

OUR EXPERIENCE WITH 4H

By Meredith Curtis--1997

We have been involved with 4H for four years now and it has been a wonderful experience for our family. Although secular, we have run into many Christians in the 4H Office and our group consists of Christian homeschoolers. Each mother is also a helper. Each meeting is opened with prayer.

4H's purpose is to teach life skills to children and to give them the opportunity to demonstrate those skills through exhibits and demonstrations. 4H also exposes children to parliamentary procedure and the different offices of a club (president, secretary, chaplain, etc.).

The topics available to choose from are quite numerous and include: gardening, cooking, sewing, livestock, arts, crafts, woodworking, management skills, public speaking, bicycle safety, automotive repair, electricity, health, and interior decorating.

The child and parent chose one or several project books to work on. For instance, Katie Beth chose a project book on beginning photography. When the project book was completed, she had learned the parts of a camera, how to center the subject, focusing, the use of a flash, the effect of light, camera and film care, how to mount pictures, and taking trick pictures. She took several rolls of film and even made a simple camera. She then had to plan and prepare an exhibit of her photographs. She also made a poster to exhibit. She also had to give a short demonstration to her 4H group on an aspect of photography or camera care.

The children earn ribbons for their exhibits with monetary rewards. If the demonstrations are done at a county level, they also can earn ribbons. At the end of the year, all their work is combined into a project book that is turned in, evaluated and returned as a permanent record of their work.

Not only do they acquire the skills taught in the project books, but also public speaking skills, presentation skills, penmanship and artistic skills (posters), and decision making skills (what should I demonstrate? What should I exhibit?).

Our Homemaking Days:

With four daughters to prepare for motherhood and homemaking, I have set aside Thursdays to teach my daughter homemaking skills such as sewing, cooking, baking, hospitality, needlework, laundry, interior decorating, etc.

Some years I have done this alone. But other years, other homeschooling moms have joined me and we have coopered. This has been fun fellowship for the girls and they have learned skills that I don't have such as knitting. We have used 4H project books to teach many of the skills and if there is no project book, we use a Do Your Own Thing project book. If the girls are part of a 4H Club, they are able to earn credit for all they learn, as well as ribbons.

We open the day with devotions related to godly womanhood. We read the Bible, discuss it and pray together. We discuss application from Bible passages to our lives now as well as to their lives when they are grown and managing their homes.

The girls wear Sunday dresses for homemaking day and this sets a more feminine mood for the day. The exception to this is gardening days where we dress more casually. We have lunch together and practice proper table manners and polite conversations.

In the morning, we will work on a subject such as Interior Decorating. We'll read books and articles aloud discussing the content. We will observe samples or pictures of the material being learned. Then we do a project. One day, I cleared off a table top in the living room and let each girl roam through my home searching for objects to make a tabletop display. Each girl took turns arranging her display and telling the rest of us why she chose each item and why she arranged it the way she did. The girls had to have as their reasoning, principles of balance, color, texture, proportion and style. They enjoyed that assignment a lot!

After lunch, we worked on a craft project such as embossing, card making, or making room decorations. Friendships were built as the girls shared ideas, help and encouragement with one another.

On sewing days, we set up several sewing machines and sergers. We all enjoyed chatting as we stitched. Maybe that would be the 90's version of a quilting bee. (Yes! A quilting bee is on our agenda down the road---first we have to get quilting down a little better.) We started out simply with pillows, pillowcases, and simple skirts to build the girls' confidence in their sewing abilities.

Katie Beth (12) and Julianna (9) both have a hope chest and are beginning to fill it with treasures (Christmas pillowcases, napkins, placemats, etc.) for their future home. Homemaking Day sets aside the time we need to make these treasures.