

EOA Plays Big Role

Life Presents A Brighter Side To 15-Year-Old Sharon

For nearly 13 years, Sharon Dennis' parents, brothers, sisters and friends thought she was retarded. She did not attend school. She could not talk. And she could not understand what was said to her.

Today however, she goes to school, and plays at the Sun-Mec EOA Center because of the work of Mrs. Bernice Miller, an EOA Neighborhood Service Aide. She found that Sharon was not mentally retarded but almost deaf.

The 15-year-old black youngster from the Mechanicsville area of Atlanta lived with almost 20 family members in a painfully crowded 3 1/2 room house on Georgia Avenue.

Her family, like countless impoverished black fami-

lies, earns less than \$2000 a year.

When Mrs. Miller visited the home, she not only discovered Sharon but she learned that her mother had an earnest desire to enroll the child in some school. She did not however, know the proper procedure. The aide recommended her mother send Sharon to a nearby EOA Center until plans could be completed. The mother agreed.

But Mrs. Miller's work with EOA required that she temporarily leave Sharon and Mrs. Harritt Darnell, a Home Service Technician at the Summerhill-Mechanicsville Center, kept in touch with the child by frequent visits to her home and by giving helpful suggestions to her mother.

In 1968, Mrs. Miller re-entered Sharon's life and discovered that she still had not been enrolled in any school. Immediately, she contacted the Bryant School for a psychological test, the Butler Health Center for a physical examination and Milton Avenue School for possible acceptance. All went favorably.

The school put Sharon in an age-grouping since there is no grading system and immediately Sharon became involved in physical skills, grooming and oral expression. Hopefully she will ultimately write understandably. Her progress since 1968 has been commendable.

Sharon still lives at the crowded Georgia Avenue ad-