

WOMEN IN GRUNDY COUNTY

For them no bands were playing, ticker tape parades,
The Grundy County women stayed home and spent their days,
Kept the cook fires burning, made home a pleasant place,
Made quilts and jams and jellies, embroideries and lace,
Kept the club together, made friendships and had fun
at women's camp and contests...and worked from sun to sun.

Many were the projects that they took and made complete,
From community and 4-H clubs to county fairs and cleaner streets,
Bringing beauty to the homes as crafts were learned and used
better ways to cook and can, select their clothes and shoes,
Not forgetting to read books, always improve the mind,
And as progress brought new methods, to leave the old behind.
Oh, many are the memories acquired from year to year,
As mothers taught their children how to live and love and care.
Daughters of the pioneers, loyal, brave and true,
As we write this little History, know is for you.



Ruby Goodman
Skymont EHC (Extension Homemaker's Club)
Grundy County
April, 1990

A History of Grundy County Family and Community Education Clubs

Grundy County can best be described as "Nature at Its Best." The county lies along the Cumberland Plateau, a historical travel route used by the Indians. The rugged terrain has always challenged and supported its inhabitants. Woodland Indians found shelter beneath the rock bluffs and adapted nature's offerings for their use.

As settlers began to move into the wilderness, they built cabins from the forest resources. One of the early settlers was Samuel Savage. The Savage Gulf Natural Area was named after him. In 1858, natural coal reserves on the plateau attracted the interest of a local mining company. Coal mining remained the major industry in the county for the next century, and a thriving timber business was developed over the years. Present day Grundy Lakes was the location of the Lone Rock Coke Ovens. Today, the main industries in Grundy County are tourism/recreation, poultry production, vegetable production, nursery production, farming and textiles. Early in this century the Agricultural Extension Service began providing subject matter related to Agriculture and Home Economics.

Home demonstration agents were employed as early as 1917. The home demonstration agent in 1917-1919 was Miss Elizabeth Gilmer. She traveled across the county on horseback. Most women owned a side saddle in those days, but Miss Gilmer chose to ride outside her mount wearing her "divided skirt." She would often stay overnight with her clientele, when caught in some distant corner of the county, rather than ride several miles after dark and alone. Some of the first activities in which she gave assistance were "fancy stitching" embroidery and buttonholes. She became known as the "tomato lady" because of her assistance with the girls' tomato club.

Miss Ester Brasher represented the first Grundy County girls' tomato club at the Tennessee State Fair in 1918. The girls' tomato club and the boys' corn club were the forerunners of today's 4-H club. Some believe the success of these clubs was due to the great sense of pride that existed across the land as men of fighting age went to war against the Germans. A sense of pride was also evident in the young people as they worked hard growing large quantities of tomatoes and corn to help out the community.



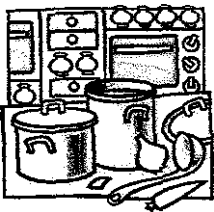
A number of years later, Miss Margaret Carter worked with the women over the county. During the depression years, she encouraged people, especially in the more remote and rural areas, to plant any available spot with beans, tomatoes, onions, okra and corn. Public canneries were set up and while the men did the gardening, the women canned the vegetables, making much of it into soup mixture to be used at the school. Serving hot bowls of soup for children not having lunches was the beginning of the "Hot Lunch Program in Schools."

The first women's community club was organized in Pelham on February 28, 1936. The demonstration given at the first meeting was "Reseating a Chair with Binder Twine." During 1936, nineteen community clubs were organized with an enrollment of over 300. The County Council of Home Demonstration Clubs was organized by Miss Bama Finger, district agent. The council was composed of officers from the nineteen different

community clubs.

Miss Docia Masters was special home demonstration agent with the Extension service during 1936 through 1938. She issued a very interesting article of the nature of her work in the local newspaper. The following is an excerpt from the article: "Home demonstration work is to provide for rural women the opportunity to meet together. This gives them an opportunity to express themselves, work cooperatively, enjoy recreation, exchange experiences and judgments, stimulate their thinking into constructive channels, to evaluate their own efficiency and set goals for self-achievement, to recognize the need of cooperation among the people on farms, and above all, to know the resources which they have at hand to bring about these desired objectives."

Programs in the early eras emphasized home improvement, shuck braiding, canning, various nutrition demonstrations, rug-making, basketry, and vegetable dyeing. An annual short course was offered in Knoxville that allowed women to attend and learn up-dated information that would be helpful to them. The short course was similar to the leadership conference and Heritage Skills Seminar today.



