

UPDATE

Spring, 1991

Vol. 2 No. 2

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Warm greetings from the new Center for Family Research at Iowa State University! The staff of the Iowa Youth & Families Project is proud to be a part of this new center which was created at ISU this past year. We are enjoying the increased space and nice facility south of the ISU campus in the ISU Research Park complex.

We have just completed 20 intense weeks of interviewing. Our team of 22 field interviewers traveled over 50,000 miles this year. That does not include travel to Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and California to visit the six families who have left Iowa since the project began.

Approximately 5,300 field hours were devoted to gathering data from the field for the 816 visits to homes. We are so pleased with your positive response to having the same interviewer do both of the visits with you. We agree that it simplified the already difficult scheduling process and made it easier for us to complete the 2nd visit sooner. Thanks to all of you who cooperated so graciously!

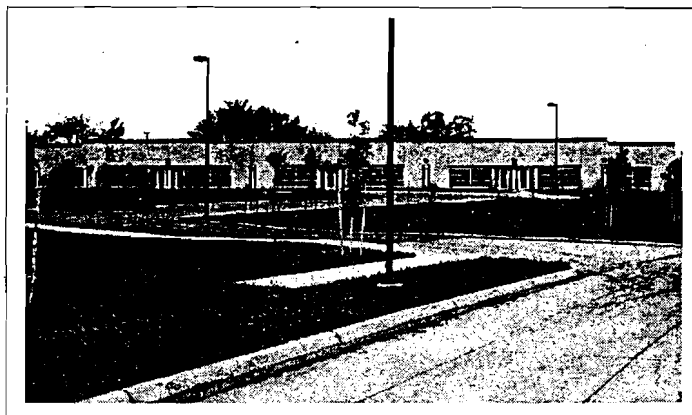
For the past several weeks I have been reading and re-reading the comments so many of you took time to write at the end of a questionnaire. Your willingness to share and explain your feelings about a variety of topics adds to the value of the research and tells us that you, too, believe in the importance of improving the understanding of families and change. In the article on page 7 I have tried to relate some of the concerns you shared with us.

PLEASE REMEMBER the information reported in this issue is from the data gathered in 1989-1990. As in most research, it usually takes one year before the current data is available for publication.

Our project director, Dr. Conger writes about his research findings concerning economic hardships and the effects on the family. He also answers some of your questions about the last year of the project and future plans.

OUR CONTINUED THANKS...

We hope the publication of the Update helps express our appreciation to all of you, over 1800 IYF Participants! Although finding the time to schedule these visits can sometimes seem more effort than it's worth, the five hours or so out of a busy year is quite small considering that the information that you have provided will be used for many years by educators, human service professionals, and family research scientists.



FUTURE PLANS

We are pleased and delighted that so many of you continue to be part of the Iowa Youth and Families Project. Many of you have asked about our plans for next year and beyond. Although all of our plans are not firmly in place, we can give you the following information:

******We will ask to visit with you again next year following a similar format - you know, so many questions! Because it has been so difficult to schedule older siblings living away from home for videotaping, we are considering dropping that part of the interview. Older siblings away from home could be mailed a much briefer questionnaire asking about their current activities.

******After next year, we would like to visit with you two more times while the target adolescents are still in high school. We don't have funding for these visits yet, but hope to obtain it.

******Once the target adolescents are out of high school, we would like to keep in touch with them and their parents and siblings once every three to five years. To understand how the changes you have experienced during these past few years influence your family in the future, we would like to visit with you for many years to come. These will probably be independent visits to the separate households in which you will be living.

You are all making a special contribution to understanding how families, parents, children, and adolescents deal with change across time. We cannot thank you enough for your sacrifices in order to help families in the future.

A MESSAGE FROM DR. CONGER
What We Are Learning

Many of you have asked what we are learning about families. As the increasingly large amount of information from the project becomes available, we are looking at many different areas of family relationships and how they are influenced by changing social and economic conditions.

