

History of 4-H and the American Private Enterprise Program

The American Private Enterprise Seminar (APES) provides high school juniors and sometimes seniors with an early exposure to the capitalistic system, teaching them how Americans organize for business locally, within the United States and globally. Specific program objectives are:

- To increase participants' knowledge of the American economic system through individual and group study
- To help prepare participants to take an active role in business through involvement with business leaders
- To provide an exchange of ideas among youth scholars and local business and professional leaders
- To acquaint youth scholars with career opportunities in business
- To provide leadership training for youth scholars and junior leaders as they serve as officers and committee members in local, area, state and national programs
- To provide citizenship training for youth scholars and junior leaders as they learn about the American way of doing business.

It began as a pilot effort in the mid-1950s. Professor Wendell Binkley of the University of Kentucky's Department of Agricultural Economics initially developed the county-level APES program and the state-level Kentucky Youth Seminar (KYS) through the auspices of the Kentucky Council of Cooperatives.

The APE program was designed as a local project for high school juniors and seniors and was initially conducted by local business people, county extension agents, school teachers, administrators and others. The Kentucky Youth Seminar was designed to provide leadership training and knowledge of American business organizations for rural youths who had demonstrated interest and leadership through participation in the youth programs of the Kentucky Council of Cooperatives.

Today, more than 50 years later, local programs continue to be initiated locally by county Extension agents for 4-H, local business and civic leaders, cooperative managers and local school officials. Youth scholars who excel at the local level are selected to participate in the annual state conference called Kentucky Youth Seminar (KYS). For several years, fourteen winners at the Kentucky Youth Seminar were selected to attend the annual meeting of the National Institute on Cooperative Education (NICE), where they participated in national competition. In recent years, the number of youth participating in the NICE Conference has increased to 22. In addition to the trip to NICE, 16 seminar winners are awarded scholarships for post secondary education.

The American Private Enterprise Seminar is jointly sponsored by the Kentucky Council of Cooperatives and the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. CES

and the council provide program leadership as well as human and material resources that are essential to the program's continued success. The program is coordinated at the state level by Dr. Lionel Williamson from the UK College of Agriculture's Agricultural Economics Department. Curricula are provided for use in local programs and the Kentucky Youth Seminar. At the local level much of the program's financial support is provided by cooperatives, agribusinesses, business executives, banks, local businesses and community leaders.

Records reveal that the first local APE seminars were conducted in 32 Kentucky counties in 1966. In that year, 793 youth participated. Over the 50+ year period, the program has had a significant positive impact on youth participants. Youth have participated in group discussions and interacted with business leaders and politicians at local, state and national levels.

In assessing the impact of the American Private Enterprise Seminar, the following components were reviewed:

- Number of youth scholars reached through local APE programs
- Number of local youth who have participated in the Kentucky Youth Seminar
- Number of Youth Seminar participants who have participated in NICE
- Level of financial support through scholarships, cash awards, and trips to NICE
- Composition of scholarship winners (farm vs. non-farm) and the number and percentage of scholarships used
- Local financial support
- Local support through program leaders, junior leaders, school officials, and others
- Youth committees, seminar topics, seminar speakers.

Local American Private Enterprise Seminars

Local programs are key to the success of the APES program. Since 1966 more than 56,000 youth scholars and junior leaders from 95 of Kentucky's 120 counties have participated in the program.

In 1966 there were 35 counties participating in the program, reaching nearly 800 youth. Today an average of 33 counties and almost 1,000 youth participate in the program annually.

Local programs receive financial support for such cost items as printing program brochures; refreshments, banquets, luncheons, cash prizes, tours; and locally produced program material. Although data to indicate a specific dollar value for such is not available it is easy to appreciate that such support has been substantial. Typically the cost of operating a county program averages about \$500. Forty or more programs are operated each year at the county level. The number of county programs exceeds the number of participating counties because many counties conduct more than one program.

If an average per-program cost of \$500 annually is assumed then the level of financial support at the county level would amount to \$20,000 on an annual basis. Over the past 50 years such support would amount to \$1,000,000. Such county level support suggests that community leaders take a strong interest in educating youth about the American Private Enterprise System.

Non-monetary support for youth participants in the American Private Enterprise Seminar far exceeds the support that has been quantified in terms of dollars. Such support is reflected at all program levels. Each year hundreds of community leaders from all walks of life volunteer their time and talents in support of the program. These individuals provide assistance to county Extension agents for 4-H and other areas: securing facilities, providing resource materials, serving as discussion leaders, adult counselors, fund raisers and generally providing other assistance as needed. Hundreds of person-hours are expended in the program each year.

