

Older Volunteer Participation in Community Life
Task Force Report, June, 1969

The Task Force was comprised of five retired or semi-retired persons with known skills and varied background experience. They were employed on a part-time basis, during June, to assist Senior Citizen Services with the following tasks:

1. Explore existing volunteer service opportunities which may be suitable for the involvement of older volunteers as well as of the more traditional age groups.
2. Suggest new and untried service opportunities that might be developed by Senior Citizens and/or other agencies and organizations.
3. Contact sources of older volunteer recruits, or potential recruits, through organized groups and individual contacts. This was not intended as a specific recruitment effort, but rather a testing of attitudes toward, and interest in, participation as opportunities come to light.
4. Interpret the Educational Motivation school program now in the planning stages with the Atlanta School System.
5. Report findings to Senior Citizen Services for comment and future program planning efforts, including the Model Cities Program.

Assignments were assumed by the Task Force workers on the basis of a contact area with which they were familiar rather than geographically. However, different and varied economic levels of the community were reached. A more detailed report to follow will reflect the range of service opportunities and volunteer interest and willingness to serve in appropriate roles.

A very brief summary of findings suggests the following:

1. Nursing Homes, with one or two exceptions, can and will welcome the skills and interest of older volunteers and will assure proper assignments and supervision. The same is true of the two large hospitals visited and other institutions concerned with mental and physical health.
2. Elementary Schools in low-income areas reiterated their desire to involve older persons in one-to-one relationships

with slow learners and with children lacking motivation. A limited number of older individuals expressed interest in this type of service.

3. Public Housing, High-rise Apartments and contiguous communities - produced a vast need for personalized services and comparable interest in giving service to others by many residents. Simple service needs e.g., friendly visiting, home delivered meals, transportation to church and to markets, telephone re-assurance and others were obvious.
4. Churches and related organizations were most enthusiastic about a movement which would engage many of their older members in other than so-called social clubs. By and large, each congregation cares for its own but has not moved beyond this concept in favor of serving the community at large.
5. The Task Force workers report a receptive attitude toward the utilization of older volunteers and a surprising number of retirees were pleased, others somewhat surprised, to learn that there are roles and opportunities for them in this big Atlanta metropolitan area.
6. The ever-present problem of transportation availability and cost is, and will be, a deterrent unless special attention is given to ways and means of overcoming it.

In conclusion - Senior Citizen Services will work closely with the newly established Volunteer Bureau of the Community Council to assure the involvement of Older Volunteers and will strengthen the volunteer service corps concept as a built-in dimension of its own agency programs.

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