



100 Years Of 4-H In Wisconsin

The History Of Wisconsin 4-H

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In 1882 a man by the name of Ransom Asa Moore, who was the president of the Kewaunee Fair, the Agricultural Society, and the superintendent of the Kewaunee County Schools at the time, wanted to give kids a new and fun opportunity by organizing a “youth movement.”

He called this the “Young People’s Contest Club,” which later would come to be known as 4-H. The first “Young People’s Contest Club” included over 6,000 farm kids from all the Kewaunee County schools, who were expected to produce and exhibit fruits, vegetables, and livestock.

Moore sold his idea to many influential men in Richland County. Start-

ing in the spring of 1904, a contest was opened up to farm boys under the age of 20, which was called the “Great Youth Corn Growing Contest.”

The boys in the contest were given seed packets in the spring to grow corn on their home farms. The corn from their plots was entered in the contest at the Richland County Fair Grounds which was held in late September of 1904.

The first prize for winning this contest was a Rock Island planter and an Eagle Claw walking cultivator, which was worth \$40 at the time. By 1910, these corn growing contests were offered at 45 fairs in the state and became open to both boys and girls.

By applying these same ideas, contests expanded to animal care, growing different crops,

food preservation and preparation, sewing, and much more. Moore’s movement had become so successful by 1910 that he hired an assistant. His name was Thomas Bewick, an agronomy instructor at UW.

In 1914, the Cooperative Extension Service was established and Bewick was named the first State 4-H leader for Wisconsin. Bewick felt that it was important for the boys and girls in the club to provide service to their community, country, and humanity.

Even though work like Moore’s was being done in many other states, his work in Wisconsin is what led him to be known as the “Father of Wisconsin 4-H.” Today, Wisconsin 4-H includes more than 150,000 youth and more than 28,000 volunteer leaders.