

**ADVENTURES  
IN LEARNING**

*Frontiers Past Sixty  
in Hamilton, Ohio*

*A Study of Hamilton's Center for Older People*

by

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## Foreword

**T**HE OFFICE OF EDUCATION is requested frequently to supply information about education and community organization for aging. This publication adds to the literature in the growing field of professional and community concern. The publication may have its major use as a handbook for community and school leaders who wish specific information about programs that have been tried in real community situations.

The focus of this case history is on the "action" and experimental-demonstration approach which the community of Hamilton, Ohio, made to the problems and challenges of their Senior Citizens. Hamilton's experience has been recorded with several audiences in mind: (1) Experienced community workers in the field of aging who can benefit from study of programs in action; (2) scholars who seek to keep their research and teaching in this field close to community realities; (3) older people whose impulses and social insights impel them to continue learning and whose talents may be enlisted in general community and social improvement; and (4) school and community leaders whose decisions on policy and administrative matters affect vitally the effectiveness of community programs for older persons.

This study of a center for older persons reveals three aspects of a coordinated and interrelated program; namely, education, recreation, and community service. For those who are seeking to emphasize the educational aspects of a program for older adults, there are many features described in this study that should be of interest to those who are planning learning activities in senior citizen groups. Others who may wish to stress the social and recreational needs of older people will find many ideas for programs that put emphasis on health and recreational activities. Still other community leaders and groups desiring to work out community service programs in which older persons can participate should find many worthwhile ideas for a wide variety of individual and group-initiated programs. The study reveals how the educational, recreational, and community service features of a total program are interrelated and developed through association of older persons in the pleasant environs of a "center."

This is a record of actual experiences assembled by a participant and an observer with intimate knowledge of the center development and program features. The Office of Education is grateful to Karl Hess and Muriel M. Allen who submitted the basic record.

In this study, community leaders and older persons should find encouragement and help in focusing thinking on practical ways through which older citizens may conserve and use their creative energies and talents not only for the well-being of themselves but also for others through service to the community and the Nation.

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## Introduction

**H**OW CAN AMERICAN communities utilize the talents and abilities of older people with satisfaction to themselves and with benefit to society? How can educational opportunities for continuing growth of older people be provided in a pleasant environment? Approximately 350 communities have developed senior citizen centers in response to the needs suggested in these questions.

The questions and the response reflect a growing concern in American life about the continuing usefulness of a rapidly expanding older age group in the U.S. population. The age group over 65 is the fastest growing segment in the American population. Over 3,000 become 65 every day in the United States. Over 16 million in this country have already passed the age of 65. By 1980 the number in this age group is expected to reach the 24½ million mark. The number of years an American can expect to live has increased dramatically since the turn of this century. The average estimated life expectancy at birth for the entire population has increased from 49.2 years in 1900 to 69.3 years in 1957.

Many communities find challenge in the phenomenon of America's aging population. Growing even faster than the aging group is the interest of community groups, organizations, churches, schools, foundations, governments, and voluntary organizations in helping to make the period of older maturity more secure, happier, and richer.

Many American communities have responded to the challenge with creative innovations and social organization. Broadly, community responses to the challenge fall into two categories. Some communities have elected to launch experimental programs and to learn in and through the process of experimentation and demonstration how the talents and skills of older people may be best used for their own and the well-being of others. Other communities have elected to initiate studies of aging in advance of developing action programs.

Illustrative of the "action" and experimental-demonstration approach is the Hamilton Ohio program of the Senior Citizen Center, the subject of this publication. Illustrative of the community self-study approach is the detailed study of the county's aging group in

Bartholomew County, Ind., the subject for another publication entitled, *Bartholomew County, Indiana, Studies Aging*.

In the Hamilton, Ohio, study the outstanding feature of the community's program is cooperation of approximately 100 public and voluntary groups whose collective efforts and decisions brought into being a program with three major features: (a) recreation, (b) learning, and (c) community service.

This study aims at two central purposes. First, the record sets forth a chronology of decisions and evolving circumstances in order to throw light on the question, "How did the program of the Hamilton Senior Citizen Center come into being?" The purpose in assembling the record is to make it possible for Hamilton citizens to share their experience with others in the many American communities that are evolving creative innovations in response to the challenges of aging. Exchanging experiences can contribute greatly to the learning process. Hamilton's experience is one of many significant records that merit study by community leaders who seek practical ways and means to serve the needs of later maturity. The second major purpose of this study is to bring into focus the program features of the Hamilton Senior Citizen Center. The detailed analysis of the specific elements in (a) recreation, (b) learning, and (c) community service provides a body of suggestions and tested ideas which communities may find useful in stimulating thought and action in behalf of Senior Citizens.

