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Home Economics and Kitty Foyle

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Home Economics and

Kitty Foyle

Allan Beegle analyzes a survey concerning the leisure time interests of local working women

KITTY FOYLE is, perhaps, the most talked about fictional figure of the last decade. She certainly is not as colorful as the famed Lady Godiva. The source of Kitty's appeal is not a magnificent, high-stepping white horse with tossing mane and bulging eyes. Instead, Kitty appeals because she is a simple, hard-working, much-neglected girl attempting to make a living. For a long time, the public has been unconsciously aware of Kitty Foyles all over America. Yet, very little is known about them.

In an effort to discover the interests and activities of the young working women in Ames, Miss Dorothy Peterson, graduate student, under the direction of Miss Mary S. Lyle, associate professor in home economics education, has made a study of these out-of-school women.

Living in Ames are 276 young women, out-of-school, between the ages of 16 and 25. One-half of this number was interviewed. Fifty were between the ages of 16 and 20 while 88 were between 21 and 25.

The majority of the young women were employed full time. However, a larger percentage of the younger group, aged 16 to 20 years, were employed less than full time than in the older 21 to 25 group. The number in household service who were employed half time or less was higher than for the other occupational groups.

As a whole the group of young women in Ames are well educated. Nearly half received some formal education after graduation from high school. Eight out of ten received training in home economics either in high school or college. A larger percentage of the younger group than of the older group had taken home economics in school.

Although well educated, the study indicated that the social life among the group appeared inadequate. Six out of ten of them did not hold membership in any organization. The younger group made more frequent use of the public library than did the older group. However, only about half reported using the library in the past year. About four out of ten have hobbies. Here again, a much greater percentage of the younger group have hobbies than of the older group.

It is quite natural that six out of ten desire additional vocational training. An extremely large number indicated an interest in studying phases of home economics in their leisure time. Others were interested in social science, English and related fields, commercial subjects, arts, crafts and religious education.

It appears that adult education classes in the field of home economics would provide an excellent outlet for these young women. In so far as the Ames situation is typical, home economics would be able to make a striking contribution toward the happiness and well-being of Kitty Foyles all over America.

April, 1941

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