



# UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



## The Gazette

The Monthly Newsletter of UNH Cooperative Extension's  
4-H Youth Development Program

April 2004

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#### **1. A Word from Wendy...**

Spring is here and with it comes enthusiasm, freshness and lots of opportunities. I have participated in the two YAP sessions that have been held to date. Congratulations to the planning and teaching teams. Teens and adults started an early Saturday morning half awake, and by one hour into the day, the group had come alive. I encourage all counties to still recruit teams to attend the north country session on Saturday May 8th. We are still short the number of groups we need to train but we are well on our way. Let Larry know if you might have groups for May 8th.

You all know that we are going into a Strategic planning process for 4-H youth development. This will be the topic of the phone conference call on May 3rd, 1-2:30. I will be sending you some pieces that have been developed through the TAP process for us to use as a point of discussion for a strategic planning process. We have set the date of October 8th as the statewide meeting. This is a statewide teacher inservice day so we should be able to have young people attend as well as other agency representatives. It will not work for everyone however if you put it on your calendar now that will help. More details will be covered in the phone meeting.

I know we have all faced situations of conflict and there are times that it seems to escalate. I found this piece from a public controversy training I went to several years ago. I think we can identify situations where we have seen both types of behavior demonstrated. The article provides some good tips for us to recognize some group dynamics and may help in some decision making situations.

Be sure as you have questions, send them my way and we can try to get them answered and all be giving the same answer.

Happy Spring

*Wendy*



## **Recognizing and Overcoming False Consensus in Groups and Organizations**

by Ron Hustedde

There are many reasons why groups and organizations need to encourage their members to express their differences in order to be successful. If an organization overemphasizes teamwork and group loyalty and excludes the airing of differences and concerns, it can seriously damage the group. The reasons become clearer when one studies two kinds of group behavior that minimize conflict. One is known as the “Abilene Paradox” and the other is called “Group Think”.

### **The Abilene Paradox**

“The Abilene Paradox” is named after a situation that occurred on a hot dusty day in Coleman, Texas. Four adult family members were relaxing on the front porch when someone suggested they go to Abilene for dinner. One by one, each family member indicated they wanted to go. After a hot and dusty trip, one family member said she would rather have stayed home. Gradually, each family member revealed the same sentiments. In reality, no one wanted to go. Later on, this phenomenon was observed in community organizations and private firms.

The Abilene Paradox occurs when group members take an action or “go to Abilene” when no one really wants to go. Essentially, it is the inability of a group members to handle agreement. It occurs frequently in organizations and groups.

### **Symptoms of the Abilene Paradox**

1. Organization members fail to communicate their real desires or beliefs to one another. They do just the opposite. The data in effect says, “It’s a great idea. Let’s go to Abilene.”
2. With invalid and inaccurate information on the table, organization members arrive at results that are counterproductive to the organization’s intent and purposes.
3. As a result of taking actions that are counterproductive, members experience frustration, anger, irritation and dissatisfaction with the group. Subgroups are likely to form that blame other subgroups or authority figures for the organization’s dilemma
4. The cycle repeats itself — an inability to manage agreement occurs frequently. Fortunately, the Abilene group recognized the process and did not repeat their mistakes.

### **There Are Several Reasons Why The Abilene Paradox Occurs**

1. Action anxiety. Thinking about acting in accordance with one’s intuition can make some people extremely anxious. It’s easier to go along with the crowd.
2. Negative fantasies. Some individuals and groups conjure up negative fantasies about owning up to their beliefs and interests. Few ask if such fantasized consequences are likely.
3. Real risk. Individuals do not take the time to assess the real risks of saying no
4. Fear of separation. Ostracism can be one of the most powerful punishments devised. The fear of separation has led White House staff members to engage in illegal activities they don’t really support or research groups to fund projects they don’t believe in.

### **Group Think**

Group Think is different from the Abilene Paradox. Group Think occurs when some members of the group want to take a course of action while other members will hide their questions or disagreement about the proposed action.

