

On the Job..

*Extension Home Economics Specialists
Identify Their Roles*

For sometime we have felt that Administrators could better tell the story of home economics Extension if they had at hand some information about the work specialists perform. The enclosed short statements by the specialists are for your use when you have occasion to refer to these home economics programs --

Eloise S. Cofer,
Assistant Director

AGING

With the development of an industrial society, a complete change in family living pattern has taken place within the lifetime of today's senior citizen, thereby complicating the problems of our elders and their families.

The North Carolina Extension Service has been helping people prepare for the later years by aiding them in improving their level of living throughout life.

Programs were developed first around personal adjustment problems in the family relations area. Then an Extension specialist in aging was employed to give increased attention to Extension programming for the retirement phase of life. Retirement may account for 1/3 and even 1/2 of a person's lifetime.

The Extension Specialist in aging is employed cooperatively with the North Carolina Governor's Coordinating Council on aging.

In this position the specialist reviews research studies in gerontology and draws implications for home economics programs. She helps county Extension agents alert the community to problems in aging and suggest plans for action. Many activities are done through County Councils or Committees on Aging, through special programs, workshops, radio, television, newspapers, and through regularly organized groups such as Extension Homemakers Clubs.

In a survey of 4,000 persons done across the state, these concerns were mentioned most often by senior citizens: personal and social adjustment, health, economic security and housing. These concerns correspond with the areas of home economics.

The Specialist in Aging adapts information from subject matter specialists to the needs of elders. She works across areas of home economics and across lines of other agencies concerned about older people in detecting problems and in coordinating educational materials to meet the needs of the older citizens of the community.

Whenever needed, she develops program materials adapted especially to the interest and needs of the later years, including "Living on Retirement Income," "Buying a Hearing Aid," and "Living Arrangements for the Later Years."

CLOTHING AND TEXTILES

The Clothing department of the North Carolina Extension Service deals with helping people to learn to fulfill their basic and secondary desires as related to clothing.

Basic desires which are protection, social approval and companionship must be achieved before the secondary desires which are intellectual interest, aesthetic concerns, technological interest and empathetic interest can be explored by an individual.

To assist people in their development, the Clothing department teaches information such as: how fabrics are made and finished, how to apply principles of good design, how to be a good consumer when buying clothing so that the characteristics desired are obtained and so that the needs of the person are fulfilled, how to care for clothing, how to handle and manipulate fabrics, and the sociological aspects of clothing. Persons vary greatly in their degree of interest in the secondary desires but all have an interest in the basic desires.

The Clothing department is a resource department supplying the latest information available to the home economics Extension agents in all 100 counties.

In addition, Extension clothing specialists identify what information is usually desired by a given clientele, such as low-income families and how to best reach and teach this group.

Home economics Extension agents are working with the total population in the area of clothing. This includes persons of all ages and of both sexes.

The area of mens clothing is increasing in importance. This has been seen through the wide acceptance of the 4-H Dress Right/Look Right project for boys. This project, developed in North Carolina, has been widely accepted by other states.

Extension clothing specialists disseminate information through means such as training schools, workshops, mass media and newsletters. Furthermore, they assist agents in long-range and yearly program planning.

Vignettes of Program

There is an ever growing interest in making clothing at home. An estimated 42 to 44 million persons are now actively involved in the home production of garments. Clothing production has become a dramatic means of self-expression and an economic necessity for some people. To improve the quality of garments made at home, a program entitled Advanced Clothing Construction Techniques has been initiated.

The number of handicapped people in North Carolina is increasing. Clothing this group presents unique problems. Some examples of what is being done to help solve these problems are:

- presenting programs and revue of clothing at North Carolina Regional Medical Association meetings, on television and to other groups upon special request.
- helping people make clothing to meet their individual needs.
- conducting projects to provide clothing for certain individuals.

Helping low-income people to adequately clothe their family members can be a challenge. Many counties have conducted workshops to teach all facets of mending, simple alterations and reweaving.

