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Interview with Larry Hall

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Fieldwork: The Family Farm

Farm Organizations and Community Life: The OSU Extension and 4-H

The following is the transcription of an interview with Larry Hall, an OSU Extension and 4-H agent for Knox County, Ohio. The recording took place at 3:30 p.m. February 8th at the OSU Extension Agency located at 1025 Harcourt Road or P.O. Box 1268, Mount Vernon, Ohio 43050. Both the Extension Agency and Larry Hall can be reached via e-mail at: Knox@agvax2.ag.ohio-state.edu and Hall.392@OSU.edu

CE: -Feld, meeting with Larry Hall at the OSU Extension discussing community life and farm organizations on February 8th 1996

AF: we got it, we got it

CE: okay-

AF: we're golden-

LH: okay, perhaps I can give you a little bit of background information on where I'm coming from with this project

AF: okay

LH: and then, as questions come up, interrupt me or you know, whatever way you want to do it

CE: okay

LH: I feel fortunate in that I am from Knox County. I still live on the family farm

AF: oh, wow

LH: in fact, one of your family farm families from last year is related to me because the area just west of Gambier was owned by the Hall family. Several hundred acres and it- you know, as families evolved and you know, married and spread out, the area got chopped up even more, so from the standpoint of- from the edged of Kenyon College west, clear up to the top of Bishop's Backbone up to Walker's greenhouse and then south, across the river and down into the valley and then north past New Gambier Road- that all used to be part of the original homestead

AF: oh, wow

LH: so the farm there at the bottom of Bishop's Backbone still belongs to my Aunt and her son, you know- it lives in the other house there. That was the home-

place where my father grew up- Clifton Hall and he had eight brothers and sisters total; their were nine kids in the family, six of whom are still alive and still live in Knox County. So, when we get together for a Hall reunion we have, you know, a large grouping there. Growing up on the family farm just north of Mount Vernon- at an early age, I was involved in 4-H because my brother, five years older than I, was involved in the 4-H Saddle Club and he also was in a dairy club. As I became old enough to get involved, I also was in the Saddle Club- (for eight years)- and then upon graduation from high school, going on to the navy and then coming back into the community, my former 4-H agent asked me to get involved in 4-H as an advisor, as a volunteer. Which I went ahead and did because I enjoyed a lot of what 4-H stood for, whether it be through projects or going to the fair or going to camp and being a camp counselor- things like this- In working with the youngsters, even before my own children were old enough to become in 4-H, I- you know, learned a lot of things about child development and I really enjoyed working with, with the kids. As my own three children got involved in 4-H and as we got involved in some of the international programs of 4-H, such as having two Japanese exchange students visit us for about four to five weeks in the summer through the 4-H Lobbo exchange, it opened up our horizons a little bit, even to the point of- another year we had a peace U.S.A. exchange student from Okinawa who spent ten months with our family. At this time, we also had a couple of foster sons that were involved in the 4-H program. As time went on and I became more involved in volunteerism, both at 4-H camp and at the fair, I was asked to sit on a few committees. One of them was the 4-H Planning Committee, another was a newly formed Center Board that took care of the workings of a building that was donated to the 4-H program approximately five years ago. This Board is a volunteer board that determines how to do the upkeep on a building located in Mount Vernon, and we make this available as a free meeting place for 4-H and Extension related groups and it's used by several hundred meetings a year. It's very gratifying to be able to offer meeting space and party space and things like this for these 4-H groups. In fact, the group that I still help advise, as a volunteer, still meets there and from time to time, when they do fundraisers, they donate part of that money back to the 4-H center board. I was also on the Knox County 4-H Planning Committee, this is a group of dedicated volunteers that helps in an advisory capacity, direct the moneys that are earned through 4-H here in Knox County and they provide some direction as far as deserving young people who get scholarships, who get trips, and other benefits from the money that is raised. Typically each year, we try to send four individuals to Citizen Washington Focus. These are typically people who are seniors in high school or freshmen in college who still meet the traditional age range of eight years old, or nine years old (or in third grade) up to not having not having reached their 19th birthday by January first of a given year. That's the age range for traditional 4-H. The Citizenship Washington Focus is a week in Washington, D.C. where they get to meet legislators. They get to meet people from all over the nation who are also 4-H'ers. We also have other groups that sponsor trips such as the Senior Fair Board, who sponsors a Youth Expo opportunity for deserving teenagers. That is a week down at the Ohio State University campus and it has

