

idea corner

Men In 4-H Clothing Programs

Recently, the Clothing Selection Program in Iowa has been successful in attracting both young men and women because of its emphasis on consumer buying skills and personal development.

The program is sponsored jointly by the Iowa State Extension Service, the Iowa State Fair Board, and Youngkers Department Store. Iowa State Extension specialists provide leadership, the fair board provides financial support and fairground facilities, and Youngkers provides space for educational and judging activities, personnel to help with the program, and luncheons for 4-H members.

First, members select and buy an outfit for a particular job, sports, temperature control, everyday, or dress-up. They justify their choices on written forms. Participants don't have to enroll in the traditional clothing project or sew, but must be members of some kind of 4-H program—whether a traditional club, CRD, EFNEP, special interest, or urban group.

During the state fair, members visit with a judge about their selection from home and model the outfit both at the state fairgrounds and at a Youngkers Tea Room Fashion Show. They also select an outfit from Youngkers' merchandise that they feel is appropriate for an interview for a job of their

choice. Youngkers allows them to borrow this outfit, wear it while being "interviewed" by a judge, and model it at a second tea room show.

Members attend educational presentations on fashion coordination and career alternatives while at the store. They also meet fashion and management professionals who can answer questions about merchandising. At the end of the Clothing Selection Program at state fair, members receive a participation ribbon and at least 10% are given special recognition.



A 4-H member models a career outfit he selected.

In 1980, 128 members participated in the program, with 30 young men and 88 young women completing evaluation forms. Over 96% of these young people felt they'd gained knowledge and/or skills in selecting clothing in their home county and at Younkers. Responses showed no significant sex differences in how good various parts of the program were.

The majority felt enough time was allowed for each part of the program, but significant differences existed between young men and women in relation to the allocation of time. While 97% of the men felt they had enough time to shop for their interview outfit, only 70% of the women felt they did. Similarly, 94% of the men felt they had enough free time at the store, while only 66% of the women felt they did. On the other hand, 60% of the men felt they had enough free time at the state fairgrounds, while 80% of the women felt the time there was sufficient. The men were significantly less likely to understand how they were evaluated.

The 1980 evaluation indicates that the program satisfied the interests of both sexes, since evaluations on the whole were very positive and few statistically significant sex differences were found. Continued efforts are needed to make the numbers of males and females in the Clothing Selection Program more equal.

The 4-H and home economics Extension staff who guide the program feel that increased involvement of adult male leadership from both 4-H and store personnel will be helpful. Changes in the time schedule to allow more free time at the state fairgrounds and a more detailed explanation of the

evaluation process may encourage male participation.

Involvement of business and cooperation among agencies can help young people learn about opportunities that await them if they choose a career in merchandising or the fashion world.

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