north carolina
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NORTH CAROLINA HOME DEMONSTRATION CLUB MEMBERS EXPRESSED THEMSELVES ABOUT THEIR CLUB PROGRAMS

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HOME DEMONSTRATION MEMBERS EXPRESSED THEMSELVES

About two years ago Miss Ruth Current, State Home Demonstration Leader, wondered in her own mind what phases of home demonstration club work meant most to club members in North Carolina. She asked herself if the things the club women valued most were in line with Extension objectives. If she knew their opinions, would such information be a base for better program planning? "We'll just find out," she thought. "We'll ask the women."

A letter was written to all home demonstration agents in North Carolina to be read at county council meetings and at club meetings. The letter asked any woman who cared to do so, to write Miss Current and tell her personally "what phases of the home demonstration program had been most helpful to her." About 700 letters poured into Miss Current's office from over the State. Forty-nine counties were represented in the replies. Club members from the very newest and youngest to the most experienced wrote their opinions.

Homemaking skills, personal and social values all shared in being recognized as helpful to the club members and their families.

This report is in no sense of the word considered a scientific study. However, the request was designed only to determine some of the things the home demonstration members considered important. They were not asked to suggest improvements or to state what was wrong with the program. Replies were only from those who were motivated to write voluntary letters.

Personal Development

More than three-fourths of the club members mentioned one or more ways in which she felt she had developed personally from participating in the home demonstration club program. This development was expressed in many ways. Their replies were not easy to classify. Expressed in their own words, here is a summary of what they said were some of the values that meant most to them:

A better homemaker in general	16%
Increased interest in community, county, and State government	25%
Improved personal appearence	5%
Improved citizenship	8%
A better mother	10%
Increased confidence and poise	15%
Inspiration to be a better person	12%
Improved outlook on homemaking	15%
Increased pride in being a homemaker	13%
How to get along with people	14%
Enriched living	10%
Opportunities for community service	15%
New outlook on life	13%
New and strengthened friendships, sense of belonging	11%

Other points mentioned were more tolerance, joy from achievement, greater appreciation of beauty, spiritual development, higher family standards, a sense of belonging and "my club has made me grow".

Community and Social Values

More than one-half of the women said that improved neighborliness was one of the outstanding values of the home demonstration program.

One out of six said that more community teamwork was a result of the home demonstration club.

Broader community interests and a more progressive spirit were mentioned by several women.

Thirteen per cent felt that their viewpoints had been broadened and understanding of world affairs had been improved through a study of the United Nations, tours, and Pen Friends. Thirty-eight per cent, or more than one-third felt that leadership had been developed and strengthened through leading in club activities. Seven felt that this leadership had carried over into their churches, 4-H clubs and other community groups.

A few excerpts from their letters illustrate the way the members feel about how their programs help in personal and social development:

"I think the entire home demonstration program has meant more to our county than words can express. Improvement of homes and better living standards, I would give first place. Community spirit, better grooming, and last but not least, our social contact."

"One of the first things that home demonstration programs taught me was the importance of the home to those who live in it. A good home is the goal of every homemaker."

"I wonder if the best thing about home demonstration work is not the association we have with the other club women of our own community and of our county. Many of them we would never have known except for this work. We laugh together, we work together and as a result, our lives are greatly enriched. We felt this in November of last year when we gave our family life program to two other communities besides our own."

"Home demonstration club work is the greatest channel open to rural women for the development of leadership. At each club meeting, project leaders participate in the program and the county, district, and state meetings afford wonderful opportunities for the development of leadership."

"To me the social contacts I have experienced through home demonstration club work has meant more than the other phases of club work, although I have been benefited by a great number of the demonstrations."

"It has given to us farm women a chance to learn and to feel that we are a part of the world and not just a part of the farm."

"Most important of all, I think, has been the process of learning to work together; to set a common goal and by united effort to attain it."