There is significant meaning for adult education in the Hamilton experience. The program is more than classes for learning. The Center is a club environment, developed by older people and assisting community groups, wherein the total range of human interests can seek satisfactions in social contacts, in learning, in recreational activities, in community services, and in relaxing quiescence. Man's "learnings" are broader than subject-matter knowledge. Through the social contacts in a pleasant environment, Hamilton's older citizens share their knowledge, seek new "learnings," and reach out in the community to assist younger and older persons to "live life" in more meaningful and satisfying ways.

Hamilton's experience merits the attention of American communities moving forward with constructive Senior Citizen programs.

# PART I

## Part I

### A Center Evolves in Hamilton, Ohio

**H**AMILTON, OHIO, is an industrial community in the southwestern corner of the State, in the valley of the Miami River. It has an industrial and agricultural society. It has no special "problem" with its older citizens. Its older citizens are no more secure or insecure than those of comparable communities anywhere in the land. There are some 6,500 senior citizens in the community, persons 65 years old or older. Just as in many other communities, however, their proportion to the total population has been increased at the rate of 1.1 percent each 10 years, and may increase even more sharply in the years ahead.

Like all Americans, those in Hamilton are the beneficiaries of a lengthening lifespan. And, as in most communities, they also are the beneficiaries of growing industrial, business, and governmental retirement plans.

There is the increasing opportunity of free time. It is in this opportunity that there is the clearest challenge.

Philosophers have said that we are "on the way" in aging the day that we are born. The same could be said of programs and the ideas from which they spring. They too may be "on the way" the day they are born.

#### *Birth of an Idea for a Center*

Hamilton's program for its senior citizens was born with an idea—and on its way with people—one day in May, 1953. A luncheon table discussion among a few civic leaders brought forth this conclusion, "We have relegated our elderly citizens to positions of uselessness and hours of loneliness. Instead of recognizing the part our senior citizens have played in making our present-day standards possible, too frequently we leave them to feel unneeded and unwanted."

Exactly who the people involved in the early planning were is less important than what they wanted to do, but the range of their back-



grounds and activities might be helpful in indicating to other communities the heartening fact that it can be done by many and varied groups.

Principally involved at the first meeting were the town librarian, the executive secretary of the YWCA, an outstanding local merchant, representatives of the area's Social Security offices, a judge, a personnel man, and representatives of the local Community Chest. Any one of them could have stimulated the meeting and many other groups probably could have been successful in getting the work rolling. A practical approach for any community would be to make sure that the formative meeting includes a well-known local business figure with extensive contacts in the business community, as well as persons generally versed in local, civic, and public affairs.

As background to the formative meeting, there were various programs that already had dealt with services for older persons. For 18 months the local library had a once-a-month meeting for older persons; then it became incorporated with a twice-a-month program for older persons at the YWCA. Two industries had retired-employees clubs. But it was that very phrase "services for" that really impelled the new meeting and the new search. Perhaps as simple a change as to "service with" would sum up the attitude of the new discussions. In other words, this new approach might be defined: To provide the means *through which* older persons could do things, be useful to others, realize the fullest expression of their own talents and purposes, rather than the approach of treating those still richly endowed persons as "cases" requiring that "something be done for them." A useful life rather than an "attended" life became part of the goal. Working with and through people became the major means of accomplishing the purpose.

### *The Plan for a Center Takes Root*

After the first luncheon meeting, numerous meetings were called, involving more and more civic-minded persons and senior citizens. They called in a speaker versed on the subject of "aging." They attended a conference on "aging," and strengthened their convictions that great numbers of older people have too much time on their hands, too little to do, too few places to go; that they feel lonely and have special problems of medical care, housing, income, and a feeling of "being unwanted."

A few weeks later, another meeting was called and more participated. Those who had been studying the subject of aging elected from their number a board of trustees of nine members. A new community or-

ganization came into being. The name "Senior Citizens" was chosen and the organization was incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio as a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

### *Senior Citizens, Incorporated*

The goals set were incorporated in the constitution and bylaws of the center. Only minor changes have been made in the constitution and bylaws in the intervening years. Here are key portions of the documents that incorporate the goals for the organization:

\* \* \*

To encourage classes and activities that will aid men and women to prepare for the period of their retirement, to the end that this period of leisure will be satisfying and fruitful for them.

