

4-H community pride program

Lynne P. Kaplan ■ James Grieshop



San Diego County 4-H'ers proudly display ribbons from their ice cream eating contest. Having fun is an important part of any 4-H project, and Community Pride is no exception.

In the urban area of Fresno, a group of youth campaign to make public transportation more widely available in their community.

In a suburban area of Los Angeles County, a group of youth work directly with a local planning commission to develop a master zoning plan for the community.

In a rural community in Solano County, a group of youth between 10 and 18 work with a school principal and other adults to plan, conduct, and report the results of a community-wide needs assessment.

Participation in the 4-H Community Pride Program is the common thread linking these three activities. Youth in urban, suburban, and rural areas learn, through involvement in Community Pride projects, how to work with adults in community affairs and public decision making.

Community Pride is one of a number of programs offered through the 4-H branch of the University of California's Cooperative Extension in collaboration with Chevron USA Inc. (formerly Standard Oil Company of California). Now in its

eleventh year, Community Pride is a significant project in 4-H programs in 19 states. Over 5,000 California youth are currently involved in projects, regional conferences, and local workshops, where they learn the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for successful participation in actual community affairs and concerns.

Community projects

When the Community Pride Program began in California in 1966, the emphasis was on beautification and conservation—efforts encouraged by Lady Bird Johnson's support. However, in the past few years project emphasis has shifted to community development and the direct participation of youth in actual community affairs and activities.

This shift is evident in the diverse kinds of projects that 4-H Community Pride clubs develop. Members identify and analyze their community to determine the kind of project to undertake. A successful project is one in which youth

learn to work together to meet a defined community need. Projects have involved working with school officials to strengthen after-school programs, exploring the heritage of a community, and starting community newspapers.

Community tour programs developed by older youth for younger children sponsor visits to police stations, fire departments, local banks, and health care offices. Each visit exposes youth to institutions that may have appeared intimidating, and that are often the backbone of the community.

Community Pride projects are as broad as the needs and diversity of the local community in which the club operates. The single element that runs through all projects is an understanding of a basic problem-solving or Community Action process.

Dixon project

Clubs interpret this process differently. One interesting interpretation was in Dixon, a rural community in Solano County. A group of youth cooper-

ated with adult leaders, county 4-H youth advisors, and specialists from the University of California, Davis in the development of a community survey. Also involved were a school principal and members of the community's governing body.

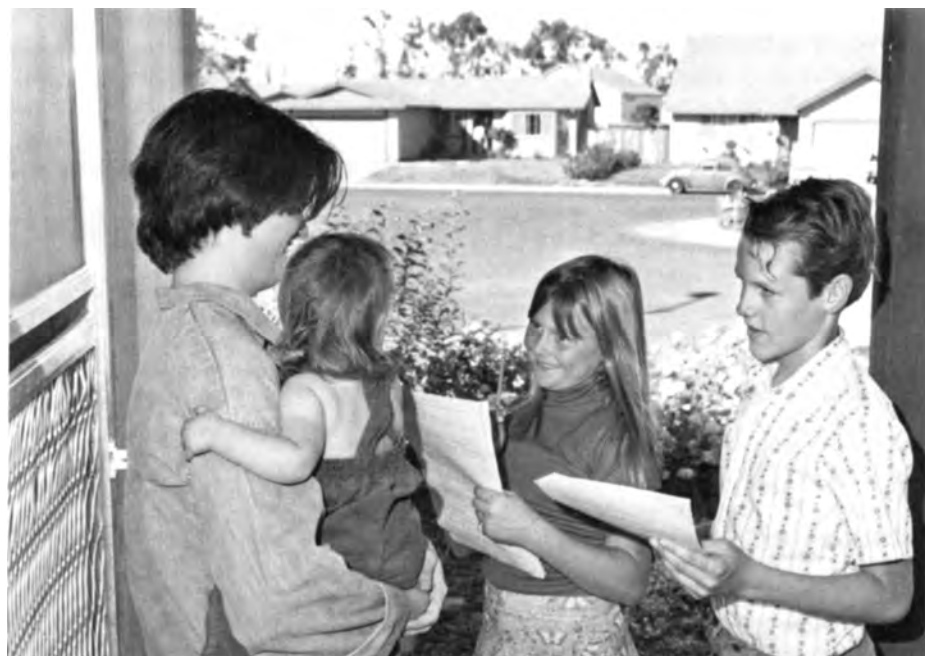
The 4-H'ers designed and administered the survey to a wide range of individuals in the community. They asked youth in junior and senior high schools, local citizens of the town and surrounding countryside, and senior citizens to participate in the survey.

Through their involvement in this project, the youth developed actual skills needed to conduct a needs assessment. They also learned how to administer and evaluate a survey. More importantly, these youth developed insight into the processes which govern their communities. Finally, they learned how to work within this system to initiate needed change.

Youth involvement

Community Pride is a program for all youth—from 9 to 19 years of age—in urban, suburban, or rural environments.

Although younger youth may have neither the interest nor the ability to investigate complex social action, they can and should be involved in planned community-oriented projects. In a group composed of younger members, efforts



Input from community residents is an important part of any 4-H Community Pride project. Here, Christy Ashburn and Steven Humphrey conduct a survey to help identify community needs. Their club will plan a project to meet these needs.

can be spent helping the group to develop a sense of community, a sense of belonging and responsibility. Older youth, depending on their interests and maturity, generally select their own project and develop their own plan of action.

The Dixon project handled differences in interests and abilities among members of different ages in an exemplary manner. Older members performed

jobs that required more experience, such as door-to-door interviewing; younger members conducted the inquiry into the types of community groups present in Dixon. All youth learned that each task was important to the success of the project, and learned to respect each other's roles.

Participants in Community Pride projects learn that an organized group of people can generally accomplish much more than a single individual, and learn how to develop an effective organization. Ideally, they learn to believe in themselves and their responsibility to play an active role in their communities.

Community Pride is an important program for both the involved youth and California's communities. It urges youth and adults to actively support the democratic principles upon which our society was founded. It encourages individuals to be self-reliant yet socially responsible as they transform the communities in which they live into the place they call "home." Community Pride encourages youth to be involved in the growth and change of their communities and encourages the communities to permit youth to play a crucial role in their community.

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Photos on page 5 by Tracy Borland.



Dixon 4-H'ers prepare to conduct their community survey. From left to right they are: Kate Whiting, volunteer leader Mrs. Edwina Koonce, Molly Pardi, and Christy Ashburn.