

MERIDIAN COMMUNITY CENTER

Activities - September 1964

Staff:

- Permanent: Elaine Weinberger, Eric Weinberger, Freeman Crockett (On vacation last two weeks of month)
- Temporary: Dr. Irma Gurdjev, (child psychologist, Princeton, N.J.) mid-September 1½ weeks; Gail Falk, teacher; Mrs. Marion Kirsten, social worker, New York City; Rick Batdorff, sculptor, Oregon.

Current Activities

Grade school children:

2:30 to 6 PM (9 AM until 6 PM until school opened)

I. Crafts

Puppet making, doll making, making decorated boxes, making leather footballs and belts.

II. Arts

Finger paintings, water painting, folded paper painting, papier mache and chicken wire sculpture.

III. Reading to children and being read to by them, and singing

IV. Dramatic - extemporaneous puppet shows, and skits with costumes made by the children.

V. Outdoor Activities- Swimming (pool now closed), fishing and frog catching, ball-games and playground activities.

High School Student and Adult:

I. Fabric Distribution - new parcels of very good fabric have been arriving and are being distributed to ladies of the community who come to the center. Recipients of fabric are encouraged to attend voter classes at the center and to register to vote.

II. Clothing Distribution - The clothing distribution program was re-organized. It is under the direction of Mrs. Cheney with help from MSU members. Almost all clothing has been distributed, new shipments expected soon.

III. Tutorial Work - 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM or later every evening, grade school and high school students are helped with their current school work on an individual basis.

IV. A small group has been reading scenes from James Baldwin's "Blues for Mister Charlie". A good deal of interest has been expressed and we expect the group to grow larger and to become involved in rehearsals for a production for this play or another for presentation to the Meridian Community.

V. Library- getting limited general use, a Freedom Corner has been set up consolidating our large selection of books on Negro history, the movement, by and about Negroes, ect. This has attracted considerable attention. Books are being sent out with staff members to precinct meetings so that people can withdraw books without having to come into town.

VI. Spontaneous Activity - temporary staff people occasionally engage casual groups including volunteer staff and high schoolers here for tutorial work in readings from books of poetry, sculpture demonstrations, etc.

Additional programs are now in developing stages. Details in later reports.

On Wednesday, Eric spent the morning at Bethel Baptist Church where clothes are distributed by Barbara Cheney Moss. A staff person should work with her whenever possible to help in limiting quantities per family. Vitamins distributed.

In the afternoon Eric and Elaine did some canvassing in the 4th precinct. We met Mrs. Willie E. Lancaster, 3306 11th St. who housed the Schwerners when they first arrived in Meridian, and housed white volunteers this summer. A member of the NAACP, she showed with pride, a picture of herself attending a NAACP banquet in New York.

We talked about the community Center and its activities and she expressed a great interest in the sewing classes. She has a heart condition and is unable to climb stairs so I suggested that since the sewing machines are portable perhaps we could have a sewing lesson in her house. She was very responsive to this idea and said that she would organize a class, get a few ladies together and have a class in her home.

When the center first started she contributed an electric heater, a school-type desk chair and was in other ways co-operative. She could be a very valuable contact in voter registration work in the 4th. Her neighbors spoke highly of her.

We visited about a dozen homes in the vicinity of Mrs. Lancaster's house. We met Mr. Roberts, a blind man, about 2 doors away who, I hope, the voter reg. people will further encourage to vote. State law provides that he can take the test orally. To all the people with whom we talked, Eric gave a bottle of Squibb vitamins (Dr. Moldovan's shipment) with the encouragement to come to the Community Center for more.

Elaine began typing sides for cast of "Blues for Mr. Charlie".

Community Center Staff Meeting: Weinbergers, Miriam Kersten, Rick Batdorff, Linda Allenstein, Gail Falk.

Miriam will compose new welfare forms, Elaine suggested she give workshop on welfare know-how, etc. Rick will work on getting a table for center, Linda will continue work on setting up day-care center, Gail trying to set up Freedom School.

Vitamins distributed at Mass Meeting in evening, Mrs. Devine spoke.

Thursday: Eric spent day at Mt. Olive Church where Georgianna Dace distributes clothes - found that this distribution point not functioning but Georgianna does make up boxes for people who submit COFO welfare forms to voter reg. canvassers.

Attended MSU meeting where petition that will precede Freedom Study Day was being prepared. Staff will assist the "writing committee" later in the week. Distributed vitamins.

Elaine had sewing class in the morning, afternoon continued work on sides for cast.

Friday: Spent day catching up on general office work, correspondence; worked with children in Community Center.

Evening: Reviewed scenes of play with female lead.