

Lebanon 4-H Playground Project

by: Melissa Piper
Associate Editor

Many people still think of 4-H as the same old vegetable garden steers and pigs and cooking and sewing for the girls.

However, over the past few years 4-H has taken on a brand new image. Today, a myriad of projects from knitting to rocketry can be taken.

Why the change? Today more than ever before more and more urban youngsters are being introduced to 4-H and since cities lack the space needed for strictly agricultural projects many new areas of interest are being used for 4-H projects.

For the past eight years, Lebanon has been introducing 4-H to children in the city of Lebanon by using existing playgrounds in the summer.

Within the city of Lebanon there are twelve playgrounds where 4-H summer aids teach crafts, cooking and activities, hoping to acquaint youngsters to 4-H and it's many opportunities.

Barb Bliss, one of the summer aids, explained the Urban project, "we are trying to let children know that 4-H is not just an organization for farm youngsters".

She added that many feel it is just for children who live in the country and that it has no interest to city youth.

However, helping children get interested in projects that include making bracelets, decorative jars, baking cookies and planting gardens has made their job easier.

The aids, who are Sue Secrist, Barb Bliss, Don Hostetter and Laura Grimes, visit eight playgrounds during the week along with taking the children on field trips and hikes.

Don Hostetter, the only male aid, has also sparked interest in the 4-H physical fitness program, enlisting eight children from around the city to participate at 4-H



Sue Secrist and Don Hostetter, 4-H Summer Aids show children at the Sixth Street Playground in Lebanon

how to make bracelets during a craft presentation.

Lancaster Farming Photos



Learning can be fun, especially if a child knows that he is making something useful. Lebanon children have been fortunate this summer as 4-H aids have taught them crafts, cooking and gardening.

Achievement Festival to be held next week at Penn State.

The children will be participating in the President's Physical Fitness competition which includes soft ball throws, standing broad jump, 50 yard dash and pull-ups.

The aids have also taken the children to tour Ja-Mar and Dol-Mar Dairy Farms on hikes. This year the aids will be escorting the children to the Lebanon County Fair.

The playground project has received a good amount of cooperation from the area merchants especially in donating material and goods needed for the crafts and projects. One textile firm in the area donated paint and silk screen material to make all of the children 4-H T-shirts.

The project, which this summer includes over 800

youngsters, is specially funded by the Lebanon County Commissioners. The Commissioners became interested in the idea almost eight years ago when they were concerned about children having nothing to do in the summer. Impressed with the work the 4-H clubs were doing, the commissioners asked the cooperative extension service to develop a project for the summer playgrounds.

The Urban 4-H Project has been well received in the area and has even sparked interest for many adults. It is hoped that in the future a 4-H club within the city of Lebanon will become started by interested adults who realize that 4-H is more than just cows and cooking.

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