more of an occupation track to it, where you can select a certain track and go to seminars and activities and tours that have to do with that particular activity. There are also leadership camps, forestry camps, conservation camps, buckeye leadership workshop camps that are all offered and they [all] receive various levels of sponsorship from some of the Knox County 4-H Planning Committee funds as well as some of the other service organizations in Knox County. I also sat on the Extension Advisory Committee Board. This is a group of community members- up to 36 members, in fact, which is a huge committee for the size of county that we are- but very dedicated people who help direct what Extension does in Knox County. And they also sit as an advisory committee for us. While I was on all of these committees, the 4-H agent status had changed dramatically. The 4-H agent when I was a member served from '62 to 1988. The next person served for about two and a half years and had to leave. An interim person came in for a year. The next person served for two and a half years and then left. And so we had a revolving door situation going on when our committee was again asked to do a search for a candidate for this position as 4-H Youth Development Agent in Knox County. I looked at the job description that was constructed and felt that it spoke to me. And so at that point I made the initial application and went through all the things that one has to do to become hired by OSU and then go to the various interviews and do the paper chase and everything with the applications. I was hired and started my service here December first of 1993. And it is a full time position with the proviso that I get my masters degree within five years. And so I'm on that track now- getting a masters degree in agricultural education with extension emphasis with a minor in youth development. All of which speak toward my duties as a 4-H agent. Our program has changed a lot. A little bit of history on 4-H- in, on January 15th of 1902, Albert Belmont Graham, who was a school superintendent in Springfield, Ohio, gathered together 20 to 30 girls and boys and started up an agricultural club. These youngsters learned about cooking and raising livestock and raising plants and tying knots in rope

AF: [laughs]

LH: all of these things were useful on a farm type setting and this evolved into working into land grant universities and several acts were passed to allow more and more participation across the state and eventually across the nation to the point that now we're talking several people in many different countries have a form of 4-H going on. 4-H is in about 85 different countries. It's called different names in different countries because of the language differences but they all have the basic premise of learning by doing, or hands on experiential training. It's usually a non-formal setting, usually in small groups rather than large and depends heavily, at least in the United States, on volunteerism. In Knox County, a- our county population is just over 48,000. We have over 1,500 youth in our traditional program and they are served by about 350 volunteer advisors. There's no way that our offices could handle getting services to these youngsters without having these volunteers. We have approximately 86 community clubs in the county- that is down over the past 10 to 20 years from

about a 120. So, the trends we're seeing is that the number of clubs is decreasing, the number of participants is increasing and the number of volunteers is staying about the same. So, some of them are becoming very efficient at what they're doing or just taking on a heavier work load. So, we're all the time looking for new volunteers to serve as advisors, key leaders, middle managers, and different types of educators in an effort to get the information out. In our traditional program, we have up to 200 different projects that are offered and the Family Guides that I've provided list what we have available in 1996. Each year, a new Family Guide comes out that will have the projects updated. Each year, sometimes do to low enrollment across the state they are discontinued, sometimes they add new projects as they are being developed. Each of the projects is grouped together with like projects. They try to put in a designation of whether they are beginning, intermediate, or advanced level to go along with different child development stages. We try to give the volunteers opportunities to get training on how to deal with kids of different ages and their different child development levels. There are also special interest groups, or special emphasis groups in 4-H and locally we have a school age program that is actually like a day-care setting before and after school at two elementary schools. And [in] this setting, we also do 4-H programming so they do learn cooperative skills, life skills, survival skills if you will- they learn how to get along with each other and how to set their own goals, how to have little successes as they step, step-wise proceed through life. We also have at-risk groups. We have a juvenile diversion program at varying age ranges. One group meets at our 4-H center and they do some programming where they learn about self-esteem, self-confidence- they learn to get along with other people, they learn some socially acceptable behaviors, making better choices than what they may have made in the past. We also have a group that has been mandated through the juvenile courts because they are felony offenders or multiple misdemeanor offenders to do some work programs. This is an effort to keep from incarcerating teen-agers in an out of county facility, which is very costly and really doesn't solve the problem because when they come back into the county after serving their term with no more tools to work with than what they left with. We have some dedicated volunteers and officers of the courts who go out and work on a farm with horses with these youngsters and they help clear fencerows and build fences and pens and work with the horses and- one of the things I tell 'em is 'you can't give attitude to a horse, a horse gives attitude to you.'

AF: [laughs]

CE: [laughs]

LH: and so, [chuckles], even though you might say 'don't walk behind the horse because you might get kicked,' some youngsters might have the chip on their shoulders and say, 'well, I'll do whatever i darn well please' and the horse gives their attitude back to them.