Irving Janis (1979) coined the term, “Group Think” after he analyzed how important governmental decisions on foreign policy were made. He found that group emphasis on team building and consensus impaired decision making, reality testing and moral judgement. He reached his conclusion after examining the Bay of Pigs Invasion of Cuba, the American decision

to invade North Korea, the failure to read the warning signals about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the Vietnam War.

### **Symptoms of Group Think**

Janis found there were up to eight major symptoms of Group Think:

1. An illusion of invulnerability which creates excessive optimism and taking extreme risks;
2. Collective efforts to rationalize and discount warnings about the inadequacies of group assumptions;
3. An unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality;
4. Stereotyped views of enemy leaders as too evil or too dumb to warrant genuine attempts to negotiate;
5. Dissenting opinions are viewed as disloyalty to the group;
6. Self-censorship occurs. Each member of the group minimizes his/her doubts and counter arguments;
7. Shared illusion of unanimity conforming to the majority view. Silence is viewed as consent;
8. The emergence of self-appointed mind-guards who protect the group from adverse information.

In attempting to maintain consensus, only a few courses of action are considered. The group spends more time considering arguments for the plan than against and optimism about the plan causes the group to overlook setbacks or to prepare contingency plans in the event of failure.

### **Avoiding the Pitfalls of False Consensus**

There are several steps organizations can take to avoid the false consensus of the Abilene Paradox or Group Think. These steps are not prescriptive for all groups. Each group will have to develop its own plan to minimize the pitfalls of conflict avoidance. Some steps to consider include:

1. The group should openly recognize that differences and conflict strengthen organizations;
2. Individuals should be encouraged to express their differences with each other;
3. The group should intentionally seek voices to be part of the group that may be different from the majority – voices that can offer fresh ideas;
4. The group can systematically examine the negative and positive consequences of its proposed actions;
5. The group can make links with other groups that have other perspectives.

### **References:**

Harvey, Jerry B., The Abilene Paradox and Other Meditations On Management, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988

Irving, Janis, Victims of Group Think: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions,  
Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972



## *In the Granite State*

### **2. Bear Hill Camp Work Day**

As requested, the date of the Bear Hill camp work day has been changed so it is not in conflict with State Activities Day. We are providing a great lunch and plenty of snacks and coffee and other drinks to keep people motivated. Please promote this opportunity with folks in your county so we can get a large group there and get lots of work done!

### **Bear Hill Camp - Green Up Day**

May 8 9am – 3 pm

Dear Friends,

Despite the April snow showers our 4-H summer programs staff is preparing for opening day at Camp on June 27, 2004.

I need your help to ready Camp Bear Hill for another great summer season. I am looking for volunteers on the workday May 8, 2004.

Bring your tool belt, cleaning supplies and bug spray, of course! Cabins must be cleaned, walking paths raked, docks put in, and general repairs made following a New Hampshire winter. If your talents include carpentry, plumbing or landscaping, your expertise is greatly needed.

Work gloves, cleaning materials, paint and garden tools necessary for the days' work will be provided for you. And to sustain our hard working friends, we will have our experienced culinary staff preparing a great BBQ lunch, lots of iced tea and lemonade. Our office can also provide the inspiration of 4-H campers and parents:

“I learned how to deal with difficult situations, and how to be a good leader” Camper, age 10, Week 4

“I learned how to set a good example for the younger campers !!!” Unit 4 Camper, age 14

New Hampshire 4-H Camps believe summer camping experiences provide children of all backgrounds the opportunity to learn and interact with other children and the outdoors. How many of you have a special memory from a camp experience you had? These remembrances have a lasting positive impact on a child's development: social, physical, intellectual and emotional development.

Through PlusTime NH, the national Americorps- NCCC , a volunteer organization will join our family of volunteers to clean Bear Brook to a shine. With their help and your own generous gift of time, our camp will be ready when we open the doors to over 800 campers in June.