As we learn more about families and change from the stories you tell us, we disseminate that information to other family scientists and to human service professionals such as educators, extension workers, medical doctors, and mental health professionals. Of course, your identity is never revealed and we only talk about IYFP Families as a group. Some of the important findings so far include the following:

Families Are Successful In Many Different Ways.

When we designed the IYFP we wanted to talk to a large number of families and family members. We felt that different families can be effective in a variety of ways and only by interviewing several hundred of you could we understand more about the many different paths to a successful family life. You have demonstrated that this approach makes sense.

For example, some of you are very traditional families with dad working and mom at home raising children and taking primary responsibility in that area of family life. On the other hand, many of you are dual-career families or equal partners in a family business with mom and dad sharing fairly equally family and work responsibilities. We have both types of families, and many others in between, who are very happy and pleased with their relationships with one another.

The key ingredient for success seems to be shared agreement that a particular arrangement is one that both parents believe is fair and acceptable.

Many IYFP families that have not reached this common perspective continue to work toward an arrangement that will be seen as mutually beneficial.

Economic Hardship Creates Real Pressures And Adjustment Problems.

As we expected, negative economic changes take a real toll on individual family members. Financial difficulties increase sadness, pessimism about the future, worries and fears, and, in many cases, irritability between family members. Here again, families handle these problems in many different ways and there is no single route to success.

In many families, mom goes to work to increase family income. Moms as fulltime homemakers decreased from 19% to 10% between 1989 and 1990. Many fathers and mothers also have taken second and even third jobs. Fathers with two jobs increased from 31% to 45% between 1989 and 1990. The pressures are often tremendous as youngsters have to assume more responsibility around the house and parents enter into new roles and responsibilities

that they may never have expected in marriage.

In most cases the key to successful adjustment is each family member's ability to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of the other.

You have told us that oftentimes this sensitivity results from better communication that is aided by working with a counselor, mental health professional, or minister. For many IYFP Families, reordering priorities that emphasize the closeness among family members and that reduce the importance of material success help them through stressful economic times.

Men And Women Respond Differently To Varying Types Of Life Stresses.

For many IYFP fathers, financial and work problems are most likely to increase worries and other kinds of emotional distress. For IYFP mothers, family problems such as ill health and children's school difficulties are most likely to increase fears and anxieties. These findings are consistent with other research. Fathers also are concerned about family problems but they seem to be most affected by economic difficulties because, for most IYFP Families, they are the primary breadwinner. Mothers are concerned about family finances, but they are even more sensitive about other family problems because they have primary responsibility for dealing with them.

Each parent can be most helpful to the other by realizing the special difficulties each of them may have when problems develop in areas of family life for which one parent has major responsibility.

IYFP Families who have experienced extremely stressful changes and have dealt with them most successfully, tell us that both parents and children must cooperate to handle the situation.

Younger family members can make a real contribution to dealing with difficult problems and often feel a real sense of pride when their efforts are recognized.

Regardless Of The Types Of Stresses Families Experience, It Helps To Call On Others For Assistance.

We hear again and again from IYFP Families that regardless of the problem, whether financial, difficulties in raising children, troubles with family communication, and so on, talking with knowledgeable others can help. Families frequently report that school counselors, ministers, community mental health professionals, medical doctors, or a good friend have provided them with the information they needed to deal more effectively with a difficult problem.

Asking for help when needed seems to be an effective problem solving strategy for most families.

Elsewhere in this newsletter we provide a list of telephone numbers that you, a relative, neighbor, or friend might find useful. If you need additional information, please call Ruth Book, IYFP Field Coordinator, collect at 515-294-4518.



SUE PROESCHOLDT
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

For the past two years Sue Proescholdt has signed her name on many of the 4,000 checks going out to families involved in our research projects. As one of the many office staff who play a vital role in keeping the research center functioning, we would like to introduce her to you.

Sue joined the IYF Project in the summer of 1989 as our project secretary and office manager. She is now the Administrative Assistant for the Center for Family Research. Her educational background in foreign languages and education was eventually replaced by her secretarial skills when she worked to put her husband, Terry, through Vet Med school - the career change suited her well. Sue is quick to say that university settings are an exciting place to be - she has worked on three different campuses. And now, since her husband is a researcher and teacher for ISU's Vet Med college, they will no doubt continue to enjoy this university.