Kentucky Youth Seminar

The level of participation in the Kentucky Youth Seminar has varied directly with the level of program participation at the county level. In 1966, the first year attendance records were kept, 208 youth participated in KYS. In recent years the level of participation in KYS has decreased due in part to the program's eligibility requirements, competition from other youth programs such as Governor's Scholars, conflicts with family vacations and financial considerations. In 1996, changes in the availability of meeting facilities, increases in costs and other variables forced a reduction in the number of scholars. This smaller number allows for an effective program that recognizes resource constraints.

Local businesses usually pay the expenses of youth scholars and junior leaders to KYS. The cost per seminar participant is \$105.00 for youth and adult counselors. Adult counselors are selected from each county to accompany youth scholars to the Kentucky Youth Seminar.

Over the past 50 years, more than 7,400 youth scholars have participated in the youth seminar at an estimated cost of \$777,000.

At the conclusion of KYS, post secondary scholarships are awarded to 14 youth scholars and two junior leaders. Over the past 50 years, the annual amount of scholarships awarded has ranged from \$4,500 to the current \$7,700. During the period 1955-2006, nearly \$390,000 in scholarships have been awarded. To date, over 98 percent of all scholarships awarded have been used.

Cash awards are also given to deserving youth during the Kentucky Youth Seminar. The amount given annually has varied from \$1,115 to \$1,500 with an annual average of \$1,400. Over the past 51 years over \$71,000 in cash awards has been given.

National Institute on Cooperative Education

The level of participation in the National Institute on Cooperative Education is determined by the Kentucky Council of Cooperatives. The council has supported travel and expenses of 14 to 22 youth scholars and junior leaders and up to six adult counselors to attend the NICE conference annually.

Over 575 youth scholars and junior leaders have attended the NICE conference since 1955. The average annual cost of these trips is \$12,000. Over the past 50 years the Kentucky Council of Cooperatives has provided over \$600,000 to support youth participants in NICE. The University of Kentucky has sponsored an average of five university employees to this conference annually.

Youth Committee Support

Several years ago a youth committee was appointed to assist in planning local programs, the Kentucky Youth Seminar and the annual trip to NICE. Membership on this committee is representative of all of the major cooperative families (financial, marketing, service, and supply). The departments of Agricultural Economics, State and County 4-H Youth Development, and Agricultural Communications are representatives of the Kentucky Council of Cooperatives. The youth committee meets three to four times each year to review the previous year's program and plan program activities for the coming year. Sub-committees are appointed and given the responsibility of securing seminar speakers; developing board cases; evaluating and selecting winning board cases at the seminar; planning the junior leader program; planning seminar tours; planning seminar social activities; and determining the criteria for selecting participants in NICE program.

Does the APES Program Work?

The APES Program is a widely recognized program offered by Kentucky Cooperative Extension. Observations over the past few years suggest that the program works and is well received. Program evaluations tell us that youth look forward to participating in the program. In fact, many youth request permission to enroll in the program for a second time. Does the program work? Ask community leaders and youth in your community.

Summary of Participation

Years	A P E S Programs (Local)	KY Youth Seminar (State)	NICE (National)
1966	793	208	0
1967	824	227	14
1968	619	140	14
1969	811	193	14
1970	683	148	14
1971	833	167	23
1972	897	152	19
1973	912	158	17

1974	854	128	15
1975	1,266	166	17
1976	1,456	227	14
1977	1,256	184	14
1978	1,316	187	14
1979	1,331	232	14
1980	1,510	240	14
1981	1,630	240	14
1982	1,550	228	14
1983	1,601	232	14
1984	1,915	215	14
1985	2,017	247	14
1986	2,261	237	14
1987	1,901	270	16
1988	1,976	251	16
1989	2,319	242	16
1990	2,060	252	16
1991	1,959	213	16
1992	1,882	233	16
1993	1,687	230	16
1994	1,564	230	16
1995	1,511	204	16
1996	1,307	142	16
1997	1,329	152	16
1998	1,303	178	16
1999	1,393	162	16
2000	1,370	158	16
2001	1,316	158	16
2002	1,091	129	16
2003	1,212	92	18
2004	1,008	101	21
2005	994	111	22
2006	977	97	22
Total to date	56,494	7452	575