



100 Years Of 4-H In Wisconsin

Campbellsport 4-H Club History

The 4-H program had its beginning in the early 1900s. The forerunner of the present day 4-H club started with a corn club for boys and a tomato club for girls in rural schools. In 1914, Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act establishing the Cooperative Extension Service. The act stated that extension service would provide people with useful information relating to agriculture and home economics. Funds were provided to organize boys and girls clubs and by 1924 the name "4-H Club" had become commonplace.

The Campbellsport 4-H Club was organized as the "Mighty Mites 4-H Club" in 1942. The club had an adult general leader and six female members. The first general leader was Mrs. Esther Schrank. Leverne Ablard Senn, Lila Ablard Ebert, Elaine Schrank and Mae Schrank were four of the first six members. World War II was happening at the time, so victory gardens, paper drives and collecting milkweed pods (used in life jackets) were patriotic efforts performed by the club members.

By 1944, the all female club had changed its name to The "Campbellsport Farmerettes." Community service and education on modern agricultural practices were still the primary focus of the group and its membership was growing. By 1954, the club had two general leaders and 14 female members.

In January 1964, the club underwent another change. Boys were allowed to join the club and the name was changed to "Campbellsport 4-H Club." Instead of focusing on one project, many clubs were expanding to multiple projects. Instead of one or two leaders, many parents volunteered to lead projects where they had expertise. The Cooperative Extension Service provided the latest information developed by the University research programs to these leaders.

Popular projects at that time included dairy,

gardening, poultry, foods and sewing. 4-H members took an average of three projects per year and exhibited them at the Fond du Lac County Fair.

The number of 4-H clubs in the county grew over the years reaching a high of 49 clubs in 1959. Membership in those clubs also grew, reaching an all-time high of over 1,500 members in 1969. Campbellsport 4-H club was one of the larger clubs in the county. The highest recorded membership occurred in 1985 when Campbellsport had 111 members. Since then the number of clubs and members has dropped. Today with smaller families the number of clubs registered in the county is 21 with a total county membership of 767.

Over the years, the scope and variety of projects that members can take has grown. From a focus on one project, today's members can choose from almost 100 different projects. The University of Wisconsin Extension Service has project literature to help members learn about what interests them.

Today, arts and crafts is the most popular project followed closely by photography and foods and nutrition. Livestock projects have expanded to include dairy, beef, hogs, sheep, poultry, rabbits, goats, horses, dogs, cats, and even llamas! Some of the more unusual projects include aerospace, communications, nature science, self-determined, youth leadership, and shooting sports which includes guns and archery.

The 4-H program through these various projects seeks to develop each member's potential. The life skills youth learn will stay with them throughout their whole life. The program is focused on developing tomorrow's leaders. Members learn to serve their communities by recycling, food drives and helping sponsor community events.

During the 1960s through the 1980s, the Campbellsport 4-H Club

was one of 13 organizations that were part of the Fond du Lac Recycling Cooperative. Members worked at the recycling center four times a year earning between \$60-\$100 each time to support the club's activities. The club also maintained a flower bed and sign at the Ashford Town Hall. A second flower bed was established and maintained by the club in memory of Robert Wilke, former Campbellsport Police Chief and long-time 4-H leader, at Columbus Parc.

In June 1976, the Campbellsport 4-H Club hosted an Ice Cream Social as a way to promote Wisconsin Dairy Products. The event was organized by Mrs. Beatrice Gudex. That event has evolved into a fundraiser that still promotes dairy products, raises money for charity from a milk mustache contest and promotes a sense of community where folks can gather to enjoy good food and good company.

The members elect officers and conduct business at monthly meetings through the use of Parliamentary procedure. Volunteer adult leaders host project meetings where members learn about different projects. County Fair is a great opportunity to show off 4-H members hard work. Members complete a record book at the end of each year reflecting on what they have learned.

At the end of each year, members are recognized at the annual club achievement night for all their hard work. Outstanding 4-H members from each club are recognized at the county achievement night.

The Campbellsport 4-H Club prides itself as a youth organization that engages the entire family but allows each member to develop to their full potential. 4-H strives to develop members into creative, community-oriented, service-minded leaders for tomorrow!

—Katie Gierach from the Campbellsport 4-H wrote the article that was in the February 6th Campbellsport News.