

Hattiesburg Report from Barbara Schwartzbaum

Somebody just asked, "Where is everybody, out at community centers or What?" That kind of summarizes something about what's going on in Hattiesburg. Too damn many nursery schools, and milk programs and nothing happening when a local constable shoots a man in the back and kills him. Maybe I don't see the connection between the type of center program we have and the long range community organization clearly enough, but I do feel too much of our time and people are taken up in this. We have a community center in Palmers Crossing with a nursery program for pre-school children, a recreation program for teens and pre-teens, and an evening program of Freedom School, sewing classes and typing classes. Dewey St. Center has a very good afternoon recreation program and a strong group of guys who started a freedom school there a few months ago. This group, I think, is the best thing going right now.

We have a well-organized welfare committee and have distributed large shipments of food and clothing. Food is brought to the office by local people, and we live with families, so that our expenses and community relations are probably relatively good.

There is daily VR canvassing, but we have come to the conclusion that we need something new to be effective in this area. Trouble is we don't yet know what. We're having a staff meeting tonight and maybe we'll come up with something. Our staff nurse is setting up a community health program and a new girl in the project is going to work on finding out something about who's who and what's what in Hattiesburg--long overdue. Mainly, though, nothing is shaking here, even though a tremendous amount has been accomplished when you look at the base that's been made as compared to this time last year--but there still is that feeling that now that we have the base, we're not moving along with it right.

What are we doing about the basics of jobs, schools, downtown, the police, etc.? I really can't see where we are doing much of anything, but then maybe I haven't enough perspective. So much time is taken up in carrying out the needs of Jackson, our own existences, and the Fs-Cc complex, that it was only when I got to Waveland that I sat down and thought (poorly--I'm out of practice) about what, at least, I might be said to be doing. I concluded, little of any worth. That, I am sure, is too negative. I remember in Albany I always felt that we didn't move, that the police moved and we reacted. I've gotten some perspective on that now and today can see plenty of small definite changes in Albany. So we shall overcome if I can ever divorce myself from this damn electric typewriter (and the fact that, dammit, I like this typewriter) and my doubts, thoughts, and inactions. Freedom.

Barbara Schwartzbaum.