Please join us! **To reserve your work date please call 603-862-2184 or you can email me at [chris.conlon@unh.edu](mailto:chris.conlon@unh.edu).** I look forward to seeing you there.

With Warm Regards,  
Chris Conlon, 4-H Bear Hill Camp Director



### **3. Come Enjoy Camping with Your Children**

ALLENSTOWN - Does the idea of going to camp for a weekend interest you? Do you find yourself sending your children to camp every year, yet wonder why you haven't gone?

New Hampshire 4-H Camps, a component of UNH Cooperative Extension, are holding a Family Retreat Weekend at Bear Hill 4-H Camp in Allenstown. You and your children are invited! This year, it's scheduled May 21-23.

What better way to spend an inexpensive weekend with your children, while camp staff takes care of everything. Activities include swimming, canoeing, hiking, crafts, group games, archery, fishing, and other camp favorites.

Camp staff lead all activities, with many opportunities for families to "do their own thing." Meals will be single menu, served family style in the camp dining hall. This is a great opportunity to come to camp, play, enjoy the beauty of Bear Brook State Park and spend time with your children.

Fees are \$50 per adult (18 years and older), \$25 per child (6 – 17 years) and children five and younger are free. All fees are due with the application. Early registration is encouraged so we may plan accordingly. For more information and an application, call the 4-H state office at 603-862-2132.



☺ *Your Input Needed* ☺

### **4. LIT and Teen Institute Candidates Needed**

If you have not submitted the names of your candidates for the Teen Institute and the LIT program at Bear Hill Camp, please submit them to the Wendy Brock at the State 4-H Office by the first week of May. Also, if your county has more than one eligible youth, please submit all names in the event that there are vacancies to fill from other counties.



**Reminders...**

### **5. State Activities Day Registrations Due**

**Don't forget**, State Activities Day databases are due to the State 4-H Office on May 3. Names and addresses of the Judges are due at the same time and can be emailed to [michele.king@unh.edu](mailto:michele.king@unh.edu)



## **6. Teen Council Applicants**

It has come to our attention that some teens interested in running for Teen Council are unable to attend this year's conference due to a conflict with a summer academy program. If your county has any teens in this situation, *please remember that a Council candidate may send a video tape to conference if they would like to run for Teen Council but are unable to attend conference.*



## **7. Teen Conference Registrations Due Soon**

Teen Conference Registrations are due to the State 4-H Office on May 7. This should include registration with workshop choices and code of conduct/permission on the back side of that as well as the medical forms on a separate sheet. As in past years the blank database is on the FTP site. Please fill in the delegates information, with the exception of the workshop choices as workshops will be assigned randomly in the State office once all registrations have been received from the counties. Each county should submit one check, made out to UNHCE.

Due to problems in the past with permission and medical forms not being turned in, the Teen Council has decided that any applicant who has not turned in their paperwork by June 1 will not be expected to attend Conference. They will receive notification of this from the State 4-H Office along with a refund.



## **The National Scene**

### **8. New Character Education and Civic Engagement Website**

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools has unveiled a new web site for the Character Education and Civic Engagement Technical Assistance Center (CETAC), called CETAC Online. The site provides state program administrators, local educators, and the public with information about character education and civic engagement programs, as well as strategies that support academic goals and other reform efforts. It also will provide support and information for and about schools involved in character education and civic engagement across the country, officials said. The site contains publicly accessible information about legislative changes and news and events, as well as publications on character education and links to resources of interest to the field. "This new web site is an excellent tool for educators, parents, and the community across the nation because it provides significant information and resources on character education and civic engagement--two key components in the historic No Child Left Behind education reform law," U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige said in a statement announcing the online resource. <http://www.cetac.org>



## **Opportunities Unlimited**

## **9. NASA Science and Technology Scholarship Program**

Texas Space Grant needs your assistance in identifying High School seniors who desire to study Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics!!! NASA is expected to release a new scholarship program later this summer for undergraduate students, including incoming freshman, who are pursuing a career in a Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics discipline. Initial applications for this program may be taken during the summer of 2004.