"We have found ourselves better wives and mothers, more efficient homemakers, more conscientious citizens, closer neighbors, and stronger Christians through the lessons learned in home demonstration."

"When I think of the greatest value that I have received from being a club member, the first thing that comes to my mind is the many friends that I have made through club work that otherwise I probably never would have known. (I really consider this most valuable)."

".....I think a home demonstration club in any rural community serves to enrich the life of that community. It serves to make better citizens of the community members, and to bring them closer together. It serves to bring about a closer cooperation in the community that would not otherwise be there. Community projects can be undertaken and followed through to a successful conclusion."

"Home demonstration clubs have filled a vacant place in farm women's lives. The social contacts and inspiring programs have made rural living more attractive. We have become ambitious and diligent in our search to improve our gardens and homes. Home demonstration work has afforded us the opportunity of judging our own character and appearance."

"Home demonstration club work has helped me to first have confidence in myself, and also to have confidence and pride in the farm women in our county and State. I am seeing the great potential talents in our women being developed and put into practice, influencing the homes, churches, and communities, which is a great inspiration and thrilling experience to me."

"I enjoy home demonstration work because it is the only organization in our community that we have the pleasure of attending with complete unity with all the ladies of our rural section.

"Through our club work we learn to work together, play together, love and to share our griefs and sorrows, but most of all we learn to love our neighbor as ourself. I have attended the meeting regularly for eight years. I can truly say I really love home demonstration work."

"My home demonstration club activities rank next to my church in my interest and thinking.

"Only through home demonstration work I was able to visit the United Nations this fall. Citizenship has played a large part in our work at club and it has been integrated with our home life. To see the processes of human differences discussed and problems solved has given me a higher understanding of international problems as well as those in my own community."

"I have been made to realize as never before the importance of each woman to her community."

"We feel that we are real citizens of our county and State when we study and take active parts."

Home Economics Skills and General Information on Homemaking Are Valued Highly by Club Members

Eighty-four per cent of those who wrote letters mentioned one or more phases of home economics information as being of greatest value to them. Most of the women named several phases of homemaking as being helpful. All are related to one or more of the general objectives of home demonstration work.

Three out of four placed a high value on information on foods; production, conservation, preparation, meal planning, buying, making foods attractive and tasty, and health values were all mentioned. The following remarks are typical of what was said about foods and nutrition:

> "I was a young housewife when I became a home demonstration member 35 years ago. We had a surplus of foods on the farm and in those days refrigeration was out of the average rural people's privilege to be able to have. So one of the most important phases of home demonstration work to me was to be shown how to can and save the vegetables, meats, and fruits on the farm."
>
> "It has taught me many new and improved methods in conservation. and preservation of food; the importance of growing and eating many foods; the importance of showing and helping others in their need for a home garden."
>
> "The home demonstration club is a pleasant and easy way of learning the latest information on homemaking and foods."
>
> "Food preservation information has been especially helpful to me. When I use the methods extension recommends, I am sure I am using the best methods known."
>
> "My family, for sure, enjoys a more wholesome diet, served in a more attractive way."
>
> "Through my home demonstration training in foods, I was able to become a lunch room manager and also hostess for a men's club.
>
> "I also sell foods I have conserved."

"The things I have found most helpful that I have learned from home demonstration agent are as follows:

1st The study of the basic seven foods and my little chart on the wall in the kitchen have done much in helping me to balance my meals.

2nd Homemanagement taught me to group my things together to make a bed one side at a time and save many useless steps.

3rd The arrangement of furniture. After that demonstration I went straight home and rearranged the living room furniture and pictures and was pleased with the effect."

"I have been able to help others through knowledge gained from my club work. For instance, other information on dried milk has been passed on to everyone on the place and has meant milk for their families."

