

1938

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Nebraska
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
U. of N. Agr. College and U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Extension
Circular
5541

1938

CAN WE BE TRUSTED WITH LEISURE?

The increasing amount of leisure available for recreation makes this question increasingly important. One thing which is equal for all of us as long as we live is TIME. How time is invested determines growth or decay, happiness or sorrow, success or failure. These results come about more from the use of leisure time than from other expenditures of time. Leisure is that time not spent in sleep or required activity. It is our "free" time, our "own" time. It is our recreation time. Does our use of it re-create us? It does if--

1. It differs from the daily round.
2. It provides for our active participation.
3. It rests overworked muscles and nerves.
4. It neither brutalizes men or shames women.
5. It gives an opportunity for self-expression.
6. It satisfies mental, physical and spiritual needs.
7. It does not become the end of existence.
8. It avoids over amusement.
9. It does not require an extravagant outlay of money.
10. It is engaged in for fun.
11. It sends us on our way refreshed and invigorated.

L. P. Jacks has well said, "The proper use of leisure is the skillful use of it." The skillful use of leisure enriches personality, gives security, confidence and satisfaction as new activity skills are acquired. How we use our leisure determines how much self-direction, self-control we have as well as the quality of our attitudes and appreciations; outlook and insight.

Leisure signifies freedom. Work, rest, and recreation are three fundamentals of life with which most of us are concerned. Work and rest care for themselves. Recreation is the one big factor about which we worry. Can we trust ourselves with this third phase of life? Can we be trusted with leisure?

Some of our own fathers and grandfathers were at one time the owners of a number of slaves. This ownership gave them more leisure. How was their leisure time used? Today we still have slaves--machines. Our present day slaves are not human; that is, most of them are not. Our slaves, the machines, have given us some leisure. The modern tractor, the grain binder, the combine, the corn picker, washing machines and electrical equipment are only a few of these slaves which help to release time for leisure.

The tractor has replaced the hoe and mule; the grain binder has replaced the cradle; the combine replaces the binder and thresher; the mechanical corn picker has replaced the hand picker; the modern two, three and four row cultivators are replacing the single row machines. Modernized household equipment has released some time for the homemaker.

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The questions which face civilization are: "What will man do with this machine-made time? Will he use it wisely? What would you do with one hour of leisure if given to you tomorrow at the busiest moment of the day? Can you be trusted with leisure?"

During the past five-depression years, the writer has had an opportunity to make some careful observation within a farm family, the mother of which has raised a large number of children and each is making a success in his own respective field. Three girls have chosen marriage and are raising families. Three other girls have chosen careers. The boys have been more or less successful in their ventures. What should be the leisure program for this mother, having spent the greater portion of her active life in raising this successful family? She has developed an inferiority complex and is now staying at home and doing nothing to improve herself or to keep up with her sons and daughters. It seems as though each individual should plan ahead for this span of life. Can this mother wisely use any new found leisure?

Program for Recreation

Mr. John Bradford, Rural Recreation Specialist of the National Recreation Association, has organized a "Ten Point Emphasis" program, which contains good suggestions. In this program, which we quote, you will find classified varied activities that help make an adequate program of worth-while-leisure-time. These may be used by individuals or groups.

1. Nature contacting and nature crafts--nature lore, Indian lore, camps, hikes, outings, nature guiding, nature books, collections and museums.

2. Social Recreation--Training for right social practices and contacts, the technique and management of parties, dances, dining, etc., the management and control of social recreational centers, and special planning of social contacts of young people of marriageable age.

3. Physical Activities--The culture of the body as a fine art--the Greek emphasis; physical education as equipment for fine and abundant living rather than as a preparation for sports and pastimes which are an end in themselves; the cultivation of self-chosen activities which carry over into adult life--hiking, aquatics, tennis, dancing, archery, golf, horseback riding, and many others.

4. Recreative Music--Music for the joy of self-expression through sound creation: bands, orchestras, chorals, community singing, harmonica bands, folk music, light opera, quartettes, etc.

5. Recreative Drama--There needs to be a tremendous expansion of the dramatic emphasis which has been too largely confined to the production of plays--we need much more dramatic expression through pageants, major and minor festivals, processions, pantomimes and tableaux, dramatized poems, dramatized stories, dramatized costume parties, shadow graphs and puppetry.

6. Rhythmics--Fundamental training in rhythmics: folk, national athletics, interpretative, gymnastic, classical, and social dancing.

7. The Recreative Arts of Line, Color, Form and Perspective--Painting, Sculpture, Plastics, and Photographic arts.

8. Scientific Experimentation Hobbies--Astronomical, botanical, electrical, chemical, aeronautical and radio. Thousands of boys and adults are tinkering with automotives, radio, aircraft, boat building, and other outlets.

9. Handicraft Arts--work in wood, metal, textiles, paper, leather, reed and raffia, bead and wire work.

10. Linguistic Arts--old-fashioned bees, debates, forums, essay writing, topical writing, short-story writing, play writing, writing of historical pageants, linguistic arts memory contests of familiar literary expressions and the cultivation of recreational reading--The San Francisco Recreation Department is putting on weekly recreative spelling contests over the radio. There are scores of short-story writing organizations in the west limited to amateur productions. Texas conducts farm women's reporter schools, training them to write "news" stories. There is need for a revival of participation in public speaking discussion groups, and debating.

