

THE KENTUCKY YOUTH CONFERENCE

The Kentucky Youth Conference was begun in 1967 by former Attorney General Robert Matthews to seek among the young people of Kentucky the leadership necessary to curb Kentucky's juvenile delinquency problem. In 1966 Kentucky got, for the first time, a roughly accurate look at its juvenile delinquency problem. In that year, the Attorney General's Office, in cooperation with the Department of Child Welfare, developed a voluntary and uniform juvenile offense reporting system. They found the over-all picture bleak, showing little end in sight to the rising tide of juvenile crime in the state of Kentucky.

The Kentucky Youth Conference was designed to do something about this problem. It is based on the theory that young people, if given the opportunity, can themselves develop solutions to the problem of juvenile delinquency; that their energy, insight, and imagination cannot be overlooked; and that they should seize the leadership in dealing with this problem.

These concepts of the Conference became a reality in August of 1967 and again in August of 1968 when more than 800 high school age people from all parts of Kentucky gathered at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond to ask themselves what they could do about juvenile crime in their local communities. Their discussions, stimulated by excellent speakers, programs, and the most comprehensive data on juvenile crime available, sparked many ideas for local projects. Youth Conference delegates have organized a teen jury in Henderson; a three-county Central Teen Council in northern Kentucky involving county judges and police judges; a youth employment service in Versailles which, in its first year of operation, found jobs for some eighty young people in the area; and a Boyd County program which has involved pre-teen children of indigent parents in the area in picnics and horseback riding. Many such programs throughout the Commonwealth have met with such great success, unprecedented community interest and widespread support that the annual Conference will now remain a permanent institution in Kentucky.

Delegates to the Conference have been sponsored in the past by more than twenty thousand Kentuckians representing corporations, labor unions, civic clubs, schools, and church organizations. These groups, along with various other foundations and youth organizations interested in the development of Kentucky youth and the prevention of juvenile delinquency, lend financial support to the Conference efforts. The Kentucky Youth Conference is now sponsored by the privately financed, non-profit Kentucky Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Youth Development Foundation of Louisville, Kentucky and has begun a Sustaining Member Program intended to broaden its financial base, while giving Kentuckians a chance to participate in its efforts in an important and essential way.

Throughout the entire state businesses, organizations and individuals recognize and support the tremendous potential of the Kentucky Youth Conference, and of Kentucky young people, to mobilize the resources of the state in effective combat against juvenile delinquency and to explore new areas of constructive citizenship for the young.