

# Exploring the Roots of Your Organization (CEOS)

Shirley C. Eagan, Ed.D.  
WVU Extension Professor Emerita

The purposes of this study topic are to assist members to:

- Better understand the history of the organization to which they belong,
- Be able to discuss the CEOS organization with others, and
- Become more involved in the organization.

## Introduction

How many are involved in tracking their ancestors? As you've explored your personal roots, have you discovered anything you did not know before? (*Allow a little time for discussion.*) Some surprises might include: where your ancestors came from, the work they did, the number of children they had, and what happened to them. These stories can be interesting to you and your family. Sometimes you even discover some little-known facts about your family.

Some people do not care to look at the history of an organization, believing that an old organization has "old ideas." But, we don't think this way about our family, do we? This topic will explore the roots of our organization and help us learn some interesting highlights, happenings, and activities.

## Club program

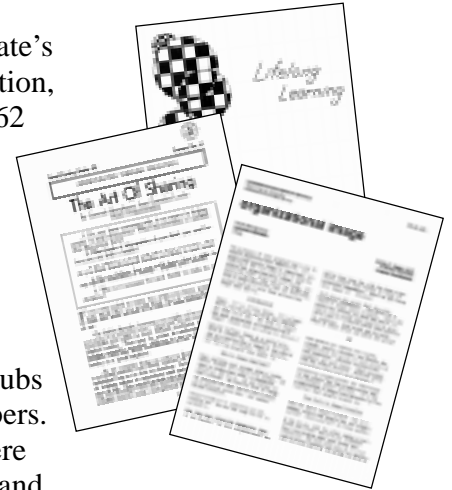
The Community Educational Outreach Service (CEOS) organization is really quite young. The name was officially accepted Oct. 7, 1998. But the organization in West Virginia goes back nearly 90 years to the Farm Women's Clubs started in 1914. These clubs were organized primarily because the members were interested in new ideas that would help them as homemakers.

From the beginning, the club program has been affiliated with the West Virginia University Extension Service (WVU-ES) since Extension employees have guided the organization. Funded by federal, state, and county monies, WVU-ES employees are charged through the 1914 Smith-Lever Act with providing

practical information in agriculture, home economics, and related subjects. In our state, Extension is a part of West Virginia University, the state's land-grant institution, established in 1862 when Congress passed the Land-Grant Act.

In 1915, the state had 16 registered clubs. By 1925, there were 190 clubs with 3,900 members. In 1985, there were nearly 800 clubs and 14,000 members. In 2001, there were some 6,500 members. As times change, the number of people interested in club work seems to vary. (*You may want to discuss why members join or don't join your club and why membership is falling statewide.*)

The first clubs were composed almost entirely of farm women; hence the name Farm Women's Clubs. As the state's population changed and farm families began to work with families in towns and cities, they found they had many common interests. In the mid-1950s, the name was changed to Home Demonstration Clubs. Most of the Negro clubs and some others used the name Homemakers' Club from the time they were organized. By the late 1960s, the Negro clubs had joined with the Home Demonstration Clubs, and most clubs statewide had changed their names to Extension Homemakers' Clubs to reflect their relationship to the Extension Service. The latest name change, to Community Educational Outreach Service Clubs, came in 1998. (*When was your club organized and who were the charter members? Are any of them still alive? Maybe you could invite them to a meeting to talk about some of their experiences. Share scrapbooks or memories of club names and activities.*)



Some counties have members-at-large (MALs) or mailbox members who do not belong to a club but do pay county and state dues. These are members who, for some reason, cannot actively participate in a club. The aim of the MAL program, started in the early 1970s, is to continue a member's interest in the program until he or she can become active in a club.

A series of printed lesson leaflets, "Adventures in Good Living" appeared in 1933 and continued into the 1960s. Topics were selected each year by surveying members and nonmembers in each county. Today, clubs study eight to ten program topics each year. Topics are suggested by the state committees, members, and by specialists and other professionals.

Club involvement in county and state activities varies. *(Discuss your club's involvement with the educational committees; the way it chooses goals and activities; and members' involvement in topic selection, budget development, fund-raising, etc. Are there things the club should do differently?)*

### **County councils**

Most counties having clubs have a county organization that aids clubs in working together on countywide events and activities. These county councils are governed by county officers and committee chairmen and representatives of each club. *(You may want to help members better understand the county organization by discussing your council's membership, committees, meetings, and activities. Share how membership dues are used at the county level and discuss how local members can be involved.)*

### **Area organization**

The first regional Farm Bureau women's meetings were held in 1939 in five areas of the state. Regional training meetings continued from time to time.