ALL: [laugh]

LH: So, it does work out well that way. We also have school enrichment groups and we serve about 800 to a 1,000 children in this regard. We actually take curriculum to the schools. Some of the things that we have are Arbor Day activities to learn about trees and how to plant 'em and others are embryology studies where we actually provide incubators and we pr- we pick up fertilized chicken eggs for them and in 21 days and six hours, hopefully they'll have a good hatch and hatch out up to a dozen chicks. And they learn about different stages of embryology and the great part about this program is that not only are they learning about chicks themselves, but even if they have a failed hatch, we have a key leader that goes into the classroom and opens up the egg to determine what stage of development the development was arrested at. And, they can get into a discussion about life and death and knowing some of the reasons why things happen. And so, we look for teachable moments in whatever we do. It is important that they understand that even in an apparent failure of a project, you can still learn from it. And people can learn at any stage in life, whether they're a child, or middle-aged or elderly, they always have something they can gain from their environment; they always have something they can give back to their environment. Those are just touching bases on just a few of the aspects that 4-H has to offer. Of course, in a traditional setting in a rural community like Knox County, the County Fair is big stuff. When I was growing up, getting to exhibit your project at the fair was the highlight of the summer. And, while to some audiences that may seem kind of hokey, it really was an opportunity for you to publicly display your knowledge, whether it be in a poster or a birdhouse, or a picture that you had taken and had enlarged or any number of rabbits, poultry, sheep, swine, goats, beef, dairy, horse exhibits that you can come up with. This was an opportunity for them to say, 'this is what I did and I'm proud of it' and it gives parents and grandparents and extended family members an opportunity to beam with pride and acknowledge that these kids have really learned a lot. Some of the things that we find out are that people who have problems with violations with the law are usually not the kind of people that are involved in youth organizations. Now, I deal primarily with 4-H, but I also have very close ties to FFA, which used to be called Future Farmers of America and this is a high school based and on up to age 21 type group- in fact, two of my three children have been involved in FFA and they deal with-in the classroom with learning about agricultural aspects. They have opportunities there to also learn about real life and also learn about how to run a meeting properly through parliamentary procedure, how to communicate well with others, and they are dealing very well with some of the technological advances such as electronic mail and your web sites. Getting information quickly and electronically off of CD-rom and other avenues. Back in the days when we used to have to write a letter and hope that you got a book sent to you, that took a lot of time

AF: right

LH: now, to press a key stroke of a computer button we may be able to access

several years of work and that's, that's the fascinating thing about the technology and having children who can access that. Because in determining what life skills they have, they need to be able to know, not necessarily all the information, but how to access the information. And, you know- the availability of this. So, that's part of our task as well. Also, we deal with parenting and helping parents realize some of the special natures of their children, dealing with those who have disabilities or other handicaps, trying to find the positives and trying to know how to deal with any barriers that they might have. Because many of these kids excel in certain aspects of the 4-H or FFA program. We also support other youth organizations such as S.A.D.D. and M.A.D.D. and Key Club, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, the sports teams- We feel that every child should be involved in at least one youth organization. It does not have to be 4-H. We are pleased if it is, but if they get the same kind of support from parents and from coaches and things on a ball team or in some of these other organizations, that's just as, as large of a success. We would like them to have in their toolbox at the end of their schooling to be able to say, 'well, yes I have the survival tools I need to go on and become a contributing member of society' -no matter what they do. Work force preparation has probably been one of the hot topics lately. As a 4-H agent, we chose a special[t]y, or specialization area; mine is in career education and work force preparation. So, historically 4-H agents have been called the career counselor in an extension office. In my case it's even more than that because I try to facilitate an information flow from the Ohio State University, from OSU Extension on to places like the Knox County Career Center, which used to be the joint vocational school and any of the other school programs that are going on in our county. I deal directly with the Career Coordinator at the Career Center and we try to access grant funds and other opportunities for career awareness exploration and getting people on a career track if that's indeed what they want to do. We try to address tech-prep considerations for those not on a college prep track in high school and with the availability of Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute at Wooster, we can even access a two year technical program. And now, they've expanded that so that once they've gone through the two years, if they decide they want to get more schooling, then they can transfer to main campus and go on for their bachelor's degree once attaining their associates degree. So, we try to offer a wide range- As you can imagine, with all this information that's coming in, it's hard to keep track of everything. We are in contact with the Internet; we are receiving daily information from all different aspects of extension and extension is much more than 4-H youth development. It also covers family and consumer sciences, community development, and agriculture. We have agents in Knox County that serve each of these areas. Working-

AF: How many 4-H agents are there- in Knox County?

LH: In Knox County we have one- me

AF: you're it

LH: yes

AF: and in the state of Ohio?

LH: in the state of Ohio, there is less than 88 because some 4-H agents cover more than one county. Usually, if they cover more than one, it's just a two county assignment. There is quite a bit of turnover in 4-H agents. It's very easy to get burned out when you're trying to serve so many different things and they talk about their plate being very full and you can't put anything else on it.

AF: [laughs]

LH: but, the ones that remain are very dedicated and these are people that spend 25, 30 years doing this and loving it.

