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D. F. F. A. DADS OF THE FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA

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The agricultural program in the schools of Minnesota is a busy and ever challenging one to the teachers of agriculture. All-day classes, part-time classes, adult classes, F.F.A. activities, together with many outside duties in urban and rural services demand that the teacher of agriculture receive local help in carrying out a good agricultural program as set up by the state and national departments of education and expected by the local community. Three years ago I found this help in the Dads of the Future Farmers of America. The thought that other teachers might be interested in the idea has prompted me to write this brief story of our helpful venture.

Origin

During my years of work with boys in their many activities I have observed that the dads are more interested in their own sons than are other men. If this be true, then the dads would be the best group of men to have in an organization to study their sons' personal problems and their sons' problems in agricultural education. It occurred to me that I could carry out a better agricultural program if the dads would become more interested in and better acquainted with the F.F.A. program.

With the above facts in mind and the knowledge that many growing youth organizations are sponsored by a group of adults, I have taken the dads of the boys who are members of the local chapter of the F.F.A. and organized them into a sponsoring organization known as the D. F. F. A., "Dads of the Future Farmers of America." That was a good idea, but we soon discovered that mother is also very much interested in the activities of her son. Therefore, after the first year, the mothers were voted in as honorary members. All mothers are interested in the programs and they have brought into the organization more color, song, sociability, interest and a larger attendance.

Aims and Objectives

To bring the dads and mothers together to study their sons and their son's edu-

cational problems.

To give to the F.F.A. a sponsoring body of adults who are most likely to give help to the boys in their daily desires and home needs.

To bring the dads and boys closer together as pals and partners, both in play and in work.

To give to the teacher a group of adults to help solve the problems of the individual and of the class, which are, in fact, directly or indirectly the parents' problems.

To keep the teacher in close contact with dad and mother and the farm.

To give to the teacher a good adult evening class.

To bring about a closer relationship between the dad and son, thus bringing about more happiness in the son's life and in his financial success.

To guide the son in the direction he should go from where he is to where he ought to be.

To deal with the son's specific goals of achievement along the way of educational development.

To give to the F.A.A. a progressive program in farming.

To develop a good agricultural program.

To develop both dad and son in appreciative attitudes toward scientific development in agriculture.

To give to the dad a solution to some of his economic problems.

To give the son an opportunity to honor his father and mother.

To improve and build for better farm living.

Organization

The aims and objectives of the organization were explained to the F.F.A. boys at their regular F.F.A. meeting. The boys were fully convinced of the advantages to them of such an organization. Most of the boys not only asked their fathers to attend but urged them to come. After this, I tried to visit all parents before a written invitation was extended to the first meeting. The dads were notified of the first meeting by the sons.

Extracts from first letter:

Dear Dad:

"This is what your son calls you in school. I have your son in my class and he is a fine fellow. I have 49 other farm boys, a group of boys who have so many problems it is hard for me to help solve all of them. Maybe you did not

D.F.F.A. Initiation Ceremony for the Green Hand Degree by F.F.A.

Officers and Sons

Adviser: Mr. Secretary, you have the names of several dads who wish to join the Dads of the Future Farmers of America Organization. Will you please read the names.

Secretary: Reads names.

President: Mr. Adviser, are the sons of the candidates regularly enrolled in a class of vocational agriculture?

Adviser: They are.

President: Do the sons of these dads possess the degree of Green Hand?

Adviser: They do.

President: What further rights do these dads possess for becoming Green Hands?

Adviser: The constitution so states, I quote: "The Dads of the Future Farmers of America shall possess the same degree as their sons."

President: Then we will proceed. Mr. Secretary, will you read again the names of the successful candidates and as each name is read will the candidate take his station. (President tells where.)

Secretary: Reads names slowly. Waits for each to rise before calling next name but calls before station is reached.

President: Mr. Secretary, will you read the aims and objectives of the D.F.F.A. organization.

Secretary: Reads aims and objectives. (Omitted.)

President: Candidates, you have heard the aims and objectives of the Dads of the Future Farmers Organization. Will you strive to carry out these aims and objectives? The answer is "I will."

Candidates: I will.

President: Let me congratulate you. I hope that you will carry the spirit of the aims and objectives in your hearts.

President: Mr. Reporter.

Reporter: The business of farming is the keystone of the arch of industries under which all time must pass. To be a good farmer is one of the greatest and noblest callings. "The first farmer was the first man, and all historic nobility rests on possession and use of lands."

President: Mr. Treasurer.

Treasurer: May I call your attention to the picture above my station? Washington was an engineer, a general, a president and the Father of Our Country, but he was a farmer first, last and all the time. His old home at Mount Vernon is a model farmstead. He kept farm accounts, practiced rotations, loved country life and lived the life of a country gentleman. Another of our former Presidents was Thomas Jefferson. He was the author of the Declaration of Independence, the author of the Statute for

Religious Freedom and founder of a state university, America's first architect and statesman as well as president. He found time to terrace his Virginia farm and make it productive. He invented the steel plow and the grain drill. Like Washington, he spent his last years on the farm. These men, early in our history, clearly demonstrated that a real farmer who uses his training and intelligence can reach the top rung of the ladder of success. May you use your talents and training for the betterment of yourselves, your sons and your fellow men.

President: Mr. Secretary.

