

4-H Youth Development Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

The 4-H Youth Development Advisory Committee Meeting was held Thursday, April 9, 2009 at 3:30 p.m. in Plantation Hall at the Louisiana State Cotton Museum.

Those present were: Donna Lee, LSU AgCenter associate county agent and parish chair; Kelley Heimstra, LSU AgCenter regional 4-H coordinator; Kris Mayers, LSU AgCenter associate extension agent; Sherry Smith, LSU AgCenter administrative coordinator; Rosie Brown, Biaster Hewitt-George, Grace Siggers, Eloise Edwards, Sr. Bernie Barrett, Michelle Sheppard and Harriet Bridges.

Ms. Lee opened the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and introduced herself. She mentioned that the East Carroll Parish Extension Service millage renewal was on the recent ballot and it passed. She thanked everyone for their support and stated that the renewal means a lot with the budget cuts in the state; that without the passage of this millage we probably would not have an office in East Carroll Parish.

Ms. Lee announced that today is Ms. Mayers' last day with the LSU AgCenter; that we are very sorry to see her leave and she is going to be missed not only in our office but within the parish. Ms. Lee informed that there is a hiring freeze in place but we have been allowed to hire a temporary person to fill in for Ms. Mayers. We are very excited to have Michelle Sheppard for the 2009 summer 4-H activities. She already has ideas and will come in during the week of Spring Break to familiarize herself with the program.

Ms. Heimstra stated there are special exceptions we can apply for to hire someone before the hiring freeze is lifted.

Ms. Lee introduced Ms. Heimstra. Ms. Heimstra asked everyone to introduce and tell a little about themselves.

Ms. Mayers stated that this year's programming has been focused on gardening. There is a project book designed for gardening, but it has many other ideas that are interesting for the youth which incorporate gardening information.

Ms. Mayers said she has known for some time that she would be leaving the LSU AgCenter and she has tried to wean herself from the kids because they are so attached to her. She has told the youth to continue what they do in 4-H because the program is not about her, it's about them and that the next 4-H agent may offer them things that she may never have thought of.

Ms. Mayers informed there are three camps coming up this summer. 4-H camp is for 4th-6th grade 4-H'ers and is scheduled for July 13-17. She mentioned that she believes 4-H Camp numbers have gone down the past couple years because of the dates assigned to East Carroll Parish – late in the summer. 4-H Camp dates are assigned by the State 4-H Office in Baton Rouge. She said she thinks we are up for rotation next year and we should be able to attend camp earlier in the summer in 2010.

Another camp is 4-H University held in June. The 4-H'ers love to attend 4-H U and she believes they will continue to participate. For one agent to take approximately 20 each year is a big deal.

The last camp of the summer is Citizenship Louisiana Focus which will be held in Baton Rouge in August. Ms. Mayers thinks the number allowed to attend this camp is 10.

Ms. Heimstra asked Ms. Mayers what she feels is the most important program she currently has going. Ms. Mayers' response was Safety Day Camp and she recommends that her replacement be trained as a Safety Day Camp coordinator.

Ms. Bridges discussed plans for this year's Safety Day and mentioned there will be another Safety Day Camp held for Pre-K through 2nd grade in September. She also stated that the school board pays for training for Safety Day Camp coordinators.

Ms. Heimstra asked if anyone had any suggestions for a volunteer to be trained to be a coordinator.

Ms. Sheppard asked for a description of Safety Day Camp.

Ms. Mayers then described what takes place at Safety Day Camp.

Ms. Heimstra asked if anyone had recommendations for other programs that need to be continued. The following were mentioned: the Susan G. Komen Walk for the Cure - Breast Cancer Walk/Run; Make a Difference Day; Achievement Day (Healthy Lifestyles); and the annual food drive.

Ms. Hewitt-George said the food drive is important. It is still conducted but it needs to be improved and made bigger.

Ms. Heimstra stated at the state level each parish has to choose from two focus areas: Belonging and Service Learning. Belonging is critical for youth to have normal, healthy development. Belonging helps those children who are bullied, insecure, etc. Service Learning teaches youth to give back to the community such as participating in the food drive.

Ms. Mayers indicated that she had focused on Belonging this year.

Ms. Heimstra then asked everyone to write down what they think should be the focus area for the next year. Just because one is chosen that doesn't mean that both could not be done. What it does mean is that an evaluator would come in to survey and determine which focus area is most productive.

Ms. Bridges said she feels that Service Learning has been more intense the past several years.

Ms. Hewitt-George said she likes Belonging. That it is very important – she works at the junior high school and she sees kids firsthand.

There were four votes for Service Learning and two votes for Belonging.

Ms. Heimstra then asked what everyone feels is the number one skill kids need to focus on.

Ms. Bridges said both Northside and Southside Elementary are promoting a program through Pennington that gives the children fruit to eat instead of candy at snack time. They are being taught to choose healthy drinks instead of soda. There has been a dramatic change from where the kids were to where they are now. This program is reaching youth from Pre-K through 5th grade.

Ms. Heimstra stated the areas mentioned for focus were: Nutrition/Health; Environment (keeping land, plants, animals and humans safe); Character Counts; and Workforce Development.

Some discussion was carried out about these topics.

Ms. Mayers mentioned, in reference to last year's trip to the Hornets game, even when something good is going on that something bad is bound to take place. She said the Hornets have put East Carroll Parish on the map. She reminded everyone of the \$15,000 in toys the Hornets donated to the parish a few years back and the tickets they gave for the leaders to attend the game this year. She also said they have agreed to donate Hornets memorabilia to East Carroll to be auctioned off (Jerseys, signed basketballs, etc.).

Ms. Heimstra said the committee should decide what focus area the club meetings need to be based on from those mentioned before.

Sr. Bernie said she likes Workforce Development and Ms. Mayers said Character Counts coincides with that.

Ms. Sheppard stated she likes Character Counts and that the youth need a better idea of how to be good citizens.

Ms. Hewitt-George said she likes Nutrition/Health because obesity and juvenile diabetes are major issues some kids face today. She mentioned there are more and more health problems in children today.

Ms. Mayers informed that Character Counts is a given. It can be incorporated into any focus area. Character Counts are automatically instilled in the youth. She said Workforce Development would be good for grades 9-12 but not to focus on that the entire year for the younger kids.

Ms. Edwards said she thinks Workforce Development is important. The prison system is teaching and encouraging all inmates to re-enter the workforce.

Ms. Brown stated she is concerned about what the youth are going to hear and what they will put to use.

Ms. Heimstra suggested that the focus area for the next year's 4-H program be Workforce Development with Character Counts tied in. The other areas could be taught by Nutrition Educators and Jr. Leaders.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.



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