Better Management Was Considered to be Very Helpful by Almost One-Half of the Women

They talked of planning family spending and budgeting; better use of time and energy; improved housekeeping methods, laundry, cleaning, arrangement of furniture and equipment for greater convenience. Six mentioned wills and inheritance information as being important. A few quotations will help to catch the meaning of how they felt:

"The thing I appreciate most about our work is that it teaches us to economize and use what we have. I think this would come under management and that word management covers about everything."

"Through records kept for home demonstration work, I have been able to follow a budget and generally to improve the management of my home and finances."

"I have learned to plan my work and then do it so there will be some time for rest and recreation."

"One little idea that has saved me many steps and much energy is keeping some of the same supplies in many needed places. Now that I have learned to sit to iron, I no longer consider it a drudgery."

"I never iron my husband a shirt but that I remember it was my home demonstration agent who taught me to do it better."

Home Furnishings, Improved Housing, Home Beautification and General Home Improvement

These were outstanding features for more than one-half of the club members. Refinishing furniture, selecting and arranging, landscaping, house planning and remodeling, kitchen improvement, the use of color and other ideas were mentioned. A few of their expressions represent the thinking of many:

> "Home demonstration club work has helped me to improve the selection of furnishings and equipment in the home; to serve a balanced diet at a low cost by conserving food at home; to improve the selection of clothing; to beautify the home grounds and to have a better social life."
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> "Then, too, these programs carry over into our schools. Namely, my daughter had to make a booklet in her home economics on 'Planning My House'. I had my home demonstration leaflets on storage, curtains, etc. which she used and she made an A plus, the highest grade in the class."
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> "And I could not leave out improving home lighting at all. It was a great help."
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> "The programs on shrubbery that we have received for years have been most helpful (that was one of the first helpful things) and then food preservation, but I think we have all graduated in that. I have enjoyed the programs that have been lessons like the groupings of furniture and things inside the home -- slipcovers, draperies, etc. I have enjoyed it all."
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> "One of the most valuable lessons was in 'home wiring'. Since we have had several tenants' houses wired, this information was a great help in knowing just where to place the receptacles to give the best service."
>
> "Before I joined club I could not sew or arrange furniture because I had never taken home economics. Now I can sew anything I want to and can arrange furniture so it looks better, and at less cost. It has taught me how to be friendlier to new people and to entertain groups."
>
> "Our house and all furniture was burned three years ago. When time came to draw up plans for a new house, our home demonstration agent helped. When time came for color selection in paints and in buying furnishings, I did not worry -- with what I had learned from the home demonstration meetings, I had no trouble."

Programs on Family Life Have Been of Value to Members

Almost 40 per cent of the women mentioned some phase of the family life programs -- better family relations; helpfulness in understanding youth; more family planning; child guidance; tolerance, were considered to be some of the results of family life programs. Here is how a few expressed it:

> "As family life leader for two demonstrations has meant much to me to learn how to have a happy home, be a better mother and wife, and have team work in the home. Attending home demonstration meetings to me socially meant that I overcame self consciousness by learning to preside at a meeting as president, and taught me to understand people and respect their opinion better. I have learned more about home management and the art of living on a budget which is so necessary on a farm."
>
> "To me, family life is one of the most interesting and consecrated subjects that can be studied, taught, and learned in home demonstration work. I really feel that my family has been benefited to the fullest by me attending and taking part in the different phases of home demonstration work. Our children have learned to take projects that they can do themselves and keep records, which will be a lifetime help to them. The whole family has become interested in each other's project. My family looks forward to me telling them what we did at the different meetings I attend."
>
> "To me the outstanding project is Family Life. This is a subject every parent needs and last but by no means least is the Fellowship and Spirt of Good Will I have enjoyed with the club members."
>
> "Being a mother with a young and growing family, I have benefited from every meeting I have attended. But striving more and more to know how to bring up my family to be a happy and well balanced family, I feel that I have received my greatest values from the 'Family Life' programs. 'Home Furnishings' would come second."
>
> "I consider home furnishings and family life have been of the greatest value to me."
>
> "The family life program made me feel important as a homemaker and that I had an important job to do."
>
> "The training that has been given on children has helped me to let my children grow up in an understanding atmosphere."

