The agricultural agent's office coordinated wartime programs for youth and enlisted the help of area school children. Floss from milkweed pods was used to make life jackets. In 1944, boys and girls collected 4,000 burlap sacks of milkweed floss for 2,000 life jackets.[37] Alice Olson, who lived in a farm house in the Town of Blooming Grove during the war, recalled that project: "I can remember when we were up on the farm, the school kids came... and they said we know you got [a] lot of milkweed out by the woods. They went and they'd pick the milkweed pods.... So, for awhile after that you didn't see too many milkweeds around because they took the seeds and everything."[38]

The staff at the agricultural agent's office worked to boost morale by sponsoring local theater and choral groups and special events. A favorite was the annual Dairy Queen Pageant, complete with a play, parades and the crowning of a queen. Another was the fall corn-husking contest that matched competing groups of corn pickers from Dane with rivals from nearby counties. One husking contest held in October 1940, drew 4,000 to a day that included a high school band concert, a parade to the hybrid corn field where the husking match took place, a dinner at large "eat tents," music and song, a requisite address, a contour-plowing contest and a ceremony announcing the winners.[39]

Figure 11-8. A wartime pageant in Dane County :"Defenders of America: Her subjects pledge allegiance to the Dairy Queen and Their Country." (Dane County Agricultural Agents' Annual Report, 1942, University of Wisconsin Archives.)