

WOOD AND FIBER SCIENCE

JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF WOOD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

VOLUME 22

JULY 1990

NUMBER 3

MAKING SWST'S INVESTMENT IN 4-H WOOD SCIENCE PAY OFF

Perhaps you have heard that the SWST Board pledged \$5,000 per year for 5 years partially to support the 4-H Wood Science Awards Program. "What's in it for SWST?" you ask. The Board asked me to use this space to tell you what 4-H Wood Science is, how our support benefits SWST, and what SWST members can do on their own to help.

What is 4-H Wood Science?—4-H Wood Science is one of about fifty project areas that 5 million 4-H youth can participate in through "hands-on" learning experiences under the guidance of 4-H leaders or volunteers. The most successful of the 120 thousand Wood Science project enrollees will receive state or national recognition, thanks to SWST and the other donors. The crowning event for many 4-H'ers is winning a trip to the National 4-H Congress, where each year about seventeen hundred of the top 4-H'ers receive recognition. Awards provide the incentive, and thanks to the combined donorship of SWST; Deft, Inc., the Wood Finishing People; and *Wood* magazine; there will be an expanded Wood Science Awards Programs beginning in 1990. 4-H Wood Science is youth learning about wood, and nearly 5 million other 4-H youth (those not enrolled in wood science) learning about wood science from them.

How does SWST's support benefit SWST?—How much is it worth to SWST just to know that 5 million youth at least know that there is such a subject area as wood science, and that 120 thousand youth actually know something about the material wood, have learned to work with it, perhaps learned to identify wood, perhaps learned about wood structure or properties, or perhaps learned about the role the wood industry plays in their community? *Wood* magazine, noting the shift away from industrial arts education in the schools, justifies its support of 4-H Wood Science in this way:

Our \$31,000 contribution will help to underwrite the efforts of this fine program and hopefully instill a healthy interest in woodworking among this country's next generation of home-wood-working hobbyists.

Do I even need to paraphrase this to reflect SWST's interest?

Our \$5,000 contribution will help to underwrite the efforts of this fine program and hopefully instill a healthy interest in wood science among this country's next generation of wood scientists and wood users.

And we wood scientists know better than anyone else how much our nation benefits from the efficient use of that remarkable, renewable industrial raw material *wood*.

Has SWST ever had a better chance to get the visibility for wood science that we have so long sought?

That is great! Now what can I do?—I am glad you asked, because our collective knowledge as wood scientists can help make the content of the 4-H Wood Science Program even better. At present, we have three Member Manuals and an instructor's manual, which are good for youth up to about age 12, but they really do not cover advanced wood science topics. As a minimum, we should compile a bibliography of available source materials about wood suitable for independent study by youth from ages 12–17. I volunteer to collect these references, or would be happy if one of you volunteered to do it. Perhaps you know someone who has started such a bibliography. Remember the audience we are trying to reach is bright young people who have many alternative uses for their time. So we have to make it interesting, and at their level. Remember that they will not usually have access to laboratory facilities and limited access to professional woodworking tools. And the publications should be free or inexpensive, since 4-H budgets are often limited. (Note that 4-H Wood Science is a good alternative project for urban 4-H'ers who can not select some of 4-H's more traditional projects because they do not have access to land upon which to grow commercial crops or raise animals.) Send your suggestions to me at: NPL Wood Products, NRRD, ES-USDA, 3871—So. Bldg., Washington, DC 20250.

Lastly, you can always be a 4-H volunteer. 4-H has at least 600 thousand adult volunteers. Simply call your County Extension Office or your State 4-H Extension Office (if you are near a land-grant institution). Most would be glad to have you as a volunteer to lead a wood science club project, conduct a tour of your firm or your research laboratory, help judge completed projects, or whatever.

A manager I once knew said that his most important job as a manager was to provide a successor to replace him. SWST's payoff from 4-H Wood Science may be in providing for our successors, the future SWST leaders who came to wood science through 4-H.

DONALD E. NELSON
National Program Leader
Wood Products, Extension Service
Editor, SWST Newsletter
Chair, SWST 4-H Wood Science Committee