\* \* \*

To cooperate with social agencies in the promotion of the well-being of older people and to support such community programs as will help older people lead independent and useful lives.

\* \* \*

To provide one or more social centers where older men and women may come for companionship and recreation, for the practice of arts and crafts, and for counsel or referral to other agencies.

\* \* \*

To encourage research regarding the relationship between group work, housing, recreation, and the health of older people.

\* \* \*

To serve as consultant to neighborhood agencies or institutions that wish to provide recreational activities for older people.

\* \* \*

To do, or cause to be done, all such other acts or things as may be necessary or incidental to the fulfillment of the said purposes.

The first step had been taken. A day center for senior citizens was to be established.

### *Early Financing and Publicity*

A minimum budget of \$7,000 was authorized. One-half of that budget was promised by a merchant, who had been instrumental in the success of the first and subsequent meetings, with the stipulation that the other half be raised by the community. This was accom-

plished by late summer through donations from the Hamilton Community Foundation, a fund created by local persons for the general civic good, and from business firms, social organizations, industries, service clubs, and individuals. During this period the merchant was a constant source of assistance to the new board of trustees. After 2 years of operation of the center, the organization became an agency of United Appeals, with two-thirds of the budget being provided by United Appeals and the remaining one-third being raised through dues of \$2 per year per member, through projects by Senior Citizens, volunteers, and by donations.

During the period of planning, study, and organization, wide publicity was given to every step of the operation by the local press. The public was alerted that something new was happening in Hamilton. The publicity given by the local press and radio was invaluable in the growth of the project, and has continued during all periods of the Center's growth.

### ***The Staff***

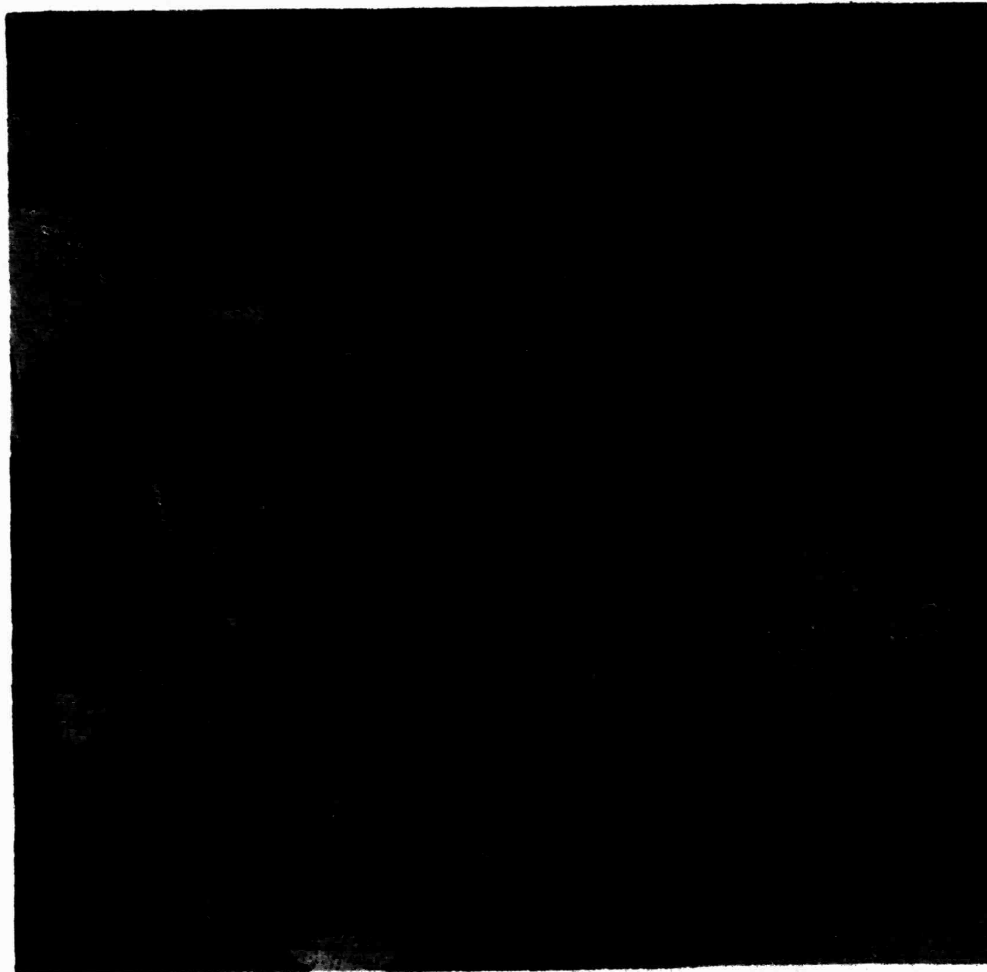
There was immediate recognition of the need for a full-time director. In retrospect, local leaders believe this decision was fundamental to the success of the program. The director has provided continuity and constancy of programming, avoiding the inactivity that often kills the random efforts of a completely volunteer effort. The director provides a known focus for all activities, is helpful in answering complaints and in furthering progress. The presence of a full-time director fixes responsibility and avoids diffusion of effort. The director can "make or break" the entire effort. Selection of the director is a key decision for a policy-determining group.