AF: wow

LH: And, it just takes that particular kind of person that is willing to go along with all that-

AF: having a full plate

LH: yeah, right. To have- I mean, I thrive on having two many irons in the fire all the time

ALL: [laugh]

LH: now, that's just the way it is. In Knox County, as I mentioned, we have one 4-H agent, we have one family and consumer science agent and in the old days that used to be called the home-ec agent, home economics. Well, now it's called family and computer sciences across the nation. We are very fortunate in having two agricultural agents. One is funded through extension, one is funded through an endowment account. We also have an education associate who covers part of one of the ag agent's position while he's off doing some district level and some state level work with some special programming. Then we have program assistants in agriculture and in 4-H. These are workers and we're fortunate in that they've been in our office for several years- are very good at taking in phone questions and written questions and addressing certain aspects of the program. And they each have their own special areas that they have expertise in and much more expertise perhaps than some of the agents and they can answer those part-specific questions. They can go out to the classrooms and do programming and offer educational opportunities to adult and to youth audiences as needed. We have, of course, secretarial support staff and they're much more than secretaries because they handle a lot of the questions as well. They have to know the technology of developing computer programs to track all of these different aspects. We have a couple of part-time program assistants that work with that special emphasis group of the school age program and these are dedicated certified teachers who are working with this

particular important level of youth programming in schools. And they have a much better grasp of that particular area than any of us do. So, as you can see, it's very eclectic, it- multi-talented, multi-faceted and it's different in each county. Because you can't use a cookie-cutter approach in talking about a rural county versus an urban county versus one where it's split down the middle. Tradition plays a huge part in extension. We were developed out of the Agricultural College down at the Ohio State University, but we also have the ability to build coalitions wherever they need to be built. In our office, we have many tap-ins to area organizations such as the Knox County Health Department or the Knox Community Hospital. We have opportunities to work with community leaders, with political leaders, with business people in an effort to get our programming into the hands of the people that need it the most. We serve on a day to day basis from a standpoint of somebody walks in and asks us a question- if we can answer it, we answer it, if we have a fact sheet on it, then we try to provide that for them. If we don't know the answer, we try to act as an ombudsman to direct their information to someone who is able to answer their question

AF: Are their fees for being in 4-H?

LH: In 4-H- not necessarily, but there are a few community clubs that as a matter of parliamentary procedure have decided to collect dues and usually these dues are a quarter a meeting or 50 cents a year or something like that. They do fundraising projects. No- we do not charge a fee to belong to 4-H, we do not have a uniform; we have a logo, the 4-H clover and the four H's stand for head, heart, hands and health. And that comes out of the pledge that we try to have the members learn and say at the beginning of each meeting and it goes-

AF: Is there any way we could get a copy of the pledge?

LH: Absolutely, it should be in the material

AF: okay, great

LH: It's 'I pledge my head to clear thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service and my health to better living for my club, my community, my country and my world.' Now, when I was a 4-H member, we didn't have that last few words about 'and my world' but in 1973 they added that because 4-H was spreading so much. And I truly believe that within the next few decades, when we get into space travel, it will expand to 'and my universe.' So, it is- it's one of the oldest youth organizations that's still going and 4-H has shown over the years that giving kids this opportunity for the hands on learning, they retain it much better and they're able to go on and teach it to someone else, so the, the see one, so one, teach one really works out in 4-H. You know, because they do get an opportunity to practice what they've learned and then, if they can pass it on to someone else, that's a success story in itself.

AF: yeah, that's great

CE: And it actually did begin in Ohio? 4-H in its entirety?

LH: yes, now if you go up to Michigan, they say that they started it

CE: they claim- [laugh]

LH: [laugh] but, no it did. and you have this information in the green pages book that I'm gonna' give you a copy of. It talks about Albert Belmont Graham and-

CE: great

AF: I have a question about things in general

LH: sure

AF: How do you view the decline in full time farming like across the nation affecting community life here?

LH: okay, In looking at some rural sociology information about 30, 40 years ago you saw approximately 40% of the population on some time of farm or agricultural related business. Well, now we're down to about 2% of the population. So, you're seeing less farmland, larger farms, fewer farmers and that- the farmers also includes female as well as male, more commercial ventures that are agribusiness. And people becoming a little more specialized. Back in the days of the Depression, it was not uncommon for people to be able to exist primarily off what they raised on their own land. You know, they would have different species of animals, you know, for meat, milk, eggs, different by-products like that. They would be able to sell some of what they made or sewed or cooked or whatever to get money for the things that they couldn't raise on their farm. Then, as the industrial age came in, you saw a shift in the population leaving the farm which was hard work and going towards the urban centers where jobs were more plentiful, pay was better and eventually the benefits became better you know, with health insurance and the like. Now, we're starting to see a reversal of that where people are leaving the urban centers at least to live and developing bedroom communities so we have urban sprawl- [flip tape] a situation where you have urban sprawl, where the cities are getting larger, you also have people leaving the urban cities not necessarily to farm but to get away from some of the urban problems and they come out and they inhabit the farm land but they're not farming. And so, again, the farm land is being reduced. And probably one of our biggest challenges is finding ways for these people who have been reared in the cities for so many generations of decades to appreciate that yes, they might want to live in a pastoral setting where they can look out across the lovely fields of waving grain or something but when the neighbor starts spreading manure on the- on his fields to fertilize the ground so that he can have a good crop next year, the aroma may not be contusive to