Although Sue loyally declares Iowa to be the best place to raise a family, she was born and lived in Canada for 14 years. Like most parents, family life is busy with her two sons, 14 and 11 years, their many activities, and their Newfoundland pup and Golden Retriever (who enjoy playing in their own backyard wading pool!). When time permits Sue enjoys music and reading. However, time may be limited because we plan to keep Sue busy writing checks to families participating in our studies!

LIVING HISTORY FARMS

Have you visited Living History Farms yet? The passes we sent you last year are still good for this season.

We hope you will be able to find some time to get away and relax at this 600 acre, open-air museum! The average visit lasts three to four hours and begins at the 1875 town of Walnut Hill. Walking trails connect the 1700 Ioway Indians Village, the 1850 Pioneer and 1900 Farms and modern Crop Center. Arrive at least two hours before closing time and dress casually for outdoor activities.

The Living History Farms are located in the city of Urbandate, 10 miles from downtown Des Moines. Exit #125 (Hickman Road, Highway 6) on the combined Interstate 35 and 80.

1991 SEASON

May 1 - October 25 Open Daily

Monday through Saturday: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Sunday: 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Special Events:

July 4	Traditional Fourth
July 13-14	Horse and Buggy Days
July 27-28	Grain Harvest
August Weekends	Traditional Music
September 28-29	Food Festival
October 5-6	Corn Harvest
October 8-13	Quilt Show
October 25	General Season Ends
October 28-30	Halloween (6-8 p.m.)
December 7-8 and 14-15	Christmas Celebration(12-7 p.m.)

THE NEXT UPDATE

The summer will go all too quickly, school will start again, harvest season will be upon us (if this rain lets up so we can plant), and plans for celebrating the holidays will be made. And sometime during the Thanksgiving season we will send the next Update to you. You can also expect a letter informing you that one of our interviewers will be calling to see if your family would like to continue in the study and to give you our plans for Year Four.

Several families have requested that we visit them earlier in the year. This is very helpful and we encourage you to let us know what arrangements will work best for your schedule. We will also visit before Christmas if you prefer; we just need to know!

Changing addresses or phone numbers? Please call collect and let us know so we can find you! 515-294-4518 or 515-294-7613.

THE 1991 FIELD INTERVIEWERS SEND THEIR GREETINGS AND LOOK FORWARD TO VISITING YOU IN 1992



ADVENTURELAND WELCOMES IYFP FAMILIES

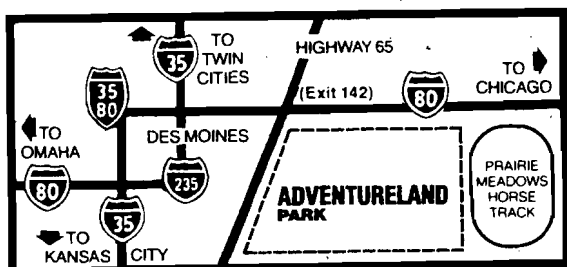
Do you have plans for the 4th of July? Along with the celebration of our country's independence, we are celebrating the completion of the third year of the project and want to Thank You All for being an IYF Family!

Adventureland is helping us by offering special discount coupons for IYFP families! These discount coupons, which are enclosed with this Update, must be used within the nine day time period of Saturday, June 29, through Sunday, July 7, 1991. The one pass is valid for all members of your family, up to five people, for \$3 off the admission price.

We hope that many of you will be able to find the time to visit Adventureland during one of those days and to take advantage of the \$3 discount per person passes. However, we realize the timing may not work out for all of you, so we are also enclosing a 1991 FUN CLUB Family Membership Card which entitles you and your entire family to a \$1.00 discount per person each time you visit during 1991.

The FUN CLUB card can be used any time, as many times as you want. But the special discount coupon is valid only June 29 - July 7, 1991. If your family is unable to use the coupons, please feel free to pass them along to someone else with our compliments.

