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# Value of Rural Clubs in Bettering Farm Life

By VIDA SECOR

**B**OYS' and girls' club work is a type of extension work which teaches boys and girls the best farm and home methods; gives them an opportunity to be of some service by demonstrating these methods to others; helps fit them for community activities and leadership; gives them social and recreational advantages. It is conducted thru the United States Department of Agriculture, the State Extension Service and the Farm Bureaus.

Club work requires the members to take up some definite farm or home problem and thru the instruction given they learn the best methods known for getting desired results. Club work can be said to be an educational movement to teach principally the rural boys and girls things which will fit them to be better and more prosperous farm citizens. It has been said "to be the one of the two distinct contributions this country has made to educational work, the other being the public school system."

The "Four-H Club" is the most outstanding club for farm boys and girls. It began about 1907 in the South. The leaders of agricultural work felt they were not progressing to any extent in getting adults to improve their methods of farming and finally hit upon the plan of educating the boys and girls to use and demonstrate the better practices. This system was at once found to be very effective. Iowa took up the work in 1909 with the boys and that year had over 500 boys in a corn club. Many other club projects were started during the next few years. The pig clubs began in 1912 and the calf clubs in 1913. Bread and canning clubs were first organized in 1911 and 1912.

Probably one of the best ways of stating what is expected of a real club is to quote the requirements of what is known as the "Standard Club." These are as follows:

1. A standard club shall have a membership of at least five working on the same project.
2. There shall be a local club leader in charge during the club year.
3. There shall be a local club organization with the necessary officers and duties.
4. There shall be a definite club year program of work.
5. There shall be held at least six regular club meetings during the club year. The secretary shall be required to keep definite record of these meetings.
6. A local exhibit of achievement day shall be held annually.
7. There shall be a judging or demonstration team which must give at least one public demonstration or enter one contest in the community.
8. At least 60 percent of the mem-

bers must complete the work required in each year and make an annual report to their club leader.

"Club work, when judged by the principles of good teaching, is educationally sound." In a recent annual report of the State Extension Service, Director Bliss made this significant statement: "Boys' and girls' club work consists in taking homely everyday tasks, heretofore considered more or less of a drudgery, and making them educational and interesting. It teaches boys and girls how to do the everyday duties of life faithfully and well. It brings about partnerships between parents and children in the community. It is probably the most efficient, practical and economical system of teaching agriculture and home economics to rural children yet devised. Thousands of boys and girls thruout the state have been given excellent training and renewed determination thru club work."

To most leaders the need for club work is already apparent. No community is without its boys and girls and the problems are practically the same everywhere—that of interesting them in the farm and of providing the education and social advantages to which they are entitled instead of having nothing definite to do. Rural boys and girls have been just "falling into" the profession of farming and homemaking without any special training. Many of the best have left the farm for other work because they were never given an opportunity to see farm life in the right light and had no chance to fit themselves for it. The farm boys and girls have gone to school fewer months of the year, have been absent more days, have dropped out of school earlier, have been under teachers with less training and have gone to school with less equipment than have city children, as is shown by the school statistics. Rural schools have offered very little that would train the young people for their job on the farm. These inequalities and deficiencies can be partly overcome and are being overcome by the club work. Unless some of these handicaps can be made up, the rural young people will continue to be discontented. Scientific farming, as is now practiced, teaches better appreciation of farm life, and less children are leaving the farms. Clubs have made them "stick it out" and in the end the rural folk prosper by these club advantages.

The field of club work is almost untouched. There are nearly 4,500 boys and girls of club age, or between 10 and 19 years of age, in the average Iowa county. There are 2,260 of these, or approximately one-half, living on farms. At present an average of 174 is being enrolled in a county in club work each year. It can be seen that

only about 8 percent of the farm boys and girls are being reached at present. If club work is benefitting those engaged in it, the benefits should be spread to much larger numbers. (This is exact data.)

It has been found that club work is effectively reaching large numbers not in school. In various club groups where figures have been secured, about one-third are found to have quit school permanently, and over one-half of the rural boys and girls do not go further than the eighth grade. Club work makes a particular effort to reach those out of school and give them special training and interest in rural problems. Club work should be developed because:

1. Boys and girls are more easily influenced to take up new methods on the farm or in the home than are adults; more of them will use the suggestions given.

2. By reaching boys and girls the adults are reached at the same time and often accept the methods used. So many of the parents at first disapprove of club work because it takes the child out of the home. When "Dad" finds out that John is raising a better pig than he is, and "Mother" finds out that Betty can bake better bread than she can, the parents become interested in what the children are doing and they then want to try these new methods also.