TSGC is participating in an effort to build a database of students who are interested in receiving additional information about this scholarship opportunity once it is announced. We would like to have 100s or, even better, 1000s of High School Seniors (Class of 04) in the database. TSGC is requesting that you encourage High School graduating seniors at your school who are going to college to study Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics to submit their name to the database. Thanks for your assistance. [http://www.tsgc.utexas.edu/lists/teachers/links/iv/7/link\\_01.html](http://www.tsgc.utexas.edu/lists/teachers/links/iv/7/link_01.html)



### *Pearls of Wisdom*

There's a way to do it better – find it.

Thomas Edison

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We are creators, and we can form today the world we personally shall be living in tomorrow.

Robert Collier

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He dares to be a fool, and that is the first step in the direction of wisdom.

James G. Huneker

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We have to act “as if.”

Bill Havens

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Wonder, rather than doubt is the foot of knowledge.

Abraham Heschel



# It's A Date...

(Deadlines are in Bold Print)

## May 2004

- 1 – Bear Hill Camp Opens
- 1 – Approval Forms for llamas, dogs, working steers, dairy cattle, beef heifers going to ESE and horses not going to ESE (NOTE: earlier deadline for horses and beef steers going to ESE.)**
- 1-2 4-H Dairy Judging Contest (tentative)
- 3 State Activities Day Entry Reports and Judges names due at Moiles House**
- 3 State Activities Day Photography and Poster Entries due to Moiles House**
- 3 Horse Show Program Book Ads due to Equine Center**
- 5 Fashion Revue Scripts due to Dotty Burrows**

- 7 Teen Conference Registrations (with workshop choices and all paperwork) due to State 4-H Office**
- 8 Bear Hill Camp Work Day
- TBA Sheep & Wool Festival – Hopkinton
- 14 Horse Enrollment & Previous Show data due – NH Horse Show Quotas**
- 16-21 Northeast Regional 4-H Shooting Sports Workshop
- 17 4-H Foundation Golf Tournament, Canterbury Woods Country Club
- 21-23 Family Weekend and Bear Hill 4-H Camp
- 24 Rain Date – 4-H Foundation Golf Tournament
- 25 Fashion Revue Garment being judged due to Moiles House**

## June 2004

- 1 State Dairy Show information sent to counties
- 1 ALL swine, sheep, goats, small animals and beef not going to ESE - (Note earlier deadlines for beef going to ESE).
- 1 TC confirmation mailing, workshop assignments and final information
- 1 Teen Council Candidate applications due from Counties to State Office**
- 1 NH Horse Show quotas & information sent to counties
- 2 Leader Tenure information due to Moiles House**

- 3 Fashion Revue Garment Judging, Memorial Union Building, UNH
- 5 State Activities Day, Memorial Union Building, UNH
- 5 NH 4-H Achievement Awards Presentation at SAD
- 12 CPR Training at Bear Hill 4-H Camp
- 16-25 4-H Camps Staff Training
- 21 Cheshire 4-H Benefit Golf Tournament, Keene
- 27-30 Teen Conference, UNH
- 27 Bear Hill 4-H and Barry Conservation Campers Arrive

## July 2004

- 1 – NERLF – Host State Information Mailed to counties
- 1 – Family & Consumer Science Trip registrations due
- 1 – State Dairy Show Entries Due**
- 6 NH Horse Show Entries Due
- 10 2003 ESE New England Center Invitations mailed to SAD Participants

- 12 Blue Ribbon Files due to Moiles House for Statewide database updates.
- 15 NERLF Scholarship info mailed to counties
- 23-25 State 4-H Horse Show – Deerfield Fair Grounds
- 29-8/1 North Haverhill Fair
- 29-8/1 Stratham Fair
- 30 State 4-H Working Steer Show – Stratham Fair