Representatives were first selected in 1957 for the state's five regions. In 1958, the first regional meetings were held, and leaders were elected by the member counties. In 1964, the state was divided into six areas, corresponding with Extension's six administrative areas. In 1985, this number was reduced to five; in 1991, West Virginia Extension Homemakers Council changed its geographic makeup back to six areas.

Area councils are led by an area representative. She/he and an assistant representative, elected for two-year terms, assist with area projects. The area

representative is a member of the state executive board.

### **State organization**

The first state farm women's organization was formed during the Farmer's Week meeting held in Morgantown in February 1919. Clubs had been working with their county Farm Bureaus on community and county projects. An understanding was reached with the state Farm Bureau to organize a state women's group. Clubs elected only a state president to be their representative on the state Farm Bureau's Executive Committee. This group was known as the West Virginia Farm Women's Clubs.

After adopting a constitution and bylaws in 1926, the group became the West Virginia Farm Women's Bureau. They had their own organization, program of work, officers, and finances. The first full slate of state officers were elected in August 1926, and the first handbook was printed in 1928.

In May 1944, delegates to the annual business meeting changed the name of the state organization from Farm Women's Bureau to Farm Women's Council. They believed the word "council" expressed more accurately the nature of the state group's work and related more closely to the work of the National Home Demonstration Council.

In 1954, the name was changed to West Virginia Home Demonstration Council. This was done partly to tie in with the national organization, but mainly because it was more acceptable to the active members who did not live on a farm. In 1968, the state organization became the West Virginia Extension Homemakers' Council. That name continued until 1998, when the West Virginia CEOS was established.

Educational committees have guided state, county, and local groups throughout the organization's history. Emphasis areas have changed because of what was happening in the state and nation. The first state committees, organized in 1921, related to schools, public health, fairs and camps, laws relating to or affecting women and children, and recreation. In 1926, the committees focused on homes, schools, health, citizenship, recreation, 4-H loan, and "Know West Virginia."

In 1930, the makeup of committees was established, with each committee having a chairman, a secretary, and a member. Positions rotated each year, with the member moving up until she/he became chairman.

Today, each state committee has 12 members, two from each area. The group selects its own chairman and assistant.

In 1959, committees were reorganized to six committees. In the mid-1980s, there were 10 committees: citizenship and community outreach; cultural arts, textiles, and clothing; family life; family resource management; health, food, and nutrition; housing, energy, and environment; international; membership; public relations; and safety. Today, there are three committees: continuing education, family life, and marketing and membership.

Throughout the years, the state council has introduced many projects. For example, the first international student was named in 1949. The next year, the first scholarship was given to a student enrolled in the WVU Division of Home Economics. Other scholarship programs followed. A purposeful reading program was introduced in 1934.

“News Notes” (later called “Open Line”) became the council’s official publication in 1950. Issued four times a year, it serves as a two-way channel of communication between the state organization and the clubs. Council’s first handbook since 1933 was published in 1953.

The first state conference was held in August 1922 at WVU Jackson’s Mill. The first annual business meeting was held in August 1926. Beginning in 1930, program planning conferences were held in the spring. They were designed to build sound programs and to stimulate leaders to think, reason together, and make group decisions.

In 1938, two state farm women’s camps were held. One was especially for mothers of children under 12 years old. Similar camps for young homemakers were held through 1941, although they were not as successful as leaders desired. A similar camp was offered in the 1980s, but enrollment was not sufficient to hold the event. A child care program became part of the camp offerings in the 1970s, and this seemed to draw more young homemakers for a time.

With gasoline rationing during WW II, only necessary meetings were held. No state camps were held from 1943 to 1946. But, a State Farm Women’s Leadership Training Conference was held at WVU Jackson’s Mill in 1944. The program emphasized subjects being studied by clubs, committee and community work, and information citizens needed to meet wartime responsibilities.

In 1962, the State Program Planning Conference was changed from fall to spring, and a leadership conference was held in the fall. Two conferences were held per year until 1991, when WVEHC decided to have only one conference annually, now held in October.