The director selected by the board regarded the appointment as an opportunity for service. The board and the newly selected director agreed on two fundamental injunctions: the director must *not* be patronizing; the director *must* be patient.

### ***Quarters for the New Organization***

The next major step was to find suitable quarters for the new organization. It was not easy. There were meetings of the board every week, as problems arose in keeping the public informed about the establishment of the center. Many questions were posed. How many people would be using the Center? For how long should a building be leased? What facilities should be made available? A building with available space was found near the center of town four

blocks from the main street and on a busline, with some parking space. On the first floor, there were five comfortable rooms. There was a double living room which could be used for meetings, a gameroom, a kitchen which could double as a craftroom, and an office doubling for extra meeting space.



**Good food is like a medicine, and food enjoyed together tastes many times as good.  
Senior citizens help serve each other.**

### ***Many Groups Cooperate***

The building was in bad condition, needing paint, restrooms, plumbing, wiring, furniture, everything that goes with making a place livable. The situation was challenging to those who had resolved that Hamilton would have a Senior Citizen Center.

The local press gave excellent coverage about the needs and prospects. The board of trustees and the director talked to groups, clubs, unions, and industries. Members of various women's organizations

volunteered to help with the renovation. A labor group agreed to furnish all manpower for painting, carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work. Civic groups promised to donate proceeds from special programs. A businesswomen's group began soliciting donations of phonograph records, playing cards, dominoes, chess, bingo, and other games. A sorority undertook to furnish a cardroom—tables, chairs, pictures, and draperies. A television set, phono-radio, stove, refrigerator, coffeemaker, china, and spoons were donated by individuals, clubs, and merchants.

A retired-employees club from a local industry made plans to transfer their activities to the new building and to bring their furnishings with them. A local firm pledged an annual support payment for the new Center. The idea of cooperation in an important community undertaking challenged interest and participation.

A church group was approached with the idea of developing a volunteer service for the Center. They were interested and have continued to be helpful in this project, developing a volunteer service of over 100 women who serve in many capacities—as hostesses for the daily coffee break, as drivers to transport members to special events, as teachers of craft and other classes, as members of fund-raising groups, and as cochairman of 70 member committees. A club of young women volunteered to help with “thank you” letters, with typing, and with other needed services.

Recognizing the necessity for working with all community groups, contacts were made with police, firemen, ambulance service, welfare agencies, medical advisers, and clergymen of all churches. Their advice, cooperation, and suggestions were invited. Of particular importance then and since has been close liaison with and understanding by the “united” services solicitation group in the city. The contacts proved helpful, and specific plans for assistance by each interested group were incorporated in the “operational plan” for the Center.

# PART 2

## Part II

### Growth of the Senior Citizens Center

**A**LTHOUGH THE MOBILIZATION of community resources for the program had been thorough, there was no certainty that older people would elect to use the center. How did they respond? Did participation grow? How did older people join with the community groups in shaping the program? The following analysis focuses on the program's growth and development.

#### *Dedication of the Center*

On December 5, 1954, the Center was formally dedicated with some 400 visitors in attendance. Full newspaper and broadcast coverage was accorded the opening, with local dignitaries, visitors from nearby towns, donors, and Senior Citizens attending. At the close of the afternoon, senior citizens from a nearby community joined in the dedication as all gathered around the piano for an old-fashioned songfest.