The consumer in today's society is receiving much attention. With the vast array of textile and clothing products on the market, making a wise decision becomes more difficult. Information has been developed to help the consumer understand first of all just what he wants, then how to go about obtaining the desired product and finally what to do if the product does not perform satisfactorily when care directions are followed.

FAMILY RELATIONS

1. Family Relations specialists assist agents in developing and implementing family relations programs with special emphasis in counties in which a group decides to concentrate in this area.

This task includes the training of agents. From time to time the specialists plan and execute special in-service training programs for agents in subject matter, programming and in the actual practice of teaching groups.

Visits are made to help agents who work with county citizens' committees or councils, to help new agents, and occasionally for special interest meetings.

2. In cooperation with the home economics department, Family Relations specialists prepare educational materials for use by professional and lay workers. These materials involve programs for organized adult and youth clubs, a monthly leader letter, a bi-monthly newsletter for agents, and a bi-monthly report of research for agents.

3. Family Relations specialists cooperate with other state agencies and organizations that work in the area of human development and family relations.

Part of this work involves service on boards of directors, state level committees and attendance at state meetings.

The specialists serve as consultants to other state agencies and private organizations, other staff members, and to graduate and undergraduate students.

Vignettes of Program

In one rural county the Extension chairman and home economist were asked by local citizens if they could do something to help the county accept school integration. Black and white high schools were to be merged for the first time.

After a conference with the county staff a request was made for a family relations specialist to visit the county. The Extension staff decided that programs on human relations in the white and black clubs might be of some help. The specialists agreed to write a brief program and also to draw up a sheet of "School Bus Manners." Later these materials were prepared, criticized by black and white professionals, and then taken to the county for final adaptation.

The local home economists adapted the material, conducted programs in organized clubs during the summer, and offered some of the material to other groups.

Only preliminary reports have been received from the county, making an objective evaluation difficult at this time. The agents did say the material was well received, especially the "School Bus Manners" which was something very specific and thus led to helpful discussion in the groups.

In one county several organizations and agencies were looking for ways to improve child care. The community college taught a course for child care workers. The Department of Social Services was proposing a special study to be supported by the county commissioners. The Extension staff was having conferences to plan for a survey of child care services. Churches and some civic groups were helping with specific child care programs. None of these groups knew what the others were doing and how concerned the others were.

The Extension chairman and home economist had several meetings with some of these groups separately and with representatives of other groups in small gatherings. Over a period of several months these groups decided they must work together on the need for more and better child care in the whole county. They formed an organization called "Educators Association for Young Children."

The newly organized group has as its purposes: to make the public concerned about child care, to promote training for child care workers and to expand child care facilities in the county. More immediate plans include a workshop on involving parents in child care programs, a survey of child care facilities in the county, the promotion of further courses at the community college and continued efforts to inform the public of child care needs.

FOOD AND NUTRITION -- EXPANDED NUTRITION PROGRAM

Perhaps our roles in the Expanded Nutrition Program are as dramatic as any. Our function, as we see it, is to give consultation to both agents and aides, though our focus is on the agent. This includes help with translating nutrition information into simple terms; overcoming food prejudices; managing the food dollar; and preserving foods available to families. We try to help with referrals to proper agencies--stressing agents and aides are "suspecticians" of malnutrition rather than diagnosticians.

Vignettes of Program

For example, an aide found a very emaciated five-month-old baby in the home of a client. She inquired about his eating and felt sure his formula was incorrect. However, she did not attempt to advise, but arranged for the mother to take the baby to the Health Department. The public health nurse was told of her findings. The mother repeated the same story to the nurse--she was making the formula by diluting a can of evaporated milk with enough water to make a quart. The problem was the size of the can of milk! The nurse and physician reinstructed her emphasizing the need for a large can of milk and gave her added vitamin supplements for the baby, who is now growing.

In another instance, a family who seemed hopelessly in debt was referred to the aide. She discovered the income could meet needs if the family planned. Through help with family budgeting, with special emphasis on food buying, the family is eating better and beginning to pay on its debts.

Just a year ago the Cooperative Extension Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and Land Grant Colleges received a special fund to expand their work in food and nutrition education.