Secretary: Let me call your attention to this ear of corn. Corn, or maize, is an American crop. It is grown in practically every state in the Union. That is why a cross section of an ear of corn is used as one of the symbols of our organization. Every son who is awarded the fourth degree is awarded a gold key which bears this cross section of an ear of corn upon its face. May you and your son work hard and advance in rank until you, too, can wear the key of an American Farmer.

President: Mr. Adviser.

Adviser: The owl is the time-honored symbol of wisdom. Knowledge, properly weighed and digested, brings wisdom. Without education we are handicapped. The uneducated man can not compete with the educated man, other things being equal. We are asking that you and your son continue to study and that you so apply yourselves to your problems that your brain, like Jefferson's, will direct your hands to do things that make life easier and happier on the farm.

President: Mr. Vice-President.

Vice-President: The plow is the emblem of labor. It has been the forerunner of civilization. Without Jefferson's steel plow this marvellous machine age would still be far into the future. Although it looks simple, the plow is a very intricate piece of machinery. There is a lot of mathematics in a plow share. Without hard labor we can accomplish little, unless our labor is directed by an intelligent mind we accomplish nothing. Work hard, but plan before you work.

President: The rising sun is emblematic of the new day that will dawn when all dads of Future Farmers in all states have learned to cooperate. Farm work has been hard. Every farmer competes with his neighbors in the markets. The farm income has been low. The farm family has had to do without many of the conveniences that city people have. Only cooperation can change this condition. Here we learn scientific production and marketing. We practice thrift. We have recreation and educational enter-

tainment. We welcome you as members of the Montevideo chapter. You will be the leaders in this chapter in two or three years. We need you and we need rural leadership. May you prove worthy of the honor we have bestowed upon you. I will now ask your son to present you with the Green Hand emblem. (Raps three times for sons to rise.) Will the son please present his dad with the emblem of a Green Hand.

Sons: Present the emblems to their fathers. After presentation the son shakes hands with father.

President: Mr. Adviser, will you please explain the emblem.

Adviser: The emblem worn by Green Hands is made of bronze. Bronze, because of its hardness and endurance, has been used for ages by men who sought a good substitute for crude stone instruments. May those qualities of hardness and endurance carry you far in our organization.

President: In behalf of the Dads of the Future Farmers of America, I welcome you as Green Hands. (Picture taken.) Please be seated.

D.F.F.A. Ceremony for the Raising of Green Hands to the Degree of Future Farmers by F.F.A. Officers and Sons

President: The Secretary has the names of several members of the Dads of the Future Farmers of America who wish to be raised from the degree of Green Hand to that of a Future Farmer. Will the Secretary please read the names.

(Note.—Lack of space makes it necessary to omit the impressive ritual procedure employed in the raising of Green Hands to the degree of Future Farmers. The activity is designed to give the boys an opportunity to express appreciation to the dads for their loyal support to the F.F.A. program.)

D.F.F.A. Ceremony for Mothers, by F.F.A. Officers and Sons

President: We are very happy tonight to initiate into honorary membership to the Dads of the Future Farmers of America the mothers of the members of the F.F.A. Green Hand degree. Also to honor the mothers who are already honorary members of the D.F.F.A. organization.

President: Mr. Adviser, are mothers of all the F.F.A. members eligible for honorary membership?

Adviser: Yes, the constitution so states. I quote: "The mothers of all members of the F.F.A. organization are entitled to honorary membership."

President: Then we shall proceed.

Mr. Secretary, will you please read the names of the mothers and as each name is read will the mothers take their stations. (President tells where.)

Secretary: Reads names slowly. Waits for each to rise before calling next name but calls before station is reached.

President: I congratulate you on behalf of the Dads of the Future Farmers of America. Pie and coffee, laughter and son, do much in any organization. Your encouragement, suggestions and decisions are needed. May your affiliation prove valuable to all.

President: (Raps three times for sons to rise.) Will the son now present his mother with the emblem of an honorary member. (Emblem is the red carnation.)

Sons: (Pin on flowers. After presentation, son shakes hands with mother.)

President: Mr. Adviser, will you further explain the significance of these flowers?

Adviser: Mr. President and Mothers: These flowers presented to you by your sons are to show you just a little of their appreciation of the many things that you have done for them throughout the year. They want and need your counsel and guidance. Wear these flowers, if only for tonight. Tomorrow you may lay them away with your precious belongings and may your sons again next year be allowed this pleasure of showing you their love and appreciation.

President: Now, on behalf of the Dads of the Future Farmers of America, I confer upon you honorary membership in the Montevideo Chapter, together with all its privileges and honors. (Pictures taken.) Please be seated.

Results

Parents were invited once a month to the agricultural department.

Parents became acquainted with sons' project books, references, laboratory equipment and the school in general.

Problems of the boy, home and community were presented throughout the year as they appeared. At each meeting the dads used the F.F.A. manuals for opening and closing ceremony.

Dads learned the different F.F.A. degrees and because their degrees are the same as their sons' they seemed to take a great deal of interest as to the kinds of projects the sons should carry on.

More and better varieties of corn and grain were grown.

More sons secured and are raising higher grades of animals.

Cars for trips are now easily obtained. Dads will often go along to such places as the West Central School and Station at Morris.

Several dads have expressed a desire to attend the marketing school.

This year they are sending an F.F.A. member to the National F.F.A. Convention.

Several financial problems were solved.

For the first time, the boys had a chance to initiate their parents into an organization, present them with emblems and congratulate them.

It has given me closer friendship with many parents and a greater enjoyment in the last line of the F.F.A. motto—"Living to Serve."