The senior citizens continued to come—not so many at first, just seven the first day. The second day the “retired employees club” brought 30 visitors; and slowly, day by day, the number grew until, when the Center was 18 months old, the numbers had outgrown the capacity of the building. More about the space problem later.

#### *Early Program Development*

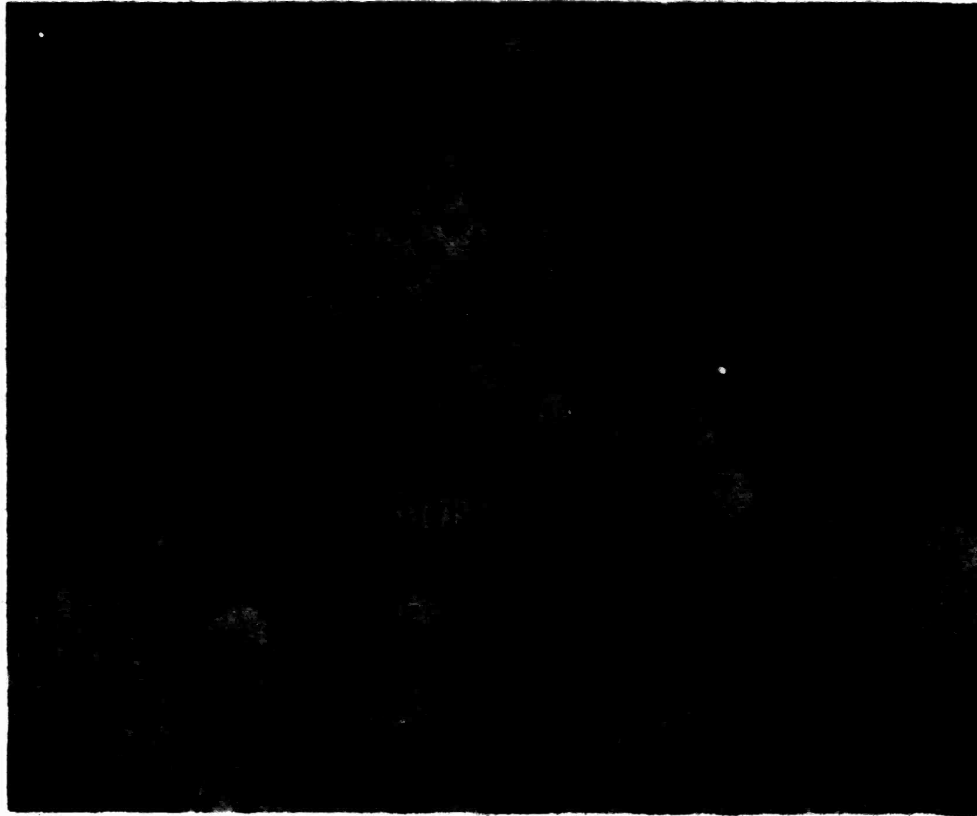
The program started with the known—with fellowship, with social gatherings—with music, dancing, group singing, games, friendship, and parties for many occasions. It grew a little at a time, incorporating crafts and talks by representatives of various community groups. Local talent responded with programs of interest to the members.

Members were included in the planning of all programs, in forming committees to help new members get acquainted, in spreading the “word” about the Center to others. Their knowledge, skill, and assist-