Some programs that were of special interest to the homemakers were the following: a program on pressure cookers; a demonstration on beef canning; and a cheese-making demonstration. The interest was so great on the pressure cooker demonstration that a large percentage of homemakers purchased cookers before the next canning season. Several men, as well as women, attended the beef canning demonstration, since this was usually a family shared chore.

A UT specialist encouraged women to make their own cheese. The results were very positive in that one homemaker made over 200 lbs. of cheese and a total of over 350 lbs. of cheese was made throughout the county. This amount did not include the cheese that was made in the Swiss Colony.

The first Home Demonstration Rally was held on October 10, 1936, in Beersheba Springs at the Beersheba Hotel. Approximately 100 homemakers were in attendance. The rally has been an annual event each year thereafter, and some years a spring rally was also held.

During the next couple of years, a major emphasis was placed on the "Live-at-Home" plan. Homemakers and their families were encouraged to make needed home improvements. Many homes made these major improvements and some participated in the Better Homes Tour. Ms. Masters encouraged one family in the Providence Community to improve the door knobs on the doors and to patch holes in the screens. A later visit revealed these improvements, plus many others, had been made.

For the three years following, Grundy County was without a home demonstration agent. The county court did not appropriate funds to finance the program, and many citizens bitterly opposed the program, thinking it was not necessary. The women who had been fortunate enough to be members of clubs that Miss Masters had organized realized more and more that they were being deprived of advantages that were both educational, as well as cultural, by not having a county home demonstration agent. A

large group of women from almost every section of the county "staged a little demonstration" of their own at county court and won their appeal for the appropriation of funds for an agent. Miss Mildred Kemmer was sent to the county the following year.

During this era, much emphasis was placed on assistance with war needs. First Aid classes were organized over the county, and homemakers were taught how to care for families and homes in emergencies or disasters. The Home Food Supply Program was established in 1941 in Grundy County, with 267 families enrolled. The families strived to raise 75% of the food on their farms for the army, navy, and the allies who were resisting aggression. The Extension programs focused on ways the families could provide nourishment and better health with the remaining 25% of the foods their farm produced. Following participation in the Home Food Supply Program, a county-wide nutrition tour was held. Features included food production, food storage, food preparation centers and food sanitation.

Clothing emphasis for homemakers during the 40s focused on alteration and buying clothes under war conditions. Remodeling clothes brought out a patriotic theme during war time, in addition to wearing patches. Homemakers gave much cooperation and assistance with wartime activities, such as: folding surgical bandages, sewing for the Red Cross unit, salvage drives for waste fats, hosiery and paper, production of food freedom (AAA) and first-aid classes.

On December 11, 1945, the presidents of the clubs were invited to the high school for the purpose of organizing a council. Presidents from the clubs attended this organizational meeting:

Beersheba Springs	-Mrs. Rupert Tate
Burrough's Cove	-Mrs. Nellon Hamby
Collins	-Mrs. Gordon Northcutt
Fults Cove	-Mrs. Maxine Terry
Gruetli	-Miss Rose Hargis
Mt. Oive	-Mrs. John Hendrixon
Palmer	-Mrs. W. H. Byars
Paynes Cove	-Mrs. Della Winton
Pelham	-Mrs. P. T. Gilliam
Tarlton	-Mrs. Willis Carroll
Valley Home	-Mrs. Henry Jacobs

The county council consisted of the president, vice-president, and secretary of each local club. Mrs. Gordon Northcutt was elected the first president. Other officers were Mrs. Rupert Tate, Beersheba, vice president; Miss Annie Thomas, Pelham, secretary;

Mrs. Northcutt appointed a program committee – Mrs. Horace Moore, Mrs. Dave Henninger and Mrs. Homer Nestor. She also appointed a committee to draft by-laws for this new organization: Mrs. Everett Roberts, Palmer; Mrs. John Walker, Tarlton; and Mrs. Lillard Goodman, Valley Home.

The council helped to plan the program of work for the year and all related activities and events. Other agencies involved in program planning were the Agriculture Committee, 4-H leaders, test demonstration leaders, community club representatives, county court members, and other community leaders. Questionnaires were sent to committee members prior to the meeting for suggestions on the program of work.

The first year book was distributed to all the clubs in 1946. The theme was: "Better Homes on Better Farms." Fashions were taking on a masculine look influenced by women going into factories and munitions plants during the war. An amusing quotation from this old year book was: "The latest thing in men's clothes this year will be women."

The first rally after the organization of the council was held at Palmer, July 25, 1946. Miss Inez Lovelace, assistant home management specialist from the University of Tennessee and Miss Mildred Kemmer, nutrition specialist and former home demonstration agent of Grundy County were guests and gave demonstrations. The by-laws were adopted at this meeting.