what the new homeowner likes. And so you have some homeowners that come out to these locations and they start having referendums and elections and stuff to try to reduce the number of farmers in their area. You have farmers who feel like their land is being taken away from them and they have no recourse because they cannot afford to pay the prices for land that land developers pay. And you have walls being built at least in people's minds between the two populations. One of our tasks is to offer up ways for these two groups to get together and work things out, collaborate in- and try to preserve whatever they have in the community. Yes, we do need housing and yes, we do need farmers. And so we have to come up with viable ways of preserving and conserving our natural resources, our natural land, our heritage, our traditions, as well as making allowances for a population that is still growing although it's not growing at the same rate it was a few years back. So, we're fortunate in that regard. Farmers have done a much better job of producing foodstuffs for our nation as well as others and in that efficiency, we can get away with losing some acreage. But, there has to be a saturation point eventually in time and once that point is reached, you can't go back and reclaim some of that land. Because it's been, you know, rendered useless you know, in regards to what can be grown there. We saw that in the deep south after the civil war, or during the civil war even because they would exhaust the land and then just move on to another farm and not replenish the soil and so some of the efforts with the research that's being done now in agriculture is to find ways of preventing soil erosion, of maintaining a balance with nature, with the wetlands projects and other issues that come up and trying to keep that balance as homeostatic as possible, while still producing quality fruits and vegetables and foodstuffs for animals as well as people, of working with neighborhoods, of looking at tax situations to provide good schools for communities, of providing necessary jobs because with the mechanization of the farm not as many farm workers are needed. So, we still have the people, but not as many job opportunities so we have to rethink our career options and the technology that's coming along shows that more people will be involved in service or technological things rather than manual labor. So, those folks that depended upon brute strength for their jobs are either going to have to be able to be retrained or they end up possibly being a burden on the rest of the community by getting social assistance.

CE: Obviously, you think of the extent- the extension agency, extension kind of implies going out into the community

LH: that's right

CE: you've mentioned a lot of assistance programs and obviously 4-H and what not, I mean, how- can you just briefly kind of describe exactly what you see the extension agency's role in the community

LH: okay

CE: just kind of give us a-

LH: yeah. The Ohio State University, like I said was one of a land grant universities in this program- very heavily research based. There are times when you get into anecdotal little situations where you say, 'oh yeah, grandfather did this and it always worked.' Well, maybe it did and maybe something else caused it. We are really trying to do research and sometimes we are good at it and sometimes we are very poor at it, at trying to figure out what really works and what doesn't. It is important that we go out and get to the grassroots community and ask 'what do they need?' Rather than coming at it from a government agency and saying, 'well, we think this is what you need and this is what we're gonna' shovel at ya' and when actually they may not have wanted that particular help at all. As I said, each extension office is tailored to the community that it is in. The commodity groups who are raising different kinds of crops, different kinds of animals or different aspects of the agribusiness community really dictates what the extension office in that particular county does. For instance, our agricultural agents are now working with farmers who apply pesticides because each year they have to be retrained by a government mandate on how to apply pesticides, what mixtures to use, what are acceptable concentrations. Very few other countries go to all this trouble in keeping the hazards down. Risk management in such things is a concept that is not really very well understood, but I've listened to a number of speakers who look at the, the risk aspect of pesticides getting into our food chain and into our water supply and actually, in most cases, if the farmers are doing what they've been trained to do, there's very health risk to the general population. If the general population does not properly prepare some of the foodstuffs, then we have a problem there with not educating them properly and, and they can you know, get into some of the, the higher chemical levels then what, the higher parts per million than what is acceptable you know, to government standards. The Food and Drug Administration of the United States probably has a better handle on things than some other countries do. They're very conservative. Yes, they do keep some helpful drugs out of circulation because they haven't been as well tested and they may, they may appear slow to respond in some aspects, but in others, they're conservative approach has probably saved millions of live- in the long run. The natural resources situation, with Extension being able to work with other government agencies such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and other people that work with folks in agriculture, we have to keep a good communication line going and we need to know where they're coming from; they have to know where we're coming from. And again, the collaboration is really helpful. If we can't let each other know what's going on then either- neither of us covers the necessary bases or we're redundant you know and we keep trying to reinvent the wheel

AF: [laughs]

LH: so that the communication level is very important. So, it's really a kind of a feedback loop. We in Extension need to contact members in the community and

ask, 'what do you need, what do you perceive as your problems?' because their perceptions are their reality. Whether we agree necessarily with what their perceptions are- that's still their reality and we have to look at it from their point of view.