**A GREAT BIG THANKS TO
ADVENTURELAND
AND KANDI AMADEO
FOR MAKING A FAMILY ADVENTURE TOGETHER
A LITTLE MORE AFFORDABLE!**



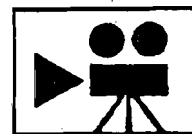
Location of Adventureland

NORMAL FAMILY CONFLICTS

Most parents and their adolescents continue to struggle with how to solve their disagreements and conflicts. For two years in a row the same issues have posed the most conflicts in families. Last year, 1990, more than one third of the 8th graders and their brothers and sisters in the study identified Fighting with Siblings and Chores at Home as the areas they "quite often" or "all the time" had conflict with their parents over. It may be that some conflicts and disagreements are just a "normal" part of adolescence.

Areas of highest disagreement reported by the youth in 1990 were:

	Targets	Siblings
Fighting with brothers and sisters	44%	37%
Doing chores at home	33%	24%
Homework & school grades	19%	14%
Attitude & Respect	17%	13%
Movies & TV	14%	9%
Clothes & Appearance	12%	8%
Curfews	11%	15%
Money	11%	14%
Transportation & Use of the car	10%	9%
Church	7%	8%
Dating	6%	4%



VIDEOTAPES ARE CONFIDENTIAL

We hear many family members asking one another "...who's going to look at our video tape?" To set your mind at ease, we want to emphasize again that the videotapes made during Visit 2 are watched ONLY by the professional coders trained to observe these family tapes. Coders sign a statement assuring confidentiality and could be prosecuted and would certainly be fired, if they revealed any information about your family. Only an ID number is used to identify the tapes. Coders must complete two months of training before viewing videotapes and any coder who we believe cannot maintain the highest professional standards of confidentiality is terminated before the end of their training.

The videotapes are NOT used in the classroom at the university and are used only by those research scientists connected with the Iowa Youth and Families Project. They are professional researchers who maintain confidentiality as would a medical doctor or lawyer. Please feel free to call Ruth Book, Field Coordinator, or Dr. Rand Conger, Project Director, if you have any questions. Call collect at 515-294-4518.

EIGHTH GRADERS' EDUCATIONAL PLANS

In 1990 over half of the 8th graders reported that "in general I like school a lot," although over one-fourth of these 8th graders said "school bores me."

Teachers should feel encouraged by the 51 per cent who agreed that "I feel very close to at least one of my teachers."

Almost 3/4 of the 8th graders said that they know how to study which is evidenced by the grade averages reported: 21% had C's, 44% had B's, and 32% had A's.

How much education did these 8th graders say they would like to have? For 32 per cent a very advanced degree like a Ph.D. was desired, 22 per cent wanted a Masters' Degree and 35 per cent hoped for a degree from a four year college. How far did they believe they would actually go in their educational pursuits? Only 18 per cent thought they would actually get a Ph.D, 16 per cent felt they would get a Masters, which put 46 per cent believing they would actually achieve a four year degree.

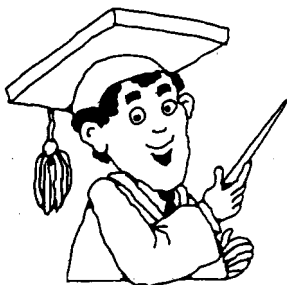
What is most important in the decision about how far to go in school? These 8th graders reported the following items as being very to extremely important - in order of MOST important they are:

- The kind of job you want
- How hard you are willing to work
- Your intelligence
- How well you do in school now
- Your desire to start earning money
- Your parents' opinion
- How much you like school
- Your parents' financial situation

Sixty-five per cent of the 8th graders were certain they will go to college. Four percent were certain they would NOT go to college.

The areas of study which were chosen most often are, in order of top choices:

Business	9%
Education/teaching	9%
Pre-law	8%
Engineering	6%
Pre-med	6%
Agriculture	5%
Art	4%



CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR SCHOOL

School pride was reported as high by the 8th graders in 1990 and 70 per cent said they would not want to transfer to another school. However, 18 per cent felt they were picked on or teased at school; 17 per cent said it was easy to get tobacco from kids at school; 20 per cent said it was easy to get alcohol from other kids at school; only 5 per cent said it was easy to get drugs at school.