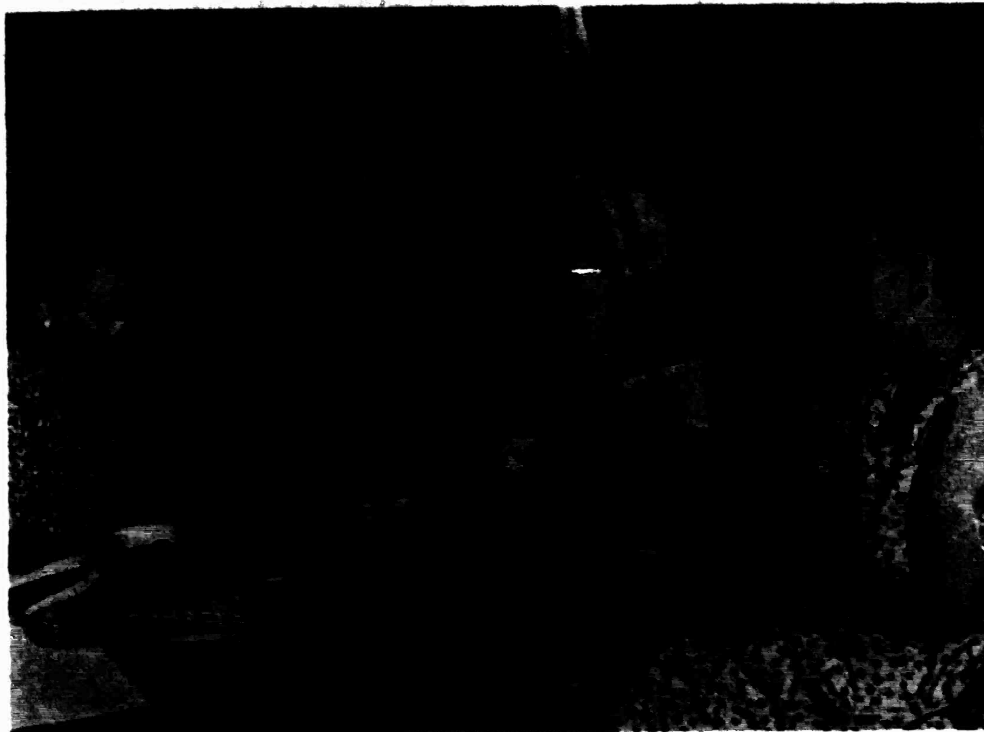
ance were used, needed, and wanted in developing programs uniquely "their own."

Program development by the members brought into being a new "organization within an organization." This organization of the membership patterned the constitution and bylaws on the constitution and bylaws of the parent community organization that founded the Center. Provision was made for the officers and committee chairmen to change once a year and for the immediate past officers and chairmen to advise and assist the new leadership. The new structure (with member committees numbering 70) advanced systematic program planning.

As the program evolved, new interests were discovered. Classes, groups, and interests were continued only during the time that active interest was shown. Some were dropped for a while, some for longer periods, or until another group of members showed an interest in the discarded program. In the crafts, volunteer teachers shared their talents with the members. The instruction, necessary equipment, and encouragement were provided by the Center.



**Arranging flowers to make an artistic bouquet, whether with a few flowers or many, brings out the artistic ability of senior citizens.**



Painting, either in oil or water colors, brings out latent talents, unknown and previously undeveloped.

### *Financing the Center*

Discovering that many of the older persons have adequate incomes but are searching for ways to serve, a plan was developed whereby any member wishing to do so could contribute time and/or talent toward the budget of the Center. Each fall a Holiday Market is held at the Center where decorative and useful articles made by the members are offered for sale to the community. The local press, radio, interested merchants and banks (which contribute space for displays) help alert the community to this Holiday Market. People gather from Hamilton and nearby communities from early morning until late evening to purchase handmade gifts, "pies like Mother used to make," and to contribute in this way to the operation of the Center. Members, volunteers, and staff man the booths, a local banker "minds" the cashbox and does the bookkeeping, and a gay, holiday spirit prevails. All proceeds from the "Market" go into the operation of the Center.

