

idea corner

Pickle Power

Pickle Power? What is Pickle Power? No, it's not a radical organization dedicated to the promotion of new methods for canning pickles. As over 1,800 Montana 4-H youth and adults are aware, Pickle Power is an activity designed to help them improve their decision-making skills. Pickle Power can be included as part of any existing youth demonstration days, county fairs, or camps.

Montana's version of Pickle Power made its debut at the 1977 4-H Congress. This annual event offers youth from throughout the state and Canada an opportunity to come to Montana State University, Bozeman, for a week of competitive events and educational workshops.

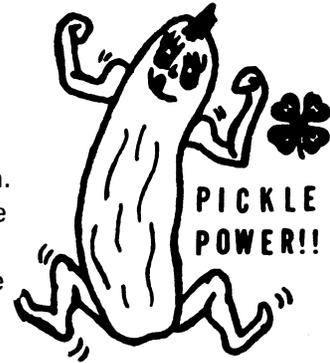
Youth indicating interest in the activity were given fact sheets entitled: "What Is Pickle Power?" "The Pickle Power Decision-Making Process," and "Pickle Power Situations." Youth were asked to follow the decision-making process to solve 1 situation during their 10-minute session with an evaluator. They could also create a problem of their own.

The Pickle Power decision-making process is described as:

1. Analyzing the problem.
2. Identifying and providing additional facts.
3. Discussing alternatives and possible consequences of solutions.
4. Reaching a conclusion.

Incentives to encourage participation in the activity included free pickles and 2-inch Pickle Power buttons. A local grocery store donated dill pickles and provided an old-fashioned pickle barrel that attracted much attention.

The Pickle Power buttons served a double purpose: to provide recognition for participants and to serve as advertisement for the activity. After youth and adults sporting Pickle Power buttons began appearing at the various workshops, the interest and participation in Pickle Power grew.



Evaluators

The 25 evaluators included county Extension agents, resident staff from the Counseling and Home Economics Departments on campus, plus state Extension specialists from Agriculture and Natural Resources and Human Resource Development.

Their role was to serve as facilitators, not to approve or disapprove the youth's proposed solution. Every effort was made to make the experience a positive one. Most sessions ranged from 10 to 15 minutes . . . although, several stretched to an hour. The longer sessions usually resulted from youth sharing their own problems.

As one evaluator said, "These were more difficult to handle because the kids wanted advice." Another mentioned, "Young people really need someone to listen to them. I feel we really provided a helpful experience."

Reactions

Most evaluators were enthusiastic about their sessions. "Better than a contest—no one lost—everyone learned a little—that's what 4-H and Extension are all about," shared one. Another stated, "I enjoyed doing the evaluating. Best part of all is I probably got to know 20 more 4-Hers throughout Montana. I like that."

One evaluator felt that youth selected a topic and immediately formed a decision without thinking the process through. He suggested that perhaps a longer group discussion would be beneficial. Several hour-long group sessions with about 25 participants were a part of Pickle Power '78. Also, informal "rap" sessions were held in dorm rooms. Chaperones overheard late-night discus-

sions that centered around situations in the Pickle Power activity.

Pickle Power has been adapted by several Extension agents for other 4-H events. One home economist developed situations about each 4-H project for County Congress. The Teen Forum, a 2-day junior leadership workshop for 10 counties, developed situations centered around leadership responsibilities. An outdoor first aid class prompted another home economist to develop survival situations. Seventy campers analyzed each problem, considered alternatives, and acted out the solution.

Pickle Power problems and situations can be developed for any program area and event. Encourage youth and adults to participate. They'll be intrigued by the name, and have a fun and worthwhile experience practicing their decision-making skills.

MARSHA A. GOETTING

*Consumer Education
Specialist, Montana
Cooperative Extension
Service, Bozeman, Montana*