Clothing the Family

More than one-half of those who wrote letters rated clothing programs very high. They felt that the programs on clothing had helped them to save money; improve personal appearance; have better and more clothes for the family; gain a satisfaction from accomplishment, and to be able to help others. Some expressed their appreciation as follows:

> "Built-in cabinets, shelves and bookcases. I got the idea of a cabinet over my sewing machine from that once. I keep patterns and sewing materials in it. Also, bookshelves on each side of it and it is such a good arrangement. I still have several ideas due to the demonstration that I hope to carry out."
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> "I have always liked to sew but there were many things I did not know how to do but thanks to the demonstration on professional sewing I have mastered some of them for instance, easing in fullness in a sleeve and again I went home took the sleeves out of my dresses and did them over. Now I am not ashamed to wear them. I can truthfully say that I have never been to a demonstration that I didn't learn something helpful in homemaking and I sincerely believe that the home demonstration work has done much to raise standards of living in our county."
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> "I consider cleaning and adjusting a sewing machine the thing of most value to me. It has not only helped me, but helped me to help others. If you have a regular man to clean and adjust your machine it will cost you around eight dollars ($8.00). Besides there is always some little thing getting wrong with it, and if you know how to take it apart and put it back together, usually you can find the trouble yourself."
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> "Conserving foods has meant that I have been able to feed my family well and also to save money on groceries.
>
> "I have also been helped by the programs on sewing. And I have been especially interested in those programs that deal with human relationship because of the great need in our world today for knowing how to live together in peace."
>
> "But the greatest values to me are the things I've learned in the field of being more aware of thoughtful planning and care of clothing, and yes, arts and crafts stands out with me also -- I sorta love that feel of creating something of my own accord."
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> "Before I joined the H. D. Club it took me about one and one-half hours to put in a zipper, now I can put in one in five minutes.
>
> "I have also learned how to construct coats, suits, and dresses and how to apply the 'Tailored Touch' which makes a more attractive garment."

"My ever-growing stock of Extension bulletins and printed sheets by experts are an answer to many of my problems. It is so good to be able to answer my neighbor's problems through these bulletins on clothing and other things."

Cultural Values Have A Place

About one out of twelve mentioned the programs on music; club and county choruses brought joy to many people.

Crafts gave an opportunity for creative outlets and for relaxation and leisure time enjoyment. About 16 per cent mentioned crafts as outstanding to them.

Programs on reading and good books added interest to club meetings.

A few expressions are:

" I hardly know which of the above things listed to single out to you. You see I've gained so much from H. D. work all of it has done wonders for me. I know the chorus is and has been wonderful, so have the family life programs. I suppose I've used crafts more than any other one thing, unless it is clothing and maybe it should come first. The social contact has done a lot for me. The whole H. D. work has and is a wonderful thing for all of us. I never go to a meeting but I go home richer in many ways by having gone. So I hope I have given you a little idea of what you asked for, and so I say I hope you will have a very successful year in 1954 and Santa will be kind to you."

"The first in importance has been the social contacts; then I have learned to save time and motion in my every-day chores, and I have greatly benefited from the tours. All of the meetings have been valuable to me in many ways. It is practically the only interest I have outside of farm life; therefore, it means a great deal to me."

".....The County Chorus has given the women an outlet for their musical abilities, providing an excellent opportunity for them to learn and perform."

"The suggested list of good books for home reading have helped me to be selective in my reading and I have been inspired to read more."

Health Programs

Fifteen per cent of the members mentioned special benefits from health programs in addition to better diets. Learning about public health services, the importance of physical examinations, cancer clinics, were recognized as

valuable programs.