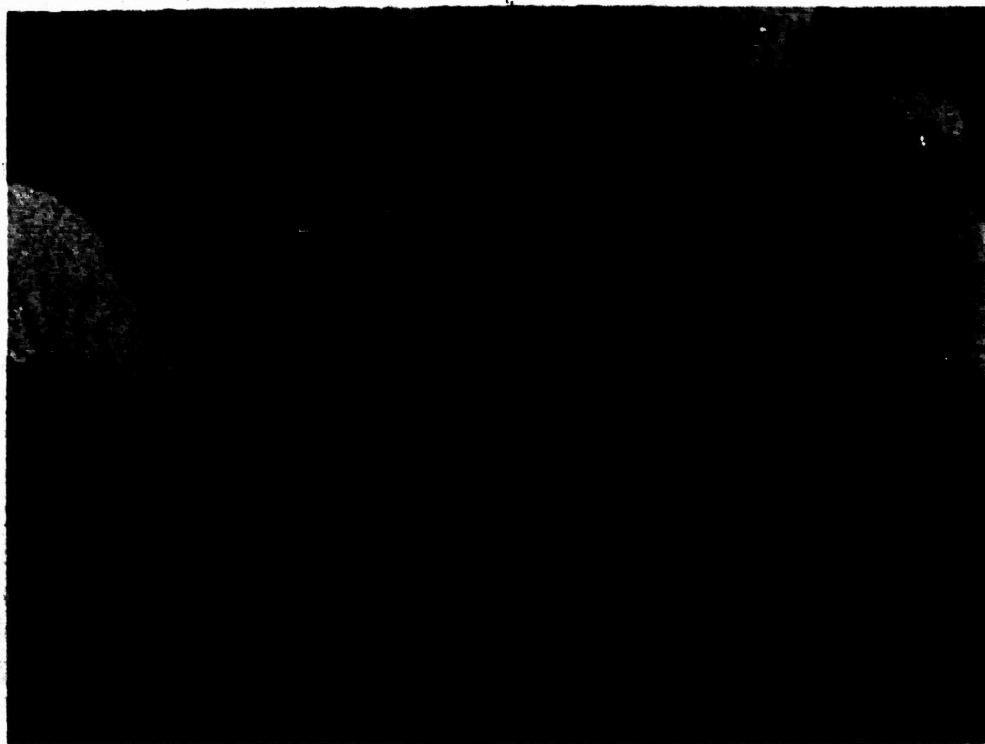
### *Growth of Membership*

Two clubs are a part of the program of the Center—the previously mentioned retired-employees club from a local industry, and a Golden



Wedding Club composed of couples (50 at this time) who have celebrated 50 to 65 years of married life. These clubs are, in effect, autonomous. Volunteers and staff help when needed.

Membership has made a steady and constant growth throughout the years, in spite of the expected high death rate, moving, and sickness. In June of 1955 the membership totaled 270; in 1956, 400; in 1957, 650; in 1958, 817; in 1960, 950; and in May 1961, 1,150. Every section of the city is represented. Some members are from the rural areas. An unusual feature of the membership is that there are five men to each four women, probably because three industries and one labor union pay the dues of those of their retired employees who wish to belong to the Center. Some members, whose dues are paid by their previous employers, show their appreciation by donating toward a fund for members who are unable to pay their dues.



The old art of whittling is enjoyed here as members of the Center make a collection of birds native to the local community.

### *Need for New Facilities*

By the summer of 1956 the membership and attendance had outgrown the first building. The crafts and other features of the program were curtailed by lack of space.

Again, the board of trustees, the local press, radio, and the mem-

bers came to the rescue. There were some discouraging delays, but in 25 months from the date of the original dedication, an abandoned school building was bought, with the deed in the name of Senior Citizens, Inc. Again, the merchant who gave one-half of the money for the original program came to the group's aid, underwriting the initial cost of the building which was bought at public auction. Thousands of other citizens also contributed to the new home for the Center. Money was contributed, in amounts from 5 cents to \$15,600, as was labor, materials, skills, furniture, paint, stoves, folding tables, chairs, and craft equipment.

