

2008-2009 DeSoto Parish Advisory Council Meeting
Thursday August 14, 2008
6:00 p.m
DeSoto Parish Extension Office
Grand Cane, LA

Those in attendance:

Leah Brown – 4-H member
Dale Bryson – 4-H member
Debra Bryson - 4-H volunteer
Tommy Clark – 4-H Volunteer
Patrick Cobbs – DeSoto Parish Sheriff's Dept
John L. Freeman - CLECO
Kristen Fulton - 4-H Leader
Hunter Fulton – 4-H member
Emily Fulton – 4-H member
Chuck Griffin – County Agent
Mindy Kile – 4-H Agent
Gracie McKinney - EFNEP
Molly Farrar Usrey – 4-H Agent
Thomas Williamson – 4-H volunteer
Callie Woodard – 1890 Agent

The DeSoto Parish 4-H Advisory Council meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Molly Usrey. Sixteen members were in attendance.

Molly Usrey and Mindy Kile, 4-H Agents for DeSoto Parish explained the purpose and goal of the Advisory Council.

Molly presented information on the club meeting focus area for the 2008-2009 year: Food & Fiber from the Farm. A discussion was held regarding the need for new specialty clubs within the parish. It was decided that a Clover bud Club would be established as well as an Outdoor skills/Shooting Sports program and horse program.

Mindy discussed bringing back the annual Jakes Day event which was recommended by the Overall Advisory Committee. This motion was met with unanimous support from the group and a date of September 13 was set for the event. ***

Molly presented information on the upcoming DeSoto Parish Fair. Current activities in place include the Livestock Show, Dog and Pet Show and General Exhibits. Mindy brought up suggestions for new activities and ways to involve more youth such as a talent show, cooking contest, shooting component, ambassadors contest, games, and a raffle. As a whole the group approved these new additions and plans were made to recruit volunteers to help with the expansion of the parish fair.

Mr. Tommy Williamson made a suggestion that we try to market 4-H in new ways to increase membership and interest in the program. Recommendations were also made to try to increase hands on activities within club meetings and to create more 4-H contest and events that youth could participate in. Suggestions were made for a pumpkin carving contest, Christmas Cookie Contest, and a Parish 4-H t-shirt design contest.

Molly discussed a recommendation given by the overall advisory leadership council that the 4-H host a professional development workshop. The suggestions for this workshop had been to include such lessons as resume writing, job interview etiquette and filling out college scholarships applications. The overall advisory council had suggested a separate 4-H project book workshop; however, the 4-H advisory committee felt the need to incorporate this information in the professional development workshop based on the fact that 4-H scholarship applications must be accompanied by a 4-H record book.

Mindy discussed Camp Roughin' It and Survival Camp with the group. Due to a limited number of youth allowed to attend these camps, the committee identified a need to host a local camping weekend. To comply with suggestions made by the overall advisory leadership council, it was decided that this weekend would include such educational components as habitat management, ATV safety, and outdoor cooking lessons.

Molly discussed the lack of participation this past year in such contest as Sew with Cotton, Taste of DeSoto Cookery, and the 4-H Commodity Ambassadors Contest. The suggestion from the overall advisory council had been to combine sew with cotton and cookery contests into a day long event to try and increase participation. The 4-H Advisory Committee took this a step further and decided to include a fashion show, public speaking contests, and Beef & Dairy poster contests all in the same day to attract more participation.

Molly discussed the lack of an "Achievement Day" this past year and the committee decided that an Achievement Day is necessary and needs to include interactive activities for the youth. The suggestion was made that this event be combined with the End of the Year awards program.

Other suggestions for involving more youth included point systems to reward school clubs and individual 4-H members. This led to a discussion as to how to fund such activities and parish residents receiving gas royalties were identified as a possible source. Other fundraising ideas were briefly discussed but no decisions were made.

Molly discussed the importance of service learning and teaching youth to give back to the community. Current community service projects already in place include clubs selling shamrocks to benefit MDA and the fall can food drive. Mr. Tommy Clark suggested having youth volunteer at a homeless shelter so that youth could see the impact their efforts make.

Finally Molly discussed the need for volunteers. As a way to recruit new volunteers Mr. Tommy Clark suggested a Parents Orientation meeting to 4-H in order to make parents aware of the opportunities for them to get involved in 4-H.

Molly and Mindy thanked the committee for their time and excellent suggestions. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm. The next meeting will be scheduled for the summer of 2009.