The Young Homemaker Speaks

"As a new homemaker, I've learned many improved methods of homemaking that I would have had no other opportunity to learn. The fellowship and experience of other homemakers has meant so much to me."

"The greatest value of our home demonstration meetings to me has been the close fellowship of the ladies of our community. I enjoy gathering in our individual homes and discussing our problems and also our accomplishments. As a young homemaker, the cooking, canning and freezing instructions and easier ways of sewing and entertaining have meant very much to me."

"Being a mother with a young and growing family, I have benefited from every meeting I have attended. I believe the family life programs have helped most. Home furnishings would probably come next."

Continuous Helps Through the Years

"After 18 years, I can't decide the greatest value -- so many helps -- but every young mother should be a member."

"I have attended the home demonstration club for the past twenty years and the values I have received have been innumerable. I believe that the short-cut methods of homemaking in these breathtaking times have proven to be the most valuable. The short-cut menu planning, the budgeting of time and money, the newest fashions and materials (which save money if you use these practices), the newest freezing methods, the built-in storage suggestions and economical Christmas suggestions, all have played an important part in the values I've received as a club member."

"When I joined the home demonstration club 28 years ago I was rearing a family, growing a garden, chickens, pigs, kept a cow and did my house work and sewing. Then all phases of the work were of great value to me. In recent years,

since my activities are limited, I am still interested in everything, but I place real value on personal and social contact."

"During my girlhood I lived in town and enjoyed my home and friends. When I married a farmer and came to live in the country, I lost some of these contacts and I missed them. When I joined the home demonstration club, perhaps the social contacts meant most. But then there were many other things I needed. A gap I wanted to fill. I soon found that by attending meetings regularly I could get the inspiration and information that would help me to make my home more attractive and more livable. Information on home furnishings was very valuable, the information on how to grow and preserve foods and to serve foods attractively meant a good deal. I especially liked the demonstrations on landscaping, recreation and crafts. The demonstrations have changed and our needs have been met.

"The programs on citizenship and family life have been inspiring. The leadership schools have helped me to face my club, and S. S. class, with confidence. The social contacts and balanced programs have filled the gap for me for 22 years."

"Speaking as a country woman who has been attending home demonstration club meetings, county council, district meetings, etc., for twenty-five years, I find it difficult to think of any area of my life that has not been affected by it. I have known so many lovely people through contacts made at many meetings. I have grown in confidence through offices held, and learned to preside, and to speak out through experience gained there, which has helped so much in religious work, book club work, etc. Through lessons studied at monthly meetings, my family has been fed more balanced meals and learned to dress more becomingly. I've learned how to plan a more attractive and convenient home. I am proud to belong to an organization so vast and far

reaching and yet is interested in each individual member, with a home demonstration agent who is always willing and eager to help with any problem I might bring to her. These are only a few of the many things I could mention, but I do sincerely say 'Thank God for giving me the privilege of belonging to a home demonstration club!'"

An Education for Some

"I feel being a home demonstration member has equalled a college education for me."

"I never had the privilege of finishing my last year in home economics. I feel that I am doing that now."

"Being a member of a home demonstration club is the equivalent of a college education."

They Like Their Agent, Too

"Without a home demonstration agent the rural women would be at a great loss."

"Our agent in her quiet calm way has guided us to a better way of life."

"It is an inspiration to see a young life so dedicated to improving people as our agent is."

"To me the farm and home agents have meant more to the rural people than all other agencies combined. Under their guidance, drab unpainted houses have been changed into neat, attractive places with fine cattle and flocks of hens to grace them."

"Being a club member means having first hand information concerning all phases of homemaking from highly trained agents and specialists."

And Finally!

"The reason the women are active in home demonstration work is that they have had a part in planning their program. They know, too, that at their meeting they will receive good demonstrations on subjects that will make their jobs of homemaking easier for them."

"To sum it all up, when you have a question, the home demonstration club meeting is the place to get your answer."

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