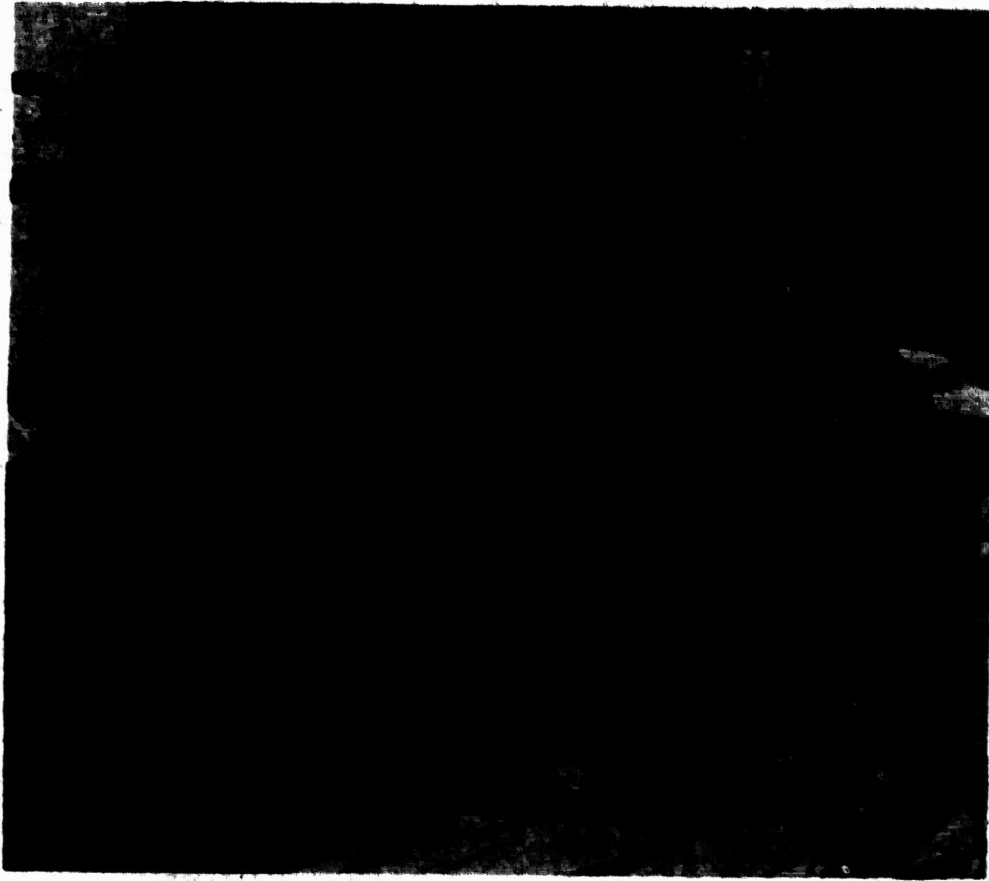
The members held bake sales, card parties, and gave money to buy materials for curtaining all 47 windows on the first floor. They set up large tables, borrowed sewing machines, and made the curtains. They hung curtain fixtures and bamboo shades at the windows. A Girl Scout troop moved the office material. Volunteers and members helped with the final arrangements for the second dedication.

The result was an attractively furnished building. There is a well-equipped kitchen for coffee breaks and lunches. A gameroom provides a place well removed from other program areas. A large cheerful living room contains a 24-inch television, comfortable chairs, and couches for small meetings and conversation groups. An auditorium seats 100 comfortably, with a piano, record player, and public address system to pipe programs throughout the building.

The men's craftroom contains tools for woodworking and a billiard table. The women's craftroom contains sewing machines, quilting frames, a ceramic kiln, and large storage space for the Holiday Market materials. A smaller room serves as an office. The spacious hallway has much used space. There are display cases at either end of the hall and chairs are arranged for "conversational groups." When service projects are underway, large tables are placed in the hall where cheerful people sit and stuff envelopes, collate booklets, and staple newsletters. They converse and draw in the newcomer as he steps in the door. The registration desk and the bulletin boards are placed in the versatile hallway. A shuffleboard layout is centered down the hall's length.

The building is centrally located, just a few blocks from the heart of the city and a block from the city buslines. There is parking space and easy accessibility from two wide streets. The rooms are bright and cheerful with many large windows. Colors have been used artistically to make the rooms pleasant.

There are a few steps into the building, but it was possible to build a ramp to the parking lot, enabling those who must come in wheelchairs, on walkers, or on crutches to get into the building with ease.



Dressing dolls for little children gives many hours of pleasure to grandmas and crannies.

### *Professional and Clerical Staff*

The staff has grown from one full-time director to four staff members and a custodian. An assistant director is in charge of crafts and assists with programing. A "group worker" assists the 70 committees and helps with classes and other groups. An office secretary assists with all office work. Employed half time, the three assistants and custodian stagger their hours to meet the needs of the program. Members and volunteers multiply leadership manpower.

### *Volunteer Assistance*

Volunteers augment staff leadership substantially. Volunteers have studied their role. They have learned from their mistakes. They have learned to avoid the patronizing approach. They have quite generally come to agree that one of their roles is that of "the listener." Some of the volunteers, during their days at the Center, do little except

circulate among the members, making friends, listening, chatting, and introducing new members. The volunteer, seated with a single member, or several, and just idly discussing the weather, last night's TV, the parking problem, the cost of living, or the latest fashions in dresses, is doing something casually that cannot be specifically programmed. The volunteers provide human warmth and receptivity. They can be successful at the job only if they do it because they like it.

Volunteers, who have tried working in the Center with a feeling of self-righteousness and a backpat of "see how friendly I am" are soon spotted for what they are, and are rejected. The "heartbeat" of the Hamilton Center is its pervading