Home Demonstration Staff Conducts Expanded Program

By SARAH G. GARDINER
Lafayette Parish Home Demonstration Agent

The first were hired in March 1969 for an eight week program. They were selected from within the neighborhoods in which they would work. Each aide enrolled in the program fifteen families with two or more children between the ages of 6 to 18.

Diet Check

A diet recall for 24 hours was made on each child and each homemaker. The aides formed neighborhood groups of the children and began a series of lessons designed to motivate the children toward better food habits. The families were visited each week to repeat to the homemaker the lesson given to the children. The youth group met every week in a neighborhood backyard, under a carport, in a church or school—wherever a meeting place could be found.

Results of the program were so significant in terms of improved diets based on recalls taken at the end of the 8 week period that a permanent program was set up in the fall of 1969.

Today's program is an outgrowth of the original program, but planned to reach a larger number of people. Today nine sub-professional aides and one aide supervisor are employed. Each has a goal of reaching 100 families and 3 groups of youth per month. Aides have found that meeting with adult groups in groups of three, four or five in “someone’s” kitchen in the neighborhood helps them reach that number. They present a demonstration type lesson.

Aides Train

Each month, the sub-professional aides are given training under the supervision of the home demonstration agents and Extension Staff. Each training session involves a specific lesson to be taught the families and a lesson and activity for the youth.

The home demonstration agents also give the aides training in the social, psychological and economic factors necessary to understand their audience, in the knowledge and skills necessary to help family members acquire a reasonably adequate diet. They also train the aides to help family members toward solutions of problems that may act as barriers to improving food habits. Many of the in-laid, but fallacious, ideas toward food have to be overcome.

In addition to all aspects of acquiring an adequate diet such as nutrition, meal planning, food buying, stretching the food dollar, the aides are trained and do direct teaching in a number of areas. These include financial management, health and sanitation practices, gardening and food production and food preservation.

The home demonstration agents feel the nutrition program is most worthwhile. Research has shown that families who have enrolled in the program have substantially improved their diets particularly in respect to the amount of milk, fruits and vegetables consumed. Good nutrition is the basis of good health and this leads toward the Cooperative Extension Service goal of “better living for all people.”

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