

Your Role As President of A Home Demonstration Club

June Cline*

The members of your club showed their respect for you when they elected you president of your home demonstration club. They knew that much of the club's success depends on a capable, well organized president, and they trusted you with the important job. This leaflet will help you live up to that trust. It will help you with each of your responsibilities as president — planning and conducting club meetings, building club membership, increasing club outreach, representing your club on the County Home Demonstration Council and taking part in Texas Home Demonstration Association activities.

Planning and Conducting Club Meetings

Planning and conducting club meetings is one of the most important presidential tasks. Of course, club officers and members are always on hand to help, but it is up to the president to see that things are done. There are several steps to successful planning and conducting of club meetings. Let's look at them one by one.

Confer with Other Club Officers

You will work with the officers to set up the club's meeting calendar for the entire year. Each club member should have a

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yearbook that lists the time, place, program and the program leader for each meeting. If a meeting date must be changed during the year, you should ask the secretary or a telephone committee to help notify members.

To insure smooth meetings, confer with your officers before the meeting. Be sure you consult with the vice president, secretary and council delegate about the order of business.

Check with the program leader to be sure she understands she is to present the program. Talk with her about when and how long she is to be on the program. She will usually need about 25 to 30 minutes to present the program and have time for questions and discussion. Sometimes it will be better to have the program before the business.

Alert committee chairmen if you plan to ask them for reports at the meeting. Some presidents ask each committee chairman to give a progress report at each meeting. After consulting with the officers, you will need to make out an agenda listing what must be done at the meeting. It is a good idea to note the amount of time you think each item on the agenda will take. You can use this estimated time schedule as a guide to help keep the meeting on track while you preside.

Get Acquainted with the Club's By-Laws

It is your job to see that the club follows its by-laws. You will need to read and be familiar with the club's by-laws and keep them on hand during the meetings for reference. If you are aware of the items outlined in the by-laws, you can help club members be aware, too.

Sometimes the by-laws may seem too binding, keeping your club from doing what it wants to do. In this case, you can appoint a committee to study the by-laws and recommend changes.

Appoint Committees

You may be an ex-officio member of all committees except the nominating committee. As an ex-officio member of a committee, you have all privileges of membership, including voting, but you are not counted in the quorum. Participating in the committees helps you to be informed about all club work.

Committees work better if members' talents, background and interests in the specific committee's tasks are kept in mind when they are appointed. Appoint committees only if they have a job to do. Three to five people should be appointed to each working

committee. It is best to rotate membership, keeping at least one member with experience as chairman while adding new members.

Preside at All Club Meetings

It is your job to preside at most club meetings (some presidents ask the vice president to preside at one meeting per year) — to call the meeting to order on time, announce the order of business and present business not introduced by members.

As you preside, it is important to encourage discussion and give members a chance to participate in club decisions. The more ideas brought into the discussion, the better the decision is likely to be. However, discussions can get out of hand. As president, it is your job to direct discussions in an orderly way. These tips may help you:

- Give every member who wishes a chance to speak.
- Encourage all viewpoints, giving “for” and “against” speakers equal opportunity to talk.
- Make sure members speak one at a time. You may have to restrict speakers to the subject and to rules of order.
- Avoid giving your own opinion. Because you are the president, your opinion could sway the group decision.

When discussion has been sufficient, ask for a motion and put the motion to a vote. When the vote has been carefully counted, announce the results.

Some groups avoid important discussions — or cut discussions short — because members tend to lose interest if the discussion drags. This does not have to happen in your club. You can help keep the group's attention by:

- Giving every a member a chance to participate in club activities. By utilizing members' talents and interests, you can involve everyone in the club. As president you should encourage others to work, not take over and do it all yourself.
- Keeping the meeting moving. Watch how members react to discussion. Call for a vote after there has been sufficient discussion, but before discussion begins to drag.
- Using the gavel — or any other device — to call the group to order. You might ask the group to cooperate so there will be time for business and a visit at the end of the meeting.
- Including a visiting period before or after the meeting. If they know there will be time set aside for visiting, members are more likely to settle down for the business session. End

the meeting with a motion for adjournment or some other method that will clearly mark the end of the business session.

Conduct Elections

By-laws outline the requirements for elections. It is your job to make sure the club follows these requirements. Be sure the members know the duties of each officer they are electing.

You, as president, can vote only if the vote is by secret ballot. You must vote in case of a tie vote.

Make Club Meetings Fun

While you are carrying on the business of your club, remember that important ingredient — fun. Every meeting should be enjoyable as well as productive.

You can add a festive feeling by being friendly to all members and welcoming guests. Always thank the hostess, leaders and others who helped make the meeting a success.

Building Club Membership

An involved membership is essential to the club. Maintaining active membership stimulates the club. Disregard of a declining membership will cause hardship for the club.

Because building membership is a time-consuming job, many presidents appoint membership chairmen to help with this phase of club work. The membership chairman is responsible for alerting the club about membership needs and inviting prospective members to the meetings.

Of course, some successful clubs have a healthy supply of hard working members. These clubs might sponsor a new club. In this way the older club can help more women become involved in the program. The byword should be to include, not exclude, any woman who might want to become a member.

Increasing Club Outreach

The club can include more people by reaching out to others. The information the club members gain at meetings can help other

people, too. By sharing information with neighbors and friends, the club members can perform a service to the community.

As club president, you can help the members realize how important outreach is. And you can help members plan ways to share information. You may want to:

- Keep in touch with the local librarian. She may know of possible avenues for sharing.
- Set up bulletin or program displays at the county fair, a shopping center or the library.
- Present program material to other groups in the community.
- Encourage members to share program information and leaflets with friends and family members.

Representing Your Club on the County Home Demonstration Council

Your presidential tasks extend outside your local club. As president, you represent your club on the County Home Demonstration Council. It is important to attend all council meetings or to ask the vice president to attend for you if you cannot go to the meeting.

You are the club's representative and should vote their wishes, not your own desires. Your club members are counting on you to represent them by taking part in decision making in the council meeting.

Ask the council delegate to report the proceedings of the council to your local club. She should give club members a brief but accurate picture of what the council is doing in their behalf.

Your Responsibility to the Texas Home Demonstration Association

As club president, you should try to attend the annual meeting of the Texas Home Demonstration Association. Encourage members to attend THDA district and state meetings. All club members who are not delegates register as guests. If club members are not THDA members, encourage them to attend as guests to learn about the Association.

Keep members informed about THDA projects and events. Program planning for the year's club meetings should include one or two Texas Home Demonstration Association recommendations for study and one Texas Home Demonstration Association service project.

Sharing Leadership Tasks

Living up to the trust your members placed in you will not always be easy. But it will be rewarding and worthwhile — for you and your club members.

Your tenure as president will be even more worthwhile for the members of your club if you let the members know how much you need their help. If you convince members that the club needs everyone's talents, you will help build leadership. By sharing your leadership tasks, you help others become capable of taking over your job when your term is complete.

The information in this publication is adapted from HE-378, *Your Job As President of an Extension Homemaker's Club*, Agricultural Information Department, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

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Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, The Texas A&M University System and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.

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