3. More results can be obtained with boys' and girls' clubs as they work in groups and can be met in that way.

There are four steps in organizing a club. No attempt is made to organize clubs in a county until the work has been fully considered by the proper committees and the agents of the farm bureau. The steps are the Extension Service, the County Farm Bureau, the County Junior Committees and the Local Club Organization.

The policy of the Extension Service is to furnish organized help and subject matter, specialist assistance whenever called upon by the county office. Special attention is given to developing county programs and providing help to carry out plans made. The Extension Service is also responsible for arranging the following general activities pertaining to club work in Iowa.

1. Provide and conduct state and interstate fair club activities.

2. Hold junior short course at Iowa State College.

3. To secure finances for educational trips as prizes in club work.

4. Assemble data and other information showing results and effects of work and issue publicity material.

The County Farm Bureau conducts all work in the counties as they are the official organization recognized by law to do extension work. "Experi-

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## The Romance of Silverware

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would fit comfortably in the hollowed end of the utensil.

A knife, in early English days, was called a "whittle," from which we have our term "whittling". The Latin word was "cutter", from which we get "cutlery".

The finest steel has been used for centuries, at least since the 14th century, in England, where, at that time, Sheffield made the first forks and knives of steel.

Forks and spoons have been rather rare for many years, and in the wills of persons in the time of Shakespeare, it was considered proper to will spoons and forks with jewels and money.

Although it is true that fingers were made before forks, it has taken man many centuries to learn to use these man-made instruments instead of his fingers in transporting tempting morsels from his plate to his mouth.

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## Value of Rural Clubs

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ence has shown that the club work of the farm bureau is more efficiently conducted by the use of project or special committees. It is therefore suggested that the farm bureau board of directors be first fully acquainted with what club work aims to accomplish and then they should annually appoint a county junior committee. Two committees are found best where both boys' and girls' projects are to be conducted, one for each line of work.

The county committee is carefully selected to insure that it is composed of interested and active persons who will represent all interests in the county. The committees should consist of 5 or 6 members each. Additional members may be representatives of breeders' associations, women's organizations, or be any other interested individuals."

The County Junior Committees after carefully studying county conditions and the farm bureau program, decide upon a tentative club program, which is then presented to the farm bureau directors. The program includes kinds of clubs to be organized, plans and regulations for each, club budgets and prizes, cooperation from other organizations and methods for organizing the clubs in the community.

The community chairmen assist with the local club organization and arranges with county junior committees for a meeting of all prospective club members and their parents, at which the farm bureau agents and a member of the county club committee is present.

One can not be a club leader if he can not be in close contact with the members on account of other duties. The best leaders are farm people, both men and women, who have had practical experience in the project to be conducted. Cattlemen usually make good leaders for calf clubs, poultry growers, good poultry leaders; and homemakers good leaders for girls' clubs. Sometimes teachers can be used as leaders, providing they are in the community the entire year. Former club members are rapidly taking up leadership of clubs and should provide valuable leaders in the future.

No better type of service can be given in a community than to help a group of boys and girls by accepting leadership of a club. The club work is now limited because of not having sufficient capable leaders more than anything else.

The colors of the "Four-H Club" are white and green—the white for purity and the green emblematic of the great out-of-doors.

The emblem is the four leaf clover with an H in each leaf. These H's stand for Head, Hand, Heart and Health—"the training and proper care of which will be the best asset a boy or girl can possess. In club work the things learned train the head to think correctly, the work done is the best possible training for the hands, the

cooperation in clubs builds up the proper attitude of the heart, while health is being emphasized thru the health contests, recreation and better living."

The motto of the club work is: "Make the best better." The slogan is: "To win without bragging, to lose without squealing."

The chief activities are the individual work of the member such as securing and feeding an animal, or studying clothing problems; the demonstrations, exhibits and contests; the tours, picnics, rally and achievement days, and the club meetings.

Individual work of members is of a wide variety and depends upon the project undertaken and the goal set by the club.

Demonstrations are classed as follows:

1. The example demonstration.
2. The public demonstration.

The work of every club member is an example demonstration. Whatever the member is doing is always being watched by the parents in the home and others in the community. All club work is based upon the demonstration idea; therefore, boys and girls in club work are required to do things with their hands and these operations are then demonstrated.

All club members are encouraged to enter some product of their work in an exhibit. Livestock exhibits, clothing or food exhibits are very common types shown at fairs and other such events.

Much of the club work is placed on the contest basis. It is found that this plan stimulates interest and activity with young people as nothing else will do. Wholesome competition, properly directed, is strongly approved.

