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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Standards
Youth Programs - 1963

VOLUNTEEN PROGRAM
Duluth, Minnesota

The Mayor's Committee on Youth Employment and Training in cooperation with the Deuluth Council of Jewish Women developed a youth program to "help young people obtain training and experience," The members of the Duluth Council interviewed nearly 5,000 high school students trying to determine what youth felt were the difficulties in finding employment. The results of the survey were publicized in an effort to arouse community interest. The problems which seemed to keep most youngsters from getting jobs were not knowing how to look for a job or how to prepare for an employment interview. Working with the Governor's Advisory Council on Children and Youth, the citizens decided to promote a sound volunteer program-- giving the students of the town a chance to become more aware of the world of work.

The many students interested in the program personally discussed with Council members their reasons for wanting to participate. After this first session, a few changed their minds or were eliminated. The selected participants were then given an extensive orientation program to prepare them for work, either in homes for the aged or at city playgrounds. During the first session the "volunteens" were told what to expect from elderly patients, as well as how to dress for work and how to behave while on the job. The second session included instructions in the correct role of a volunteer worker, and a demonstration on performing duties in the nursing homes. This session was followed by a period when the volunteens took turns practicing their new duties. After one orientation class, the youngsters were taken on a tour of nursing homes and met the patients and some of the professional staff. The volunteens destined for work on one of the city playgrounds had an extra class where they were told about working with children and what to expect from them. Attempts were made to assign playground helpers to areas near their own homes.

The majority of teenagers in this program are girls, but a few boys are working in the nursing homes. The volunteens work a minimum of 8 hours a week; some work as many as 16 hours, including Saturdays. Some of the jobs which they perform are dressing and feeding the patients, combing hair, running errands, reading to them, and trying to free the professional staff to work with the critically ill. On the playgrounds the youngsters organize games, referee, and help the children to learn new activities. The volunteens are always under direct supervision by a professional staff member.

Teenagers in this program come from all parts of the city and from all types of family backgrounds. "We have youngsters from comfortable homes, some from homes where the mother is on welfare, others from the children's homes." Since the participants pay their own bus fares and buy their own lunch, the number of boys and girls from the disadvantaged sections of the city is small. The program sponsors are now at work trying to obtain enough to provide all volunteers with bus tokens and lunch. The program operated originally on

a budget of $50, donated by the Mayor. The money has been used to buy postage, stationery, and shoulder patches. The teenagers sew the shoulder patches on white blouses or shirts so that they are readily identifiable as members of the program.

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