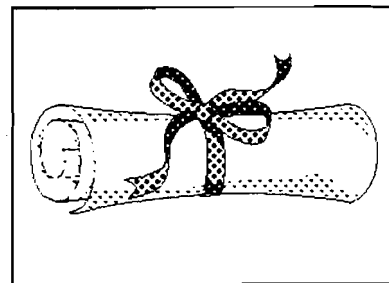
Sports versus academics is often an issue concerning parents and school personnel. How did these 8th graders feel? Thirteen per cent said sports were more important at their school than grades. The adolescents were almost evenly divided on whether or not there was too much emphasis on sports in their school.

PARENTS AND YOUTH ON PARENTING

Should young people be given classes in school to teach them to be good parents, or does being a good parent just come naturally? Our fathers and mothers say that parenting does NOT come naturally and that people do NOT know how to do it when the time comes. Over 82% agree that one must learn how to be a good parent, but more mothers than fathers agree that classes should be given in school to teach how to be a good parent.

The majority of the IYF parents and older sibs and targets agree that parents have a strong influence on the values of their kids and do have an impact upon what their children grow up to be like. Our targets as 8th graders reported more agreement that parents have a strong influence than they reported as 7th graders.

Almost three-fourths of the families agreed with the statement that the most important ingredient in raising children is giving them lots of time and attention.



CONGRATUALTIONS

1991 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES!

We send best wishes for a successful future to the 57 graduates in our Iowa Youth & Families Project!!

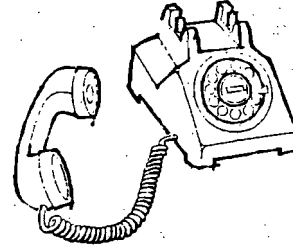
ARE WE NORMAL? By Ruth Book

Family life can be pretty hectic and crazy for all of us at times...and when it is we find ourselves asking, "Are we normal?" That is also the question most often asked of the IYFP interviewers and myself when we are visiting families in the study. So I've found myself pondering just what "being normal" means and according to over 400 families who have shared their lives and feelings of the past 12 months I offer the following definition:

- Having a "normal family" may mean...
...parents often working two jobs just to make ends meet
...running a home taxi service for teenagers involved in endless activities
...sometimes feeling that you just can't stand being around your brother or sister for another minute
...eating only a few meals together at home
...being so very tired when time pressures are high
...worrying about paying next month's bills
...having to move and learning to rely more on each other in new surroundings
...wondering how you will take care of the grandparents and raise the children all at the same time
...wishing you could get along better with your parents
...worrying about how you'll get good enough grades to go to college and how your future education will get paid for
...being thankful for the really nice family you have
...feeling really frustrated when everyone doesn't do their share of the household chores
...trying to cope with past and continuing problems
...at times feeling loved
...at times feeling unloved
...having a faith to sustain you

In addition to these informal observations, the research data you have provided also indicate that IYFP families are quite "normal". For example, all family members have provided information on their psychological functioning and physical health. This information (all those questions!) tells us that IYFP parents, adolescents, and children have about the same amount of worry, fears, anger, and physical ailments as people nationwide. Youngsters in the study have slightly fewer problem behaviors such as drug use than their peers across the country. Part of this normality may not be what IYFP families desire, however. For example, many IYFP families have two working parents which is typical nationally, but not what many of our parents want for their families.

Very likely, then, your family is like most families in the U.S. with similar stresses and strains in daily living. If you have a concern, though, about a special problem that your family is experiencing, perhaps you would like to call one of the referral agencies which is listed in the next column. Also, please feel free to call Ruth Book or Rand Conger at the Family Research Center, 515-294-4518.



When you or a friend need help, call...

FINANCIAL/CONSUMER ASSISTANCE

ISU Answer Line.....(800) 262-3804
Provides information on consumer problems, money management, home economics, etc.