### **National organizations**

In the early years, the state organization was represented at national meetings of the American Country Life Association (ACLA). In 1934, the meeting was held in Washington, D.C. The day before it opened, 330 women from 23 states attended the first Rural Homemaker’s Conference (RHC). West Virginia had three delegates. The RHC was sponsored by ACLA with the cooperation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The 1934 RHC was the forerunner of other conferences and committee meetings that resulted in the formation of the National Home Demonstration Council (HDC) in 1936. Since West Virginia was one of nine states having a state organization at that time, it became a charter member.

The Country Women’s Council (CWC) was organized in 1939 as the United States’ liaison council of member societies of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). West Virginia affiliated with CWC, which replaced the ACLA. CWC meets to discuss and consult on ACWW matters and to stimulate interest in ACWW among country women and homemakers. West Virginia has hosted two of the group’s annual conferences—in 1947 at WVU Jackson’s Mill and in 1980 at Oglebay Park.

In 1946, Mrs. J. Wayne (Hattie) Reiner of Monongalia County was elected president of the national HDC. The 1947 national meeting was followed by a meeting of the CWC. High attendance meant that some participants had to eat meals on the dining hall front porch and stay in local tourist homes.

West Virginia hosted the National Extension Homemakers’ Council (NEHC) on WVU’s campus in Morgantown in 1976. Many of the activities centered around the nation’s bicentennial and West Virginia’s mountain culture. Nearly 2,000 people attended.

In 1995, WVEHC voted to withdraw from the national group, renamed the National Association for Family and Community Education. Several things led to this withdrawal, including the 1992 name change and a dues increase.

West Virginia voted in 1996 to become affiliated with the National Volunteer Outreach Network (NVON), which was organized in 1995. NVON brings together organizations that are members of or are willing to work with the ACWW to promote friendship and understanding in the world; promote well-being of the individual and family; bring about a better understanding of the relationship of the home, community, state, nation and the world; speak for and further the interests of the member organizations engaged in service to families and communities; and coordinate activities and disseminate information relevant to the ACWW and CWC. In 2001, NVON had seven member states, representing some 116,000 members.

West Virginia hosted NVON's national meeting in 2001 in Parkersburg, attended by some 220 members and state delegates.

### International organizations

ACWW's history starts with the first International Council of Women (ICW) formed in 1887. In 1927, ICW met to consider forming an association for rural women's groups. Representatives of many rural groups met in London in 1929 to organize ACWW; its first triennial conference was held in 1930. In 1936, the triennial was held in Washington, D.C., and the NEHC became a member. Because West Virginia was affiliated with NEHC, we became affiliated with ACWW.

ACWW works closely with the United Nations and serves as a consultant to many groups. Its aim is to raise the standard of living for rural women and to maintain international friendship and understanding. It is funded primarily through membership dues and the Friendship Fund. Annual council meetings are held in London. Every third year a meeting is held in a member country. Each member society sends five voting delegates to the meeting.

### Closing

Our organization does have a rich and varied history. We should be proud of it and want to continue its good work to help West Virginia families and communities. (*Discuss ways program is helping others today and what it might do in the future.*)

### To Help You Teach

1. Open the meeting with the WVCEOS Creed and the state song, "People of West Virginia." You may want to suggest that these be a part of each meeting if they are not already.
2. 2002 has been designated as the Year of the Tree for WVCEOS. What might this theme have to do with the study of this topic?
3. If time permits, you may want to develop a quiz or a game similar to "Do You Want to Be a Millionaire?" using the information in this leaflet and related materials.
4. Research activities of your county and the club so you can include relevant information in this program topic.
5. Collect copies of organizational materials, scrapbooks, news articles, etc., to share with members. Be sure to include copies of current materials, such as a Handbook, "Open Line," county yearbook, conference program, constitution, etc.
6. Ask members to share their experiences with club activities, state conference, national conference, and other meetings with members. If no one from the club attended these meetings, perhaps someone from the county can assist. Highlight what participation has meant to the person and their family.
7. Talk about what is being done to preserve historical documents and information in your county and at the club level. If nothing is being done, suggest that a committee be formed to explore options.

### Resources

Humphreys, Gertrude. *Adventures in Good Living*. Parsons: McClain Printing Company. 1972.

*West Virginia Farm News* carried news of the club program on "the Farm Women's page" monthly from May 1928 through June 1959. You might want to search your library for issues of this magazine.

Copies of state and county newsletters, yearbooks, scrapbooks, and other related materials.

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