AF: so, there's a feedback sort of

LH: yes- they give us feedback, we give them information and then they give us feedback- is this really working or not

AF: so you're primarily an educational

LH: that's right- we are, we are here to provide information, you know. We're kind of like traffic cops on the information super highway rather than road kill. We try to facilitate the flow of information- if someone comes in and they're asking about a certain question in horticulture we have access to several different fact sheets that are updated periodically that have to do with, you know current strains of fungus or other pestilence problems that may affect that particular crop. Also if there's a trend away from a certain type of planning style and into another such as with low-till or no-till farming we try to make that information available not necessarily to say this is the way you should go and the only way you should go- we try to offer them a broad spectrum of choices and say, 'in your particular situation we feel that this grouping might work the best, but you also have this grouping here to chose from. And the special project I mentioned that our chairman is undergoing in management intensive grazing. It's a new concept for some people but it's a way of utilizing a given amount of pasture land, grassland more efficiently. Used to be the day when you'd have a herd of dairy cattle you'd just turn 'em out in the same 'ol field year in and year out. And if the weather was such that the grass didn't grow very well, they'd eat it down to the ground. Well, now a days with management intensive graining [grazing] you might run a couple electric fence lines across there and divide it up into sections and only let them graze in certain areas. Then, once they had eaten down to a certain level, you move them into the next section and let the first section have a chance to grow back up. A lot of it is common sense, but it's like 'gee, why didn't we think of this before?'

CE: [laughs]

AF: [laughs]

LH: okay, so they're they're so many different aspects and in this kind of situation, we do fight tradition because that's not what people grew up with. And you may not be able to change their impressions of how they should farm. But if you offer 'em alternatives and they chose not to take them at least that's still their choice. It's not a government agency saying, 'you will do this.' It's saying, 'try this, we feel it might benefit you.'

CE: so how does that work? Do the members, do the members of the community come to you and say, 'we need help with this' or do you actually- I mean how do you actually approach them when you go out and I guess, extend your services? How does that really work?

LH: right. We usually every Saturday in the newspaper, we give a listing of what programs we're offering or upcoming programs. And these programs, not, are not only at the local level, they may be held at the district level, at the state level or at the national level. So, those who have farm ponds may go to a farm pond seminar, management seminar; those who have orchards may go to a roadside fruit marketing convention to learn more about how to deal with whatever problems they have with their particular situation. One of the latest things that OSU has been involved with is their Excel program where they gather together some learned researchers to deal with a particular issue and there's like Dairy Excel for people who run dairies, there's an Equine Excel for horse people. Like, say a person has a stable and they maybe they train horses or sell horses or board horses, there's an opportunity to go there in three short visits where they can talk to an economics professor, they can talk to someone who is knowledgeable about horses and different breeds and their care. Maybe they'll talk to a veterinarian that will address different health concerns in the now-a-day world, you know, for horses and how to best combat those. There are some diseases in animals that once the animal gets 'em, the animal has to be destroyed. So you try to make sure that the producers of these animals know about this in a timely fashion. There are many diseases that can be spread from one hog farm to another. So many places, if you drive into a barn yard of a hog producer you'll see a big stop sign that will not allow you any further until they know that you have not tracked in any bacteria or fungus from another farm

AF: like biosecurity

LH: that's right. And because if you bring in disease that they're not covering, the chances of losing their entire operation just from one person walking into their area- you know, that could be devastating

AF: Do you, would you say that your organization ever has a problem with politics? Like are you guys, are you guys pushing technology or are you more trying to like mediate it and say, 'okay, you know like, we're trying to help efficiency,' but at the same time conserve rural-

LH: well, yes we, that's

AF: environments

LH: that's an excellent question. We do get involved in the middle of some very hot political debates but it is not our position to take a stand

AF: we're in the same way with our farm project

LH: right, certainly. And the situation say like with a local water company coming in and drilling wells in Knox County and then taking the water away from Knox County has been a really hot topic. Well, what we need to do is be able to look at both sides of the story and give what we know about both sides not just side one place or another. We deal with politicians from all parties and as elections come and go we still are here and we still keep you know, working with whomever the general majority of the voters has elected. So, we can't have partisan politics

AF: [laughs]

LH: there are commodity groups that we work with and of course, they have their own best interests at heart and we try not to be at cross purposes with them but we have to realize that they're looking at it from their particular viewpoint and maybe they've never stood at this other viewpoint and looked at the situation. So hopefully we can offer them some alternatives

AF: right

LH: and say you know, 'consider from here' or long-range planning, short-range goals- letting them assess themselves is very important.

AF: great

LH: I'll make sure that you have copies of our mission and vision statements and our values and-

AF: that would be really cool

LH: everything, that

AF: one other thing I wanted to know actually is do you- is there any sort of timeline of when projects are due or anything like that?