Of course nutrition education is one of the oldest home economics Extension programs, but these monies provided a new dimension for the program. The focus is on hard to reach low-income families. The program is mainly on a person-to-person basis with individuals who do the food shopping and meal preparation in the families. These may be the traditional homemaker or a daughter or the father of the family, depending on their particular role in the family's food production system. The expanded nutrition program is underway in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The area selected in North Carolina for the program was chosen on the basis of the program in the counties permitting the proper supervision and training of the sub-professionals who were to carry out the program.

The basic objectives of this program are the same for all counties, but each county has adapted the program to local conditions and situations as well as to the needs and interests of the target audience. Local Extension staff members with the concurrence of the State Extension Nutrition Specialist in

Charge and the State Agent and Assistant Director; hire, train and supervise the non-professional aides. Preceding the training of the aides, the Extension home economics agents, were given concentrated instruction in the development of the program as well as in various aspects of food and nutrition which were especially relevant to the training of the aides.

Other areas of information not related to nutrition, but which are helpful when working with low-income families, also were included in the training both of agents and the aides.

The criteria for selecting the non-professional aides assure more significant results for the people in the nutrition education program. These aides come usually from the community in which they work. They know the people. They have empathy with the people because of their feeling about the problems facing their clientele. Often they are neighbors of their clientele and are not regarded with suspicion as might be true with outsiders.

The Expanded Nutrition Education Program recognizes the importance of starting where people want and need help. This sometimes means working first with families on problems not directly related with foods and nutrition. Such basic problems may include individual and family needs in health, clothing, shelter, furnishings and equipment, money management, sanitation, interpersonal and family relationships. However, in this approach the need to improve the nutrition of the family is always paramount. The program was in full swing in North Carolina in April. At present, 60 counties with approximately 155 sub-professionals known as Extension aides, are involved in the program. There are approximately 3,800 families participating in the program. The average number of persons in the household is six. About 41 percent of the families are obtaining donated foods and about 16 percent - food stamps. That means that about 43 percent are not presently on a food assistance program. Of course the improvement of the family food supply through the use of either donated foods or food stamps is one of the objectives of the aides in working with families. The breakdown according to income will show that about 23 percent of the families have less than \$1,000 of income. Approximately 81 percent have less than \$3,000 income. By residence, the families are 62 percent rural non-farm, 14 percent farm and 24 percent urban. Families are spending about 36 percent of their monthly income for food. The aides find that they are well accepted by the families in the target area, which have been selected either through designation of a particular low income community, or else by referral from health and welfare agencies. The aide works with the family in the basic art of food preparation and in meal planning and nutrition. She also often is a resource for helping the family plan better in shopping, even going to the grocery store with the homemaker and helping her in her shopping for her weekly food supply. Extension work with these low-income families has shown that even though often they may be the hard to reach, they do learn and they are grateful for the help which is being provided for them. Often they express their gratefulness in terms such as "Finally someone wants to help me enough to come back and show me how to cook."

Great emphasis is being put on the development of a curriculum for the families so that at the period when it is felt that the families food habits and meal planning skills have reached a point where they can go on their own, the aide can help the homemaker join other members of her community in a small group for further learning. Then the aide may move on to families who have not had the advantages of her teaching. It is not feasible to expect that the same families will be provided with continuing face-to-face service by the aides. Presently counties are trying to reach a goal of 30 persons per aide at one time for sustained work.

Often the homemaker has an interest in other skills of homemaking which develop as she finds the service which the aide has provided to be of particular importance to her. In some counties the Extension home agent has provided the homemakers with sewing classes or with classes in other areas of basic homemaking. One of the first indications of true acceptance of the program is the point in the aide's visits when she notices that the homemaker is making a real effort to improve the condition of her home as well as her family's food supply.

We are enthusiastic about this program and feel that we will be able to continue it since at the present there is legislation pending for increased appropriation for this education program.

FOOD CONSERVATION AND MARKETING

Planning, promoting and evaluating a food conservation program is the specific responsibility of two specialists. In addition to her work in frozen foods, one specialist also promotes the fish and shellfish program.

