

## **4-H and Home Demonstration Work during World War II** <sup>[1]</sup>

During the years of World War II, North Carolina women were led by Home Demonstration and extension agents in programs to increase food production and preservation. Farmwomen tended livestock, grew tobacco, drove tractors, and did anything else to ensure that farms produced greater amounts of food. Women across the state raised Victory Gardens following the February 1942 "Victory Garden Week" sponsored by the Agricultural Extension Service. By 1944 the value of home gardens was estimated at \$68,000,000. Also that year women in the state collected 150,000 pounds of surplus kitchen fat and grease. Curb markets helped to distribute excess food grown by the women and canning and freezing helped to preserve fruits, vegetables, and meats. In 1944 over twenty-seven million containers were canned by North Carolina women and a half million pounds of food was frozen. Because of the work, Home Demonstration clubs grew to over 55,000 members by 1945.

North Carolina 4-H club members also aided the war effort, primarily through the "Food for Victory" program and the "Feed a Fighter" campaign. Beginning in 1942 "Food for Victory" offered awards ranging from \$1 to \$250 in war bonds or stamps for farm boys and girls who participated (by themselves or with their families) in the "Food for Freedom" extension program. They helped produce more milk, eggs, beef and veal, lamb and mutton, corn, barley, rye, hay, soybeans, peanuts, and vegetables. Extension agents visited farms to encourage production needed to feed Americans and American allies during the war.

In 1943 4-H club members began participating in the national "Feed a Fighter" campaign. Endorsed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, it consisted of projects to produce the amount of food needed for one serviceman for one year. They included feeding sixteen lambs, feeding and handling one milk cow, growing 110 bushels of tomatoes, and canning 500 quarts of vegetables. Run as a contest, 4-H'ers could win a trip to Fort Bragg in recognition of their contribution. The state winner in 1943 raised enough food to feed thirty-four servicemen for one year. Ninety-one thousand club members participated. North Carolina 4-H club members were so productive that they won the honor of naming two ships in the U. S. fleet: the USS Tyrrell (named for Tyrrell County) and the USS Cassius Hudson (named for the man who began demonstration work in the state in 1907).

North Carolina 4-H club members also participated in the war effort in other smaller programs. A week in April 1942 was designated National 4-H Mobilization Week with the theme "4-H Mobilization for Victory." Club members participated in the first national scrap drive in 1942, collecting metal, paper, and rubber. Nationally the 4-H organization sponsored a "Victory Scrap Drive" in 1943. North Carolina 4-H'ers raised \$1,700 dollars, mainly by selling of old phonograph records, for the purchase of an ambulance donated to the armed services. New projects were created during the war years, reflecting the need to grow and conserve greater amounts of food, including a frozen foods project. During the war the 4-H program loaned Camps Millstone and Swannanoa to the military. In response to wartime programs and projects, 4-H club membership in the state increased to a record 93,000 white and African American club members, more than doubling club membership from ten years earlier.

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## Primary Sources:

[Food for Freedom Instructional Handbook \(1943\)](#) [24]

from the U.S. Department of Agriculture

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[Wartime 4-H Support - World War II](#) [25]

from the National 4-H History Preservation Program

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