LH: okay, in Knox County the special emphasis groups have no timeline from the standpoint of they can be started pretty much at any time depending on the volunteers

AF: okay

LH: they can be ended pretty much at any time. The traditional 4-H calendar for Knox County, Ohio is that in January we hold our kick-off and we explain to our volunteers what's coming in the coming months as far as programming, training, available projects and the like. The clubs form usually in late January, early February and send in enrollment figures in March. They are starting their

meetings at that time, electing officers in the clubs, selecting projects, starting to work on their projects- if they have livestock projects, most of those are in-hand by May first. Some of the larger animals are purchased months or a year ahead of time and they've been working with them throughout the year. Some of the smaller animals are purchased right about the time of May first. Our Fair is usually the last full week in July, this year it will be July 21st through the 27th and that is the culmination of many of the traditional clubs' activities. Some of them go on throughout the fall and winter, others take a hiatus at that particular point. We have some of the special emphasis groups also that will meet seasonally- a new program that is just getting started is the Shooting Sports program where we offer youngsters the opportunity to learn cooperation, team work, self-esteem building in the way of using firearms and archery equipment. we teach them the safety factors, we teach them how things work and we do help them learn how to set goals and eventually hit a target. But, hitting that bullseye is not the main

AF: objective

LH: idea behind it. We also have groups that, that work along with some of these other groups like camp counselors- we have a junior 4-H camp in June where we can take up to 250 individuals for five days and four nights down to Camp Ohio just across the Licking County line. Here they learn about studies of nature, cooperative games- again, more and more life skills. Team challenges, not necessarily to have the individual win, but have the entire team win thanks to the mental capabilities of everybody on the team. We also try to provide them with opportunities to learn respect for others, respect for nature, respect for a higher being- if that, if that is the way they have been brought up, or just an opportunity. You know, there've been times when we've had vesper services down at camp which may be the only church type program that they attend in a given year. Because we serve many unchurched individuals. And many from broken homes who don't have some of these opportunities. At the Fair, we have a Junior Fair and a Senior Fair. The Junior Fair has to do with mainly 4-H'ers, FFA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts- having certain projects that are exhibited and undergo some competition at the Fair itself. These events are run by teen-agers on the Junior Fair Board. We put them up on the announcer's stand and them keeping records and them announcing the shows and setting up the rings and tearing down the rings and giving out the ribbons and the trophies and things like this because the Junior Fair is their Fair- it's not the adults' Fair. We have a Teen Board, a committee of fantastic young ladies who can do speaking on food and nutrition, sewing projects, fashion ideas, things like this and they are willing to go out at a teen-age level and do public speaking. We also have public speaking contests, we have demonstration contests to enable kids more and more to get up in front of people. In each of the community clubs we stress the need to give everyone the opportunity to get up and give an oral demonstration in their club because we feel that public speaking and their communication skills are very important, you know as they go along. Another new aspect is our Car Teen program where we have

assembled a small group of dedicated teen-agers who want to work against the increasing number of deaths and injuries caused either by or involving teen aged drivers. And this group gets together with teen participants who are mandated by the juvenile traffic court to attend- and hopefully their parents come along with them and instead of putting a uniformed officer in front of them and having them sit back and say, well, you know this law enforcement officer is paid to say 'don't speed,' 'don't drink and drive' you know, this kind of thing- they, we have teen-agers that are up there and they are hopefully speaking from the heart when they say, 'look, we care what you do to yourself, we care about the decisions you make before and after getting behind the wheel of a car; we don't want you to kill yourself; we don't want you to kill us or one of our family members

AF: how do they deal with confidentiality in that sort of situation?

LH: We have an understanding, which is stated at the beginning of every session that what goes on in the sessions is confidential and what is said in there is not taken outside without their permission. And so we do involve the parents but when we get to small group discussions, we've started splitting the parents out and having the parents have their own small group so the kids can be more open

CE: right

LH: with their feelings and the issues that they're dealing with. Yes, there are times when we have an alcohol problem in our teen-agers, we have drug problems, we have situations where they are faced with peer pressure to make decisions especially behind the wheel that they shouldn't be making. We're looking at what other states and countries do in the way of driver education, in the way of graduated licensing whereby some states actually allow fifteen year olds to drive but you have to have an adult in the car with you, not just a licensed driver. Or states that say as a teen-aged driver your first year, you cannot have another teen-ager even in the car as a distraction. Getting into situations where teen-agers who typically have a higher crash rate between the hours of 10 p.m. and three a.m. not being allowed during those hours. A- because a sixteen year old on a dark country road traveling at a speed that probably they shouldn't be traveling at is a great combination to have a wreck. And we've stopped calling them accidents because traffic crashes are not accidents, they happen for a reason. They might not be planned but they are not accidents. And so some of our teens try to get this across. We also bring in the Car Teen program, we also do bring in a state patrolman or drivers' examiner or someone from the medical community to talk about not just decision making and why it's a smart thing to buckle up that seat belt or not to drink and drive and also what are the consequences of getting behind the wheel of a 2,000 pound killing machine and ramming down the highway and wiping out a family or yourself or you know, your family member. So we do look at it from that standpoint, too. And so decision making really enters into it a lot- also having the right frame of

mind when you're operating a motor vehicle.

