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CORNHUSKER ECONOMICS

Community Study Circle - What Is It and How Does It Work?

Market Report	Yr Ago	4 Wks Ago	10/25/13
<u>Livestock and Products,</u>			
<u>Weekly Average</u>			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.....	\$127.12	\$126.00	\$133.55
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.....	162.62	190.63	188.93
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.....	148.63	175.48	168.93
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.....	198.49	193.43	200.09
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated.....	80.39	92.10	85.80
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean.....	86.46	100.57	94.42
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Wooled, South Dakota, Direct.....	98.50	128.38	148.50
National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB.....	300.33	283.98	306.01
<u>Crops,</u>			
<u>Daily Spot Prices</u>			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.....	8.35	7.02	7.19
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.....	7.38	4.42	4.26
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.....	15.36	12.35	12.54
Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.....	12.46	7.18	7.21
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN, bu.....	4.04	3.42	3.61
<u>Feed</u>			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.....	237.50	250.00	250.00
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.....	215.00	145.00	135.00
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.....	190.00	122.50	135.00
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture, Nebraska Average.....	275.00	210.00	195.75
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture, Nebraska Average.....	102.50	68.50	60.50
*No Market			

If the phrase “study circle” has you a bit curious ... then keep reading. It may not be what you think.

A Community Study Circle Program creates community change through action. It is . . .

- Organized by a diverse group of leaders from different parts of the community.
- Includes a large number of participants from all walks of life organized in small groups or “circles.”
- Uses balanced discussion materials, with a range of viewpoints.
- Relies on trained facilitators to run the small-group discussions.
- Helps the community connect dialogue to action and change.

Background:

The concept and practice of the study circle appeared in the late nineteenth century. The issues that were studied were broad political and social issues such as racial equity and poverty. By participating in study circles, citizens take “ownership” of the issues. They discover connections between public policies and their own lives, and they gain a deeper understanding of their own and others’ concerns.

Study circles arose with ambitions to create an educated citizenry. The ultimate goal of the study circle process is that local communities create and sustain public dialogue and problem solving. Such actions create strong local democracies that form the

cornerstone of a vibrant national democracy. The current study circle process was developed in 1989 by the Study Circle Resource Center, presently known as Everyday Democracy, which can be accessed at: <http://www.everyday-democracy.org/en/Index.aspx>.

Study circles are small-group dialogues where all voices are equal and people listen respectfully. It begins with planning and organizing (which often takes several weeks or months), followed by many facilitated, small-group dialogues involving large numbers of people. Participants examine complex issues and discuss possible solutions. These programs help communities develop their own ability to solve problems by bringing all kinds of people together to think, talk and work to create change.

Study Circles Are

- small-group discussions that combine dialogue, deliberation and problem solving. Based on balanced discussion materials, the dialogue is enriched by the members' knowledge and experience. Study circles are aided by an impartial facilitator whose job is to keep the discussion on track.
- discussions where people examine a public issue from many angles and work together to find solutions that can lead to change in the community.

Study Circles Are NOT. . . .

- **Conflict resolution** – a set of principles and techniques used in resolving conflict between individuals or groups.
- **Mediation** – a process used to settle disputes that relies on an outside neutral person to help the disputing parties come to an agreement. (Mediators often make excellent study circle facilitators, and have many skills in common.)
- **Focus groups** – small groups organized to gather or test information. Participants (who are sometimes paid) are often recruited to represent a particular viewpoint or target audience.
- **Traditional education** – where a teacher instructs students.
- **Facilitated meetings with a predetermined agenda** – such as a committee or board meeting with tasks established ahead of time.

- **Town meetings** – large-group meetings where citizens make decisions on community policies.
- **Public hearings** – large-group public meetings which allow concerns to be aired.

The Process In Action

Currently, the study circle process is part of a recently funded University of Nebraska Rural Futures Institute grant focused on rural community marketing. North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska are piloting the effort. The program, Marketing Hometown America, incorporates the study circle grassroots process.

- ➔ The community organizes a “kick off” event which publically promotes the process and encourages individuals to participate;
- ➔ Small groups of people (8-12) that meet for four, two hour sessions following the study guide;
- ➔ Groups individually decide when and where to meet – weekly sessions often work well;
- ➔ Participation of many different groups within the community is encouraged;
- ➔ Trained community facilitators lead each group, with note takers keeping records;
- ➔ After the groups finish the four sessions, they present their information at a public community Action Forum, where marketing ideas are prioritized and individuals volunteer for specific improvement projects to help their community become *more* marketable; and
- ➔ Groups form to work on community improvements, and community leaders use the newly generated marketing suggestions to attract new residents.

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