

idea corner

Home Economics Uses Private Funding

Extension program committees expressed the need to expand home economics educational programming to involve more hard-to-reach individuals and families, particularly young adults and senior citizens. Cuyahoga County commissioners indicated that money needed to invest in Extension programs before the county would increase its participation. Since Cleveland is the nation's center for private foundation involvement, we looked in that direction.

Thus, a proposal called "Family Education for Coping with Our Changing World" emerged. It detailed the situation of the county's hard-to-reach groups. Extension's experience with inner-city nutrition, education, media work, leader training, and cooperation with community agencies was cited.

The proposal was priced at \$33,153 for 1 year—that provided for a full-time Extension agent, 2 part-time program assistants, offices, travel, and teaching aids. It was submitted to the Cleveland Foundation in July, 1975, approved for 1976, and refunded for 1977.

Specific plans for program delivery were spelled out: training agency personnel; forming parenting groups via the libraries; lunch-n-learn sessions with an employee group; instructing the lowest-income home-

makers in homemaking skills; and providing training for community organizations and group leaders on "Clothing Reclamation," "Cooking for One or Two," "Money Management," and "Controlling Health Care Costs."

The major educational emphasis was to be on the family, and parenting was a priority subject. Kent Hamdorf, Extension family life specialist, assembled a series of nine bulletins dealing with that topic. They're called "Practical Education for Parenting (PEP)" and include background on democracy and parents, encouragement, communication, managing one's emotions, discipline, and understanding behavior. The complete packet costs \$2.25 and will be offered via small parent discussion groups.



Through regular Extension home economics newsletters, volunteers were recruited to receive intensive training in the use of the PEP materials. The volunteers would lead study/discussion groups in local communities.

To add status to the volunteer position, applicants submitted resumes of education and experience and indicated the time they had available and the geographic areas they would serve. The home economics agent and project director interviewed the applicants before they were accepted for training. Of the 35 applicants, 17

were accepted. Almost all were college graduates with some teaching background.

The volunteers received 25 hours of training—16 hours of class study, including group dynamics, and 9 hours of practice in group situations. The Extension office acted as a clearing house for group assignments. Once the volunteers were trained, a publicity campaign was launched. Excellent newspaper coverage, radio and television public service announcements, and a month-long series of agent radio interviews on various aspects of PEP brought good response. The volunteers supplemented publicity by contacting organizations in their own communities—libraries, P.T.A.'s, churches, preschool organizations. An exhibit at a radio station "Baby-Fair" produced numerous participants.

Ongoing support was essential to the momentum of the project. Volunteers met every two months to share and discuss experiences they encountered with their groups. In 19 months, 217 families completed the 6-week sequence of meetings. A seventh follow-up session helped reinforce the new skills and has encouraged continued use of the PEP concepts, plus involvement in some other Extension programs.

The volunteers averaged 120 hours of service a person, including training. And, they have become some of Extension's best spokespeople. A brunch was held in their honor to recognize their efforts.

Certificates of appreciation were presented, along with letters of introduction to future employers, which enumerated the nature of the training and the substance of the volunteer service. This was part of an effort to

help women better document their background and experience to use when they look for a job or reenter a career field.

On completion of the two-year project, a detailed report was sent to the foundation. Foundation officers responded with a heartwarming note: "It is always a pleasure to read about projects that combine imagination and practical skills in helping people to manage and improve daily living. We just hope the Cooperative Extension Service continues to reach out to such a broad cross section of the Greater Cleveland community and serve as a model for other organizations. The project can count on being used as an example of a successful Foundation grant."

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