People need recreation and will have it. Mother Nature has made us that way. If work and play are to be efficient and worthwhile, they should be organized. That is, they should follow a definite system. Every rural community should organize its recreation program. Leisure time is like dynamite, useful or dangerous, according to the way it is used. It is valuable capital and will pay large dividends if properly handled. It is a nuisance and a pest when wrongly used or neglected.

Much more of school, college and university education in the future will undoubtedly be in the field of preparation in the cultural arts and in "educating" the student in the "art of living" as well as in the methods of getting a living. We have no apology to offer in seeking to interest the ablest rural community leaders in worthwhile leisure activities.

Let us imagine that we have our group organized and want a program for one year. The following suggestions might be helpful in organizing a balanced program:

- Two meetings -- Music (appreciation, types, singing, etc.)
- Three meetings--General social game meetings, including singing games.
- Two meetings -- Dramatic arts in all its phases.
- Two meetings -- Literary (debates, discussions, speakers).
- Two meetings -- Special parties, (watchnight, Hallowe'en, birthday and Christmas)
- One meeting -- Hobbies (discussion and a hobby show).

Suggested Outline for Monthly Meeting

The strength of an organization depends, to a large degree, upon the programs for their local units. To be successful and to hold their members, these programs should begin on time, end on time, and be diversified. Programs may be built from the following suggestions:

1. Community singing.
2. Instrumental or vocal solo.
3. Short talk by agricultural or home agent or other specialist. (This person should be called on for a definite subject and be given plenty of notice.)
4. History of agriculture in the county and development of farming.
5. Quartette or other musical or entertainment feature, such as school orchestra, glee club, a project club chorus or a folk dance in costume.
6. Principal talk of the evening, or a discussion, debate, special study of reports, or a book review. Sometimes a one-act play, concert, play night, entertaining a visiting group, a demonstration, a Nationality

- group or a fun stunt may be featured.
7. Business: committee reports, old business and new business.
 8. Closing: summary and announcements.

Today there are many important problems, economic, social, educational, political, cultural and spiritual, facing farm people. Unless time and thought are given to these matters, the hope of advance is lessened. An informed and intelligent public opinion is more necessary today than ever before. This kind of an opinion does not "just happen."

American people are independent and self-reliant, yet have a highly developed spirit of cooperation and community welfare. They have grouped themselves into communities, realizing that neighbors and friends help to make life happy. The contribution of each is necessary for the good of all and the community is a unit which can serve in developing ideas and talents in a way no other unit can.

Rural communities exist because people who have interests in common have grouped themselves together to follow their common interests. It is becoming more and more necessary for rural people to learn to work together in organized groups. The individual strengthens the group and the group strengthens the individual. But before people can work together they must become acquainted with one another, learn about interests and aims of one another and play together. To be truly helpful, they must share one another's cares and joys. This "working together" must be learned and "playing together" must be learned. And when they are learned and practiced, the word "community" begins to take on a new and broader meaning. There's a spirit born which encourages better understanding and appreciation for the farm, for the home, for the community, and for each member in it.

There can be no real rural happiness without cooperation on the part of the people, and it cannot come unless rural people play together, enjoy, and appreciate one another.

Keep on Living

On his sixtieth birthday a man bade farewell to his surroundings and retired, satisfied with his accomplishments that he had made for himself a success in the world. A few days later he was sitting on the porch of his home when a car drove up to the curb and stopped. The man who got out was his family physician. As he came up to the house from the road, the idler wondered why the doctor had come. Neither he nor his wife were ill and each seemed to be in robust health. Upon inquiry as to why the doctor had come, the reply was, "No one called me. I saw a piece in the paper that you had retired, so I thought I would call around and advise you about your future."

This puzzled the retired man and he stated that he hadn't any future, that he was living now to enjoy himself by doing nothing. The physician responded by saying, "I was afraid of that; it's the reason I'm here. As your physician I came to warn you against indolence. Idle machines, as you know, depreciate from rust; idle men fall into decay; idleness can kill with just as deadly an aim as any epidemic. First, it eats the spirit, then it shrivels the body. That's why so many men who retire in the best of health are weighted down by a headstone a few years later. My prescription for this disease, which you are about to have, is to find an interest or a hobby, so that this leisure, which you have earned, will not become boresome."

The retired man took this advice with a great deal of thought. He had always liked to putter around the house with tools, fixing this and that. Now, he decided to turn amateur carpenter. He added to his tool chest. He subscribed to woodwork magazines. Soon he found himself occupying his leisure time with something which he was enjoying more than anything before in his life.

Recreation which is possible only during leisure time, or time free from required duties should:

Actually aid in developing a whole life.
Increase individual resources for the enjoyment of leisure.
Join individuals with human interest.
Aid people in becoming recreationally independent.
Scorn regimentation and formalization.
Have a cultural background.

Discussion Questions

How does your family play together in the home?

Is it necessary for your young people to "go to town" for their recreation?

What could you do to improve the leisure time atmosphere in your own home?

What does your community have to offer in the line of a leisure time program?

Is your local school house used at least once each month during the year, for community programs and parties? List these activities.

What other uses could you make of your local school house?

How can you bring all the people in your community together for a program?

Why haven't some of these ideas been carried out before?

Can we be trusted with leisure? Why not?

When is recreation re-creational? When is it not re-creational? When is it "wreck"-creational?

(Prepared by Ralph D. Copenhaver, Assistant Extension Specialist,
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