A tour by the members, parents and leaders to see the work of other members or to visit some place of interest in the community is very helpful. Often times the clubs go to the city to study and see the manufacturing centers and places of interest. This all gives them a broader view on life, so that they are not narrowed on just farm activities, and they appreciate farm life by not being one-sided.

All day picnics often take the place of regular meetings. A rally day helps to get the groups of a county together. This helps create more interest in the work. The achievement day is held when all the clubs of a county bring together the products of their work and give reports of the work accomplished.

Every club should have regular meetings. These meetings should be made the important events of the club projects. It is from the meetings that the proper spirit and interest is developed. Suggestive subjects, outline of talks, songs, plays and other helpful material can be secured thru the county office.

Club work has accomplished remarkable results in many ways. "It is not logical nor possible to put a money value on club work." The results secured by a member, in his or her single

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project in the production of something, does not tell what value the information gained may be to that boy or girl later. Neither does it tell what the example set by the member may do for others, even if it is only the parents who use the methods afterward.

One measure of success is the increasing interest taken in it the past few years. Every farm bureau in Iowa is now conducting club work. More than 1,000 unpaid leaders give time to the work each year. In the United States about 600,000 are enrolled each year. In Iowa about 18,000 are entered in clubs annually. Plans are under way to greatly increase this number.

"Direct results from club work could be cited almost without end. In some cases they would show, as was done in one county, that the yields of corn of club members averaged just double the average yield of corn in the county. In livestock feeding, boys have shown that certain feeds produce cheaper gains than the more commonly used rations. In many localities the clubs have been responsible for bringing better types of animals to the communities, especially has purebred stock been spread in this way. There are hundreds of farms in Iowa today where the first purebred stock was put on them by club members. In canning clubs the girls have been taught cold pack canning by demonstrating this method and it is universally used in the United States. Thirty-five counties reported in December that 1485 girls had changed from wearing high heeled, pointed toed shoes to a low heeled, straight line shoe."

A survey taken in 1922 of some former clubs, showed that club members stay with the farm and practice what was taught them. In Henry County a sheep club was organized in 1916 with eight members. These eight members were looked up and it was found that seven of them were farming in the community and five had purebred herds of sheep. One had a flock of 143 head of purebred sheep. Out of a calf club of 15 members in Clinton County in 1916, 3 were in high school, 5 in college and 7 were farming. In every case where the parents of the members were asked if club work was worth while, the answer was emphatically in the affirmative.

From surveys, "one of the leading breeders of a Chester White swine herd in the country started with one gilt in 1913 in a pig club and he now frankly admits that it was club work that started him in the purebred hog business.

"In another Iowa county the methods of feeding cattle and the quality of livestock has been greatly improved the past few years due almost entirely, it is said by the breeders of that county, to the extensive club work done there.

"Several girls have become local leaders in their communities, later chairmen of the county girls' committee. One girl is at present not only holding an office in her own club, but is also secretary of the women's organization in her own township. Another girl is news reporter for the county farm bureau.

"But these results are often only secondary to the value the work has in developing boys and girls in other ways. Thru the clubs hundreds of young people are getting an experience and training in handling and making plans or programs, conducting meetings and in cooperating together which was not to be had by the average adult on the farm today. It is being noticed already that some of those active in farmers' organizations are former club members. In the future this development of leadership will be very noticeable."

Many receive an ambition to get more education. Over 200 former club members are now attending Iowa State College and many are probably in other schools. Socially, the club work has also developed many advantages and is providing that wholesome and satisfying social life needed in the rural communities. The club meetings and other events provide these features.

The two most outstanding benefits of club work are: the value to the individual and the value to the community. The individual always profits in more ways than one. More often it is the development of interest in the farm and the home and the education received which will be of future use, that will be the valuable results. Often there is a financial gain, as is the case where a product is produced and sold.

## The Hygiene of Clothing

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clothing made under sweat shop conditions. Poorly dyed stockings may poison the skin, especially if it is broken or scratched.

The value of a study of the hygiene of clothing lies in the ability to recognize the factors which make for hygienic dress and to choose healthful clothing and to form correct health habits. Our clothing should be chosen to suit the needs of the individual. It must be suited to the age, occupation and season. Men's clothing is just as unhygienic as women's, especially in its adjustment to heat regulation and ventilation. There is need of more investigation and scientific work done on the relation of clothing to health, study of elimination of bacteria by laundry and dry cleaning, and the physical properties of fibers when combined in different weaves and in union of different fibers.

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