HEALTH

Medi-Dial.....(800) 255-4662
Registered nurses at Iowa Methodist Medical Center who can answer health-related questions and make physician referrals.

Teen Health Line.....(800) 443-8336

LEGAL SERVICES

Legal Service Hotline.....(800) 392-0021

FAMILY ISSUES

National Youth Crisis Hotline.....(800) 448-4663

Teen Hotline.....(800) 443-TEEN

Children and Families of Iowa

Humboldt.....(515) 573-2193

Fort Dodge.....(515) 955-2868

Counseling & family crisis intervention

Lutheran Social Services of Iowa

Humboldt.....(515) 332-3438

Mason City.....(515) 423-6313

Ames.....(515) 232-7262

Counseling services to children & families. Sliding fee scale.

Mental Health Centers

Cedar Valley MHC (Waverly).....(319) 352-2064

Central Iowa MHC (Ames).....(515) 232-5811

MHC of Mid-Iowa (Marshalltown)
.....(515) 752-1585

North Iowa MHC (Mason City).....(515) 424-2075

North Central Iowa MHC (Fort Dodge)
.....(515) 955-7171

Parents Helping Parents (Fort Dodge).....(515) 573-2770

Support for parents of children with problems. Free.

Domestic Abuse Shelters

Ames.....(515) 232-2302

Des Moines.....(515) 243-6147

Waterloo.....(319) 277-4735

Family Violence Center of North Central Iowa

24-hour crisis line.....(515) 955-5456

24-hour shelter, crisis counseling, support. A volunteer advocate will be paged and return the call to the caller. Serves all areas. Free. Or call (800) 942-0333.

THANKS FOR SHARING YOUR THOUGHTS IN 1991

A special thank you to the many of you who took time to share additional thoughts and experiences with us by using the back comment page of the questionnaires, a new feature this year. We do carefully read everything and appreciate this additional contribution to the study. Perhaps you can relate to some of the concerns and comments from other families. Here are just a few examples:

The majority of farm parents continue to be satisfied with farming as a way of life. Several parents wrote about the value of family life on the farm and how they wouldn't trade it for anything. However, other farm families told us about the continuous stress of farming, the financial problems which make it difficult to even get out of farming, and the enjoyment which worries have stolen from them.

Others related how the farm crisis affected their town businesses which in turn affected jobs and incomes and for some, the loss of their homes - a change which still affects them.

Several moms entered the work force again after many years absence. Some mothers expressed a desire to have their husbands and children be more understanding and helpful, especially with household duties. Other mothers wrote about how grateful they are that their children and husband have been so supportive and helpful now that they are working outside the home.

Families that moved shared the excitement of starting over, but also said the financial strain and the adjustment to a new community was a real challenge. The most positive change was that the move had brought them closer together.

There were concerns expressed about our society and families in general. One father said he felt that school and community seem to have lost the sense of value of family, while families themselves seem confused and are scrambling for economic security and a balance in life.

Others expressed thankfulness for their families and the ability to make it through one day at a time! We were told by many that, for them, this study somehow seems to make them closer and they enjoy being a part of it.

Another parent who thanked us for the study said the family had all benefited because the questions and situations they had to discuss helped them examine themselves and their relationships within the family.

A very honest youngster wanted us to know that he loves his parents, but just doesn't like them nagging him all the time! And another youth related that taking time to know and understand what's going on in each other's lives makes them closer and because of that it's easier to grow up.

Both parents and youth said they wish they had more time together. One father said because he works nights he

just doesn't have the time to spend with his family that he would like to. It goes both ways, a teenager wrote that he hadn't been home very often during the past year because of work and sports practices.

Several families shared how their spiritual faith is seeing them through many difficult times.

A parent wrote that because of going through counseling she is now happy with herself and her relationships with others and now deals with stress and her family in a more positive way.

We are glad you took the time to share your thoughts! A final note from a teen expressed his happiness with a small town central Iowa education and his desire to someday have his children grow up in the same way and experience this life also!

