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L. J. K. R.

MOST SUCCESSFUL CLUB WORK DEPENDENT UPON COOPERATION OF  
PARENTS

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A radio talk by Mrs. Harold French, Local Leader, Hillsboro County, N.H. delivered in the National 4-H Club radio program, July 7, 1934 and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

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Nearly everyone is familiar to some extent with 4-H club work and may be acquainted with some 4-H member. I have been closely connected with this activity for rural boys and girls for several years, more recently as a leader of a local club of girls. I have three children of my own who will enroll in club work when they become old enough. I shall encourage them for I have found that the success and happiness of a club member depends to a great extent upon the cooperation of the parents.

I began my 4-H career by joining a sewing club. Not liking sewing I soon lost interest and would perhaps have dropped club work had not my wise parents intervened. Dad, knowing my love for the outdoors, helped me with a garden and Mother taught me to can. I feel sure my enthusiasm would have waned if my folks had not been keenly interested. Dad always found time to help and advise me and Mother was never too busy to help with club reports or compose a new club song.

Five years later I started teaching a rural school in Dunbarton, New Hampshire. Club work was just beginning in that community and it was my privilege to assist in leading the club there for two years. I began to appreciate what my folks had done for me and to notice how some parents cooperated and some did not.

One father seldom allowed his boys to attend 4-H meetings, claiming it was foolishness and that he could teach his boys farming better than any club. These boys lost interest, not only in the club but in the farm. Today they are all in the city, glad to be away from a place where there is all work and no play.

Another boy came regularly to club meetings, was given encouragement at home and time to attend club activities. Today he is ably assisting in the management of his father's farm, having completed ten years of outstanding club work.

After teaching two years in the rural school, I became assistant club agent in Hillsborough county, New Hampshire. In this field even more than before, I saw the value of parental backing. I remember one Mother who wanted her daughter to join the club and urged the girl to complete the work. Other members lost interest and dropped out; each year others started but few finished. But this mother kept her girl's interest alive. Her father took her to county meetings. Soon she was old enough to lead a group herself, which she has done very successfully. A few discouraging words and lack of interest on her parents' part would have robbed this girl of a splendid club career and a real enjoyment of home duties.

Soon after marrying and making my home in Hudson I again took up local leadership. Since then our club group has grown from ten to fifty. To give due credit to the parents would take more time than I am allowed. I can only enumerate a few specific cases but fully appreciate them all.

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One mother who is expert at sewing, has acted as project advisor for the last few years. She has made the girls feel free to run in at any time and get advice. She has assisted them in choosing materials, styles and colors. This has been a real service to the club and has formed a closer bond of friendship between her daughter and herself.

Another mother kindly acted as our 4-H club cook for the week without charge. Several mothers have taken care of my small children while I took the club girls to camp. Twice when I have been sick for some time parents have opened their homes for meetings so that club work could go on.

When parents do not urge their children to attend meetings, these children soon lose interest, feel left out, and complain because they do not win trips and often drop out. We try to keep them in but can do little without help or at least interest in the home. Three parents that I know have insisted that club work be well done before their children join other organizations. This teaches them to one thing well rather than several poorly.

The Dads have helped us, too. One Dad awards a "Best Sports" prize annually at camp which arouses much interest and friendly competition.

During our eight years we have taken approximately fifty trips and the Dads and Mothers have furnished the cars. These trips have not only been great treats to the members but in many instances have given the parents a new vision of club work and its possibilities.

These incidents and many similar ones show how much parents can do to encourage their children. One of the greatest aims in club work is to better conditions on the farm and in the home. The closer the bond and the greater the cooperation between Dad and son and Mother and daughter, the nearer we will come to reaching our goal.

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