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Country Home Economists- Home Front Organizers

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HELPING women on the farm combine the vital business of food production and maintenance of a well-balanced family life is the big job of 70 Iowa county extension home economists. The Agricultural Extension Service of Iowa State directs educational work in agriculture and home economics in 99 counties. County extension home economists, 56 of whom are Iowa State graduates, organize meetings at which rural homemakers analyze and attempt to solve problems of farm family living.

Presented at the adult level and also at the 4-H Club level for girls from 12 to 21, this year's home economics program follows a democratic plan of self-leadership. Local committees suggest their problems to the county Farm Bureau boards and extension personnel. Together, they plan an educational program that will enable farm families to make a greater contribution to the war effort. Meetings, with supplementary printed and illustrative materials, are organized to best meet the needs of the county. For the most part, women's meetings conducted by the extension home economists are held to train neighborhood leaders. Those women, then, pass the information and supplementary materials to their neighbors.

Food production and conservation are studied in every county group. Lucile Holaday, '40, Benton County extension home economist, is emphasizing the gardening, canning and poultry raising phases of increased food production in some groups.

With doctors and nurses so busy, classes in home care of the sick and first aid in the home provide useful information to many counties in Iowa.

Professional courses in mending with such techniques as reweaving coarse tweeds, making block patches for worsteds and hiding seam lines with the rantering stitch were learned by Greene County women under the direction of Marghetta Jelsen, '32, extension home economist. Methods of fireproofing clothing and furnishing and making children's clothing inexpensively also came in this wardrobe conservation course. Girls in the 4-H Club plan to cooperate with the chamber of commerce in supervising a USO center at Jefferson as a definite contribution to the problem of youth recreation in wartime.

Investments and actual farm transactions are subjects of discussion in women's meetings in Pocahontas County, where an effort is being made to understand income management records. Mrs. Helen Scott Sage, the extension home economist, also works with the women in planning discussions of inflation control, taxation and post-war planning.

Rural homemakers are not confronted with serious food problems brought on by the war, according to Mrs. Helen Saddoris Whittington, '31, extension home economist in Marshall County. However, she has found meal planning difficult for the woman who replaces the hired man or a son in the service. One-dish meals, oven dinners and other time-savers are emphasized in their extension programs.

Freezing and canning demonstrations were given for 764 women in Dallas County by Extension Home Economist Shirley Bennett, '39. Andy Woolfries, formerly of radio station WOI and now of WMT in Cedar Rapids, spoke to 300 Dallas County 4-H Club members at their "United Nations" banquet in December.

A total of 1200 women attended neighborhood home project groups in Dallas County where they chose to study care of equipment, meal planning, business affairs and home nursing.

Increased participation in group activities is evident throughout the state. Miss Marie Bishop, '42, extension home economist of Monona County, stresses the increase in membership of 4-H girls this year.