NEW FAMILY PROJECT

Many of you have wondered why we have been studying only traditional two-parent families. In order to gain a better understanding of families who have experienced other kinds of changes, this spring the Center for Family Research launched a new 3-year project studying 215 single parent families in Iowa. This project is separate from the Iowa Youth and Families Project (IYFP), but uses similar questionnaires and video tasks so that comparisons between the two projects will be possible. Interviewers visited single parent families from mid-March to mid-June this year, and will contact the same families again next spring.

Much like IYFP, families in the Single Parent Project have a target child and a sibling. The parents have been divorced or separated within the last two years. Unlike IYFP, this project is spread across the entire state, and encompasses both rural and urban communities. Despite some of these differences between the two projects, the objectives are the same - to study how families in Iowa cope with the changes in everyday life, and offer the results to those who would like to improve the quality of life in Iowa.

DESERT STORM AFFECTS IYFP FAMILIES

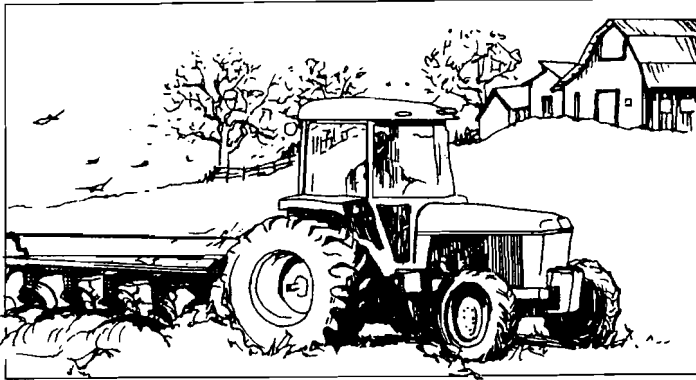
On January 16, when the United States went to war in the Middle East, several families had interviews scheduled. Despite their wish to follow the intense news coverage, they graciously continued with the interviews while our country entered the conflict.

Because of the developments in the Middle East, we decided to ask families to complete a special Military Form. The results show that, of those who responded, at least 118 families had a friend or relative who was involved in the Mideast crisis. In several cases, these persons were members of the immediate family.

We are thankful that the war was swiftly brought to a close and await the safe return of all those who served.

A FEW CHANGES FROM 1989 TO 1990

- ***10% fewer moves
- ***less arguing with parents
- ***less time spent away from home by parents
- ***more mothers working outside the home
- ***more parents working two jobs



This poem was written by one of our Field Interviewers from Marshall County - a farmer who has had many of the up and down experiences of several IYFP families.

PLOWED UNDER

The plow sliced through the cornstalks
Turning the soil, moist and black
I have to keep driving straight ahead
But I can't help looking back.

Plowed under are the troubles of last year
The drought, the bugs and the weeds
Getting ready for another year
Preparing for the new crops' needs.

If we could only do that with our lives
Plow under troubles and trials and tears
But deep as we plow and try as we may
The memories last on through the years.

Like a nightmare that stays after the dawn
As a morning mist lingers into the sun
The mistakes and heartaches stay there
And all the battles we never won.

But I must keep driving straight ahead
Although I can't help looking back
I can only hope and pray each day
God will give me the strength that I lack.

Richard Cooper
Toledo, IA

Editor: Ruth E. Book
Publisher: Janice A. Peterson
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Rural Mental Health
ISU Research Park
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IFYP FARMING FACTS

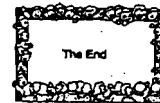
34% of the IYF families owned or operated farm land
13% of the farm parents are very concerned about their farm's financial condition; 8% are moderately concerned
7% of the farm fathers or mothers took an additional job because of the financial strain of farming

WALL STREET JOURNAL ARTICLE

In April a reporter from the WALL STREET JOURNAL visited with one of our IYFP interviewers who had made the decision to leave farming and begin a new career. The front page feature story relayed the problems of many small rural Iowa towns that are losing population and adjusting to changing economic times.



WE WANT TO THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR HELP IN CONTRIBUTING TO OUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FAMILIES.



Thanks to the target artist who sent in this original drawing - we enjoyed your talent!