

The commission has been well-accepted and has developed communication links with the local university; Civil Liberties Union; women’s professional, civic, and service organizations; government agencies; and the press. It’s now conducting a survey of the status of women in the county and has established a roster of qualified women to be recommended for committee or agency vacancies.

Could this have been done without Extension? Maybe so. But, Extension, with a variety of agents and clientele, has the expertise to see both sides of an issue. It also has the resources to reach people and provide them with unbiased information that’s essential in any emotion-laden issue.

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