"Community Improvement" was the county project and many varied and interesting topics were discussed. Demonstrations that were presented at club meetings, council meetings and rallies included subjects such as: Repairing and Refinishing Discarded Furniture, Preparation of Foods for the Family, Tailoring, Proper Table Setting, New Flowers for the Gardens, Small Fruit Trees for the Home Grounds, and Hand-Made Christmas Gifts.

During the era of the 1950s, handicrafts that were popular included stenciling, strawtex bags and hats. Other demonstrations included baskets made from reed and plywood, rug making, upholstery and tailoring. Craft camps were held in Crossville and attended by many homemakers from the county. A Better Homes Tour was begun, and many homemakers opened their homes to share ideas of improvements that were made. In the mid-50s, the Monteagle Club was welcomed into the Grundy County EHC Council, after being with the Marion County group for many years.

Goals were established in 1957 for 100% members. The goals included attendance at eleven (11) regular meetings, bringing yearbooks to meetings and attendance at one rally. The 100% members were to be guests of honor at the luncheon in the spring. The project created much interest in the clubs.

Agents participated in radio and television programs in the 1950s. A home economics demonstration was presented once a month on a television station in Chattanooga, creating a positive image for the Extension programs that were being offered. Radio programs were broadcast weekly, and articles were written for two county newspapers.

During the early 1960s, many families were out of work. The "Live-at-Home" programs continued to be emphasized by the Extension services. Mr. and Mrs. Horace Moore, Sr.

of the Gruetli community followed the plan and accomplished the following: (1) They raised all their own meat (beef pork, and poultry). They had over 200 lbs. of beef and pork and 50 chickens. The hams, shoulders and side meat were all cured. (2) They had all their own milk, butter and eggs. (3) A total of 22 different vegetables were grown in the garden. (4) A herb garden was raised with six different herbs. (5) All foods were preserved by canning or freezing – over 100 quarts of pickles alone were canned. (6) Only a few staples were purchased each week at the grocery store. The weekly grocery bill was \$5.00, unless the homemaker splurged for something not needed. Another example of this program was evidenced by Charles and Rachel Jacobs, who only purchased one bag of flour in the first twenty-five years of their marriage.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) was implemented in Grundy County during 1969-1986. Program assistants that were employed to conduct the EFNEP activities included: Mrs. Maurine Schulze, supervisor; Joyce Ladd, Alvada Rymer, Ruth Northcutt; Berta Patton; Daphine Anderson; Ruth Bouldin; Marie Schlageter; Mary Sue Arbuckle; Sadie Smartt; Mirim Moses. The responsibilities of the program assistants were: contacting and enrolling low-income families in the Expanded Nutrition Program; conducting educational programs, individually and in groups; and keeping complete and accurate records for evaluation purposes.



Demonstrations in the Expanded Nutrition Program emphasized efficient use of limited family resources in providing an adequate nutritional diet for the family, providing instructions in food productions, meal planning, food preparation and preservation, and improving the family's health through better nutrition, sanitation and food storage. Experiences were provided that would hopefully raise the aspirations of low-income families, thus developing pride and improving the home and family life environment.

Traditionally, the emphasis for Extension homemakers has continued to be placed on the home economics subject content. However, the subject matter content has changed to meet the needs of the present time. Leadership continues to improve by participation in district, state and national activities. The Tennessee Extension Homemakers Council was organized in 1982 for the purpose of binding together the home demonstration clubs of the state in educational programs and activities that promote higher standards of family living, homemaking and citizenship responsibility. Margaret Partin from the Providence EHC served as State Citizenship Program of Work Chairman. Grundy County has also been well-represented at the district level by holding offices on the council and serving as program of work leaders.

During the era of the 1990s, Mary Elizabeth Shelton of the Valley Home Club served as vice-president and president of the District III EHC Council. A name change from Extension Homemakers Clubs to Family and Community Education Clubs was implemented during the 1990s. The focus of the current five FCE Clubs in Grundy County is on service, education and leadership in the community. Each year members volunteer over 15,000 hours of service to the county. Educational programs continue to provide research-based information to the FCE members and other interested clientele. Emphasis during the time frame of 2000-2005 has been on emergency preparedness,

maintaining a healthy lifestyle, environmental hazards and financial management. The FCE programs provide a diverse opportunity for members to expand and apply knowledge that will enhance and improve their quality of life.



To summarize the historical picture of Grundy County FCE, the FCE Creed that was revised in 1992 certainly states the present and future focus of FCE: "As family and community educators of these United States, we strive to promote a better way of life for all through fellowship, continuing education and service; to provide guidance in our homes and communities for the uniting of people to make the world a better place in which to live." (Mrs. Jean Beard Kestner).