AF: great

CE: I was curious, in terms of the 4-H projects

LH: yes

CE: I mean, do the club members actually select what kind of project they want to do given they fit all the regulations for the project

LH: yes, they do

CE: and there are also group projects that take place within the various clubs

LH: that is correct, yes- and we try to allow as much latitude as possible in the, in the types of groups that form. There are many miscellaneous clubs and these are clubs that are very eclectic, they offer a wide variety of projects while admitting that the advisors are not experts in all or maybe not even any of these projects but they are willing to facilitate the learning- individualized learning of each of the members. There are other clubs that have become more specialized. For instance, our 10 Saddle Horse Clubs in Knox County and one Draft and Pony Horse Club that serve close to 200 kids who are interested mainly in equine studies. And so since that's such a specialized project, a large animal, a huge investment of time and effort and money, we feel that those are more specialized clubs. We have a Dog Club, we have rabbit clubs and some of the other species each have a grouping, but then other non-animal projects are taken care of in those same clubs also. We have some clubs that are say nutrition and fashion type clubs where those are the only kind of projects where they work on. And kids have the opportunity to select, not only the project, but also the club that they go into as long as the advisors have space for them.

CE: and do the clubs, do they just cover all ages or are they actually broken up?

LH: they cover all ages, yes. Now some clubs may have more older members than young- usually an initial club starting out will have mostly young members, but depending on their technique for bringing more members in each year, you eventually get to a one room schoolhouse situation where you have a stair step of the older members mentoring the younger members.

AF: [laughs]

LH: and serving as role models. Sometimes that's good, sometimes that's less than good [chuckles] because they also pick up some of their bad habits, too. But, it's an opportunity for, especially in a miscellaneous setting- for one person taking one project to look around and see what other people are doing with their projects and saying, 'well gee, maybe next year I'll take that project that I

see them having so much fun with.’ And you can see, the choice of projects ranges so much from the old cows and cooking stigma that 4-H used to have to you know, involving aerospace technology, computers, photography issues, non-animal as well as animal projects. In our 1,500 or more traditional kids, only 400 live on farms in Knox County. So we are already serving people who are in a rural but non-farm status or a town status

AF: that’s good- I used to live in Maryland and my neighbors were all farmers and I borrowed an animal so I could do a 4-H project [laughs]

LH: sure. And some of the horse people who can’t afford a horse lease or have one loaned to them for the 4-H season so that they can still, you know participate.

AF: that’s good, it’s fun

LH: we even have new updated projects- we have one that was added in ‘95 called the Horseless Horse project where you can still learn about horses without actually having the beast there in your back yard

ALL: [laugh]

CE: I’m just curious- what do you think the community would be like without something like the extension agency or office rather and a group like 4-H. Could you even imagine that?

LH: well, it would be hard to imagine it coming from Knox County

CE: right

LH: I think that some of the other youth organizations would fill in parts of the gaps but I think we’d lose a lot more kids who would find more time, more idle time on their hands. In talking with the juvenile court judge, when he sees them in front of his bench, he says, ‘what do you do?’ and they say, ‘well, I go to school,’ he says, ‘well, what else do you do?’ - ‘nuthin’- he says, ‘are you in scouting or sports?’- ‘no’- ‘or 4-H or FFA?’- ‘no.’ Whether it is, you know, real life

AF: what is it, idle hands are the devil’s workshop-

LH: that’s right, exactly. Whether it is just a matter of not giving them enough direction you know- I grew up on a farm where I had chores and it wasn’t a matter of if I wanted to do them, it was ‘well yes, you’ll do them.’

AF: [laughs] and you put a smile on your face

LH: And I mean, there was no question. We would go out and we’d do the chores you know, whether it was raining or snowing or sunny or whatever, or whether the kids you know down the road were gonna’ go to a ball game or something

like that, we still had to do our chores. And when you're dealing with live animals on a farm, they have to eat- or you don't eat. You know, because they have to produce whatever they're gonna' produce and there are times now-a-days when the youth are lacking for things to do and it's very easy to put them in front of the T.V. and pop in a video tape and let it be an electronic babysitter for your young ones. It's very easy to get a video game and keep a teen-ager occupied for a long period of time. But there are times when they need to get away from that type of technology and get out and find out what the real world is like. Community service is a big part of 4-H. We ask that each of the different clubs do something in the way of community service. This may be something-

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