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Resources for Tomorrow

The recent gift to the University of a 524 acre ranch for use in the Division's 4-H Youth program seems an appropriate occasion to report on this important activity, administered by U. C.'s Cooperative Extension. The new facility, located in San Mateo County, will be maintained as a working ranch. Field days and other educational programs will be arranged for children from schools and other institutions to promote an appreciation and understanding of agriculture and the rural environment. Special emphasis will be given to activities to serve youth from minority as well as primarily urban communities.

The planned program is consistent with the original intent of the 4-H movement and at the same time is indicative of the new direction of this statewide program for the Division's largest "student body". In 1913, when a party of three from the Berkeley campus traveled to "remote" Humboldt County by steamer to establish California's first 4-H Club, rural young people had very limited opportunities to know the world beyond their home communities. 4-H was developed as a practical, learn-by-doing educational program designed to help these "disadvantaged" rural youth.

Today there is still a 4-H membership of about 20,000 from California farms and rural areas, but the big leap in membership growth has been in urban young people, many of whom are "disadvantaged" not by geographical remoteness but by social and economic remoteness. Recognizing the need and recognizing that its philosophy, programs and methodology are well-suited and can be adapted for work with urban youth, 4-H has moved strongly to incorporate into its program youth from low-income areas in many of California's more populous centers.

The future welfare of our society or of any society, depends in large part on how well it prepares

its coming generations for constructive participation. It is important to provide our youth with opportunities in which they can use their talents and resources and from which they can derive a sense of accomplishment and pride. And for those from disadvantaged communities with a heritage of frustration, disillusionment and failure, it is doubly important.

With the help of more than 23,000 volunteer adult leaders, California's more than 90,000 members are given opportunities to learn and grow through experience in real life situations. They develop their individual talents in a wide spectrum of individual projects from rabbits to rocketry. They learn about working with others and about their society by helping in the restoration of old landmarks, registration of voters, establishment of blood banks, building of city parks, and service projects for the elderly.

Disillusionment with our social organizations, both public and private, is at an all-time high, and perhaps our best hope for regeneration lies in the coming generation — those who will write our books, compose our music, make our laws, and provide the leadership to improve the functioning of our institutions and our communities.

There is much concern these days about the depletion of our resources, and I submit that one of the resources we need most is that renewable source of ideas, abilities and talents that the new generation can bring us. Anything that can be done to help our youth in their self-discovery, nurture their creative potential, or motivate them to be responsive to society and human need, will increase our prospects for a brighter and more rational future.

The teamwork among young people and adults, government agencies and the private sector, community leaders and the University, which makes 4-H possible, deserves our applause and our support for their commitment to these objectives.