Another specialist works with methods of food conservation other than frozen foods plus a home marketing program. Although canning is an old method of food conservation, it is still widely used and in many instances "abused." Every year instances are uncovered in which homemakers are using obsolete and sometimes dangerous methods of canning. Last year, a homemaker who had canned 60 quarts of green beans by the boiling water bath method was instructed to destroy these. Why? Because a sample was tested in the Food Science Department and found to be "highly infested" with a dangerous strain of bacteria. This and many other instances point to a continuing need for specialists to promote recommended methods plus the why.

Promoting a home marketing program, especially for home conserved products, has had much emphasis. In cooperation with the Food Science Department, recipes for conserved products are tested and/or developed. Labels conforming to FDA requirements; jars bought in quantity through cooperation of major glass manufacturing companies; and a box for shipping, designed especially for the program, have contributed to the success of the project.

Vignettes of Program

"Aside from the money I have made, this project has meant a lot to me that I can't explain," spoke one shy homemaker. "I sold \$111 worth of fig preserves from one bush," said a senior citizen. A 4-H club member grossed over \$300 on conserved products in one season. Thousands of dollars have been made by homemakers through their sale of home conserved products.

People are conserving food for home use and for sale. Quality and quantity underline a continuing need for emphasis in using good raw products and recommended methods and procedures.

FOOD AND NUTRITION -- YOUTH

The Specialist in Foods and Nutrition with responsibility for youth programs and projects has a unique opportunity to teach ways to better nutrition and to recruit boys and girls for careers relating to foods.

Projects and programs are geared to stimulate the interest of 4-H youth. It is hoped that these projects will help boys and girls want to eat properly because they realize the importance of good nutrition to health.

By understanding the science of nutrition and the potential of the food industry in the United States, many 4-H'ers are attracted to careers in food. Currently, for example, two of the outstanding 4-H girls in recent years are enrolled in Food Science here at N. C. State; others are taking home economics. Many boys have entered the field of agriculture. Also, we hear many times from the homemaker of today, her gratitude because she was a past 4-H'er who learned the importance of planning and serving a well-balanced diet. She guards her family's health with past skills learned as a 4-H'er.

HOME MANAGEMENT AND FAMILY ECONOMICS

With the increasing complexity of today's problems, families are realizing the need for and are demanding more information to help them better use their resources of money, time, material goods and human abilities in order to achieve and maintain a satisfactory level of living.

The future of the family is predicted to depend more and more on the intelligence and vigor of its managers.

The Home Management specialists work to: (1) create among families an awareness and an understanding of social and economic trends affecting the use and development of resources, and (2) help the family acquire adequate managerial ability for maximum attainment of desired goals. Special emphasis is given to:

- . Current and long-range planning in maintenance of everyday living, providing education and providing financial security for all stages of life.
- . Recognition of available and potential resources.
- . Acceptable alternatives of resources of maximum attainment of goals.
- . Extension of resources through effective buying of goods and services, and the use of maintenance of goods.

Intellectual and creative leadership is needed to motivate and teach families to better manage for enriched living.

To assist county personnel, the specialists strive to keep themselves abreast of current developments in the discipline by formal and informal study. The specialists prepare reading lists, lesson outlines and evaluation forms for agents' teaching; and prepare newsletters and special resource materials. When appropriate, detailed informational materials for distribution in the counties are prepared. Supplementary teaching aids, such as films, filmstrips, slides, posters and other visual materials are provided.

The specialists prepare and participate in educational television programs, speak to groups who request them and train county leaders as time permits. They serve on university committees and participate in activities of their professional organizations.

Vignettes of Program

A desire to help the "poor avoid paying more" motivated Mecklenburg County's 12 aides and their director to take a course in money management at the Garringer high school. Different methods are being used to stimulate

the low-income consumer to learn how to make better use of his money. The "Consumer Education Game" has been used effectively with 54 persons. The players concluded that the game was fun and had taught them many things about credit and buying products. The aide program in Mecklenburg is an Extension project in cooperation with the Charlotte Area Fund.

Mrs. Rebecca Hall reports that "Buying Small Household Appliances" was given major emphasis in New Hanover County recently. The objective, "to provide educational experiences whereby homemakers could become more knowledgeable of selection of small portable appliances needed for better family living" was effected through:

- . demonstrations for 284 Extension Homemakers
- . 32 radio broadcasts
- . 6 news articles
- . 35 special bride's packets containing information
- . special training for 25 Home Management and 4-H leaders

Results of the program emphasis included: (1) a request from the manager of the radio station for two programs daily rather than one; (2) numerous requests for a copy of the "Smart Shopper's I. Q. Games" which were offered; (3) a TV program, and (4) a special interest meeting on appliances the following month. These efforts are expected to produce more knowledgeable consumers in respect to selection, use and care of small household appliances.

HOUSING, HOUSE FURNISHINGS AND CREATIVE CRAFTS

According to "Job Description" as set up by the Agricultural Extension Service, there are ten major functions and tasks of a specialist in a given subject-matter area. The most important roles relating to county programs and the implementation of the programs as related to problems in the county are:

1. Provide direction for a statewide program in the areas of housing, house furnishings and creative crafts.

Each specialist makes an effort to study trends both state and national, that will affect the living conditions of families. Special emphasis is put on new products and techniques for providing better housing and furnishings for all families.

Each specialist contributes new information to agents through "The Specialists Speak," (a bi-monthly publication of articles on research and innovations prepared by the specialist staff in Home Economics.) Letters, office conferences and training schools are other training methods often used.

2. Adapt elements of the state programs into the county Extension programs.

The specialist in the department makes an effort to determine needs of individual counties with county staffs, to discuss needs of counties and to set priorities for work.

3. Assist in planning and developing the county Extension program.

Much of the work accomplished in this area of programming is carried out by correspondence. County visits for conferences on developing a county program are held when requested. With present staff, it is impossible to plan with all counties on an individual county program. The county staffs are encouraged to work with other organizations, groups and agencies having common interests.

4. Assist county personnel in implementing county Extension programs.

The specialists in housing, house furnishings and creative crafts have seen this as one of their major roles. We have tried to present new subject matter and techniques through agent training schools. In some areas we consider it necessary to train about every five years. This involves a continuous training program for all agents working in the subject-matter areas. Creative crafts is considered to be primarily a leader program; therefore, annual leader training programs have been offered in certain areas of the state.

Specialists prepare educational materials for use by professional and

lay workers. These materials involve programs for organized adult and youth clubs. Visual aids are prepared for subjects that require the most expensive and difficult-to-assemble materials. These aids are loaned to the counties for monthly or special programs.

Occasionally the specialist conducts leader training programs in the counties when requested by the agents.

5. Assist county personnel in evaluating county Extension programs.

Specialists assist county staff in evaluating county programs by means of county conferences and correspondence. Evaluation ideally is built into the program planning.

Vignettes of Program

House furnishings specialists have worked closely with two of the state's largest industries - textiles and furniture - on several educational endeavors. Training programs for agents were sponsored by Extension and the furniture industry. Each county has been involved in training given by the Drexel furniture factory.

Two demonstration projects have been carried out in High Point in cooperation with the Southern Furniture Manufacturers Association and the urban development agency.

Several manufacturing companies have made it possible for our mattress program for low-income families to be successful. To date, almost 90 county staffs have been trained by a specialist, and leader training has been conducted to teach leaders, who, in turn, have taught thousands of homemakers.

The House of Wood, shown during 1968 and 1969 at the State Fair, best reflects the possible scope of a project where industry and education work together. The demonstration house was conceived to show that good housing is possible at low cost and that a house can be furnished attractively at modest cost.

Eleven counties in the Northwestern District have begun a special project to promote housing for low-income families. Each county is working with the Farmers Home Administration cooperatively on a demonstration project. There will be a demonstration house in each county. From this experience we anticipate a housing program being set up in each county.

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