

4-H mobilization for victory (1943)

COMMENTARY AND SIDEBAR NOTES BY DAVID WALBERT

North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, "4-H Mobilization for Victory, 6–14, 1943" (1943), cover letter and pp. 1–2. Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries.

As you read...

MOBILIZING BOYS AND GIRLS

President Roosevelt warned Americans early on that the United States was fighting a “total war” — a war in which each side mobilizes everything at its disposal and considers everything the other side has to be fair target for attack. In another speech, he said that every American, by “the privilege of... citizenship,” was “a part of the Selective Service.” Mobilization for war meant everyone — not just men of the age and condition for combat. Anyone who could work in any capacity or give even the smallest amount of money was called upon to serve his or her country.

Boys and girls, too, were part of the fight. Today, when the United States fights a war, schoolkids might be asked to write letters to troops or send care packages. Children of soldiers have little to do except wait and hope. But in World War II, they were “mobilized” to buy war bonds, collect scrap metal and paper, plant victory gardens, and provide extra work on farms.

4-H CLUBS AND THE “FEED A FIGHTER” CAMPAIGN

For more about 4-H clubs and the war effort, see 4-H and Home Demonstration Work during World War II.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

In this letter to local extension agents, the North Carolina Director of Extension, J. O. Shaub, explains what 4-H clubs need to do to mobilize youth.

1. What language does this letter use that sounds like the military?
2. What was the goal of the “mobilization for victory” campaign?
3. How many boys and girls did 4-H hope to involve?
4. What could boys and girls do for the war effort?
5. How did extension agents get boys and girls involved and organize them?
6. Why would this kind of appeal have been attractive to teenaged boys and girls in 1943?

TO EXTENSION WORKERS:

The men of our fighting forces are giving all of their strength and vitality to defend the freedom and continued existence of this country. Those of us who remain here at home must do our fighting on the “home front” and it is our job to see that our soldiers, sailors and aviators have all the necessary and adequate supplies of food, clothing and ammunition needed to wage a successful and victorious war.

Here in North Carolina there are about 500,000 boys and girls of 4-H club age who, with the proper guidance and direction, could exert a tremendous influence and render a valuable service to the Nation in this war emergency. It is our duty as an Extension organization to direct as many of these rural boys and girls as possible towards the production and the conservation of food. Our goal for this year should be not less than 150,000 members in the 4-H clubs, with each member conducting a food production or a food conservation project.

The goal for the club members of a given county this year should be at least the production of enough food by those members to feed all the men leaving that county for the armed services.

To meet this challenge, each Extension worker must assume his share of the job. The program needs to be so coordinated and organized as to use every hour of our time in the most efficient and valuable way.

J. O. Shaub
Director of Extension

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What will mobilization mean

The guiding of our present membership, and as many other boys and girls as is possible, in selecting and conducting at least one food production or conservation project. It will mean an all-out mobilization of rural youth for Victory. A week for focusing attention upon the activities of the 4-H Club and giving prestige and publicity to its wartime club programs.

Why mobilize

In approximately 500,000 farm youth in North Carolina is a vast resource of power and energy. While boys and girls can do much to help win the war through individual action, their efforts, if properly organized and directed in groups such as the 4-H Club, can make a major contribution to the war effort. The 4-H pledge is an all-out promise of the club member for clearer thinking, greater loyalty, larger service, and better living for club, community and country.

How can the job be done

Every extension agent will be expected to do his share of the club work. The home demonstration agent, the county agent, the assistant agent — all will have to conduct club meetings. This may mean a division of work, with each agent having certain responsibilities, and it will certainly mean a coordinated and organized program with every hour of time used in the most efficient way possible. There will need to be a complete mobilization of the 4-H membership. Leaders must be selected, trained and used. Essential subject matter information and material and necessary supervision for conducting project activities must be provided.

To guide the agent in the furtherance of this program the following plan is recommended. Remember this is to be an all-out program for Victory, and our job as an extension organization is to enlist and guide as many young people as is possible in producing and conserving food, in promoting special war activities, and in maintaining a high spirit of moral[s] and a high standard of 4-H Club work.

Plans for 4-H mobilization for Victory

THE OBJECTIVE

The production and/or conservation of the maximum amount of food by 4-H Club members; at least the equivalent of the amount required for the men in the armed forces from the county.

THE GOAL

The enlistment of 150,000 boys and girls, or 50% of the eligible youth for membership in 4-H Club work in each county, in production or conservation projects.

THINGS TO DO BEFORE MOBILIZATION

1. Be sure that all extension workers have a thorough understanding of the program. All extension workers within each county should meet together and consider plans for the job to be done and for its execution.
2. Ask each old member to secure a new member.
3. Acquaint the following people with the plans and reasons for mobilization:
 1. Members of the 4-H County Council.
 2. Officers of the local clubs.
 3. School people — arrange for definite schedule at Chapel period^I or other desirable time.
 4. Neighborhood leaders.
 5. Members of civic, women's, home demonstration, and other clubs; ministers; etc.
 6. The general public.

MOBILIZATION WORK

1. Explain the purposes of 4-H mobilization at a special meeting of each club, preferably at a Chapel period when all students of club age may attend.
2. Make a patriotic appeal to all boys and girls of club age and explain to them how they can help bring Victory through the production and conservation of food, feed and fiber.
3. Explain in detail the projects recommended. Request that the boys and girls return these forms to a teacher or leader appointed as sponsor for the club, who will forward them to the agent's office.

FOLLOW-UP WORK

1. Immediately following the enlistment of members, assemble and group the names of members according to neighborhoods, using the neighborhood map as a guide.
2. Select neighborhood 4-H leaders. See page 9, Section IV.
3. Prepare the form "A GUIDE FOR NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER IN ASSISTING WITH CLUB PROJECTS." See page 6–7.
4. Prepare and assemble subject matter material in suitable form for projects selected and present it to the club members at the next regular meeting. Copies of the same information should be given to neighborhood 4-H leaders. Suitable material has been promised by subject matter specialists.
5. Acquaint the neighborhood leader with the program, its importance, and the opportunity it presents the neighborhood leader for rendering a service. See page 10, Section V.

On the web

4-H on the home front

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1595>

In this lesson plan, secondary students will analyze a variety of primary source textual materials to investigate how young rural people were encouraged to support the war effort during World War II.

Feed a fighter

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1629>

In this lesson students will examine "Additional Helps for the 4-H Mobilization for Victory Program," a Cooperative Extension Work document from the *Green 'N' Growing* collection at Special Collections Research Center at North Carolina State University Libraries. The document will help students understand the efforts civilians underwent to support military efforts in World War II.

More from LEARN NC

Visit us on the web at www.learnnc.org to learn more about topics related to this article, including 4-H clubs, North Carolina, World War II, children, civic participation, farming, food, history, and victory gardens.

Notes

1. Time set aside during the school day for assembly, originally for religious services.

About the author

DAVID WALBERT

David Walbert is Editorial and Web Director for LEARN NC in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Education. He is responsible for all of LEARN NC's educational publications, oversees development of various web applications including LEARN NC's website and content management systems, and is the organization's primary web, information, and visual designer. He has worked with LEARN NC since August 1997.

David holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author of *Garden Spot: Lancaster County, the Old Order Amish, and the Selling of Rural America*, published in 2002 by Oxford University Press. With LEARN NC, he has written numerous articles for K–12 teachers on topics such as historical education, visual literacy, writing instruction, and technology integration.