

ENEP teaches nutrition to the needy

By JOANNE SPAHR

LANCASTER, Pa. - For a farmer who can proudly say, "I, alone, feed 56 people," it is hard to believe that some individuals around him don't have enough to eat, or don't know what goes into a nutritious meal. But, unfortunately, it's true—even in Lancaster County, the garden spot of the world. In this county, alone, 5288 families (at the time of the 1970 census) earned incomes below the poverty level. At 6.5 per cent of all county families, Lancaster was only 1.4 per cent below the national average (which includes all the poverty pockets in all the major cities in the United States).

And, in fact, 70.1 per cent of all poverty stricken people live outside of the city of Lancaster.

"Many, many people don't realize the problem, here," states Doris Thomas, Lancaster County Extension home economist. She, however, was rudely awakened to the incidence of poverty in the county in 1971 when Lancaster became part of the Expanded Nutrition Education Program (ENEP) which she heads.

ENEP is a combination of educational, social, and



Doris Thomas (standing) and Jan Escott look over plans for this year's ENEP youth program.

counselling services aimed at an audience of low income people. The goal of those involved with the program is to try to educate the unknowing as to how their diet affects them and how improve it.

The program is funded by the USDA through the land grant universities (such as Penn State) which ad-

minister it. So far, approximately 58 counties are taking part in the service.

"Those that don't usually lack the staff," states Mrs. Thomas.

Originally, in 1969 when the program was first implemented, it was aimed only at adults. In 1970, a youth phase was added to reinforce what the mother in the family unit was taught, and a year later, Lancaster County picked up the program. Families are referred by social services, agencies, and schools, etc.

Three weeks ago, Jan Escott, from Bethlehem, took over the job of Lancaster County nutrition assistant, a position that had been vacated several months earlier. Miss Escott, who is a graduate of Penn State University with a bachelor of science degree in foods and nutrition, is primarily responsible for youth activities.

"My job is to coordinate the youth program and provide materials and

training for the leaders," she explains.

Basically, she works with the youth through 4-H nutrition clubs, organized according to location around the county. While they are referred to as 4-H clubs, they do have some unique differences that set them apart from the 4-H program. Usually, the children come from families on ENEP, although other eager and enthusiastic children are not turned away. And, in every instance, the club has a core or nucleus of nutrition

education which sometimes branches off into sewing, grooming, or other topics the children want to learn about.

"In general, we teach them the Basic Four food groups," says Miss Escott. "I was surprised to learn how many people don't know what a balanced meal is," she remarked.

The clubs will be organizing in the middle of May, and the nutrition aides will start their training sessions about then. Nutrition aides are paraprofessional women

from the community who are trained by the staff at the Extension service to help the people in the communities.

"Research found, almost from the very beginning, that those people on the program were much more willing to learn from the aides than from others," says Mrs. Thomas. So, these paraprofessionals became part of the program. Lancaster County now has 12, supervised by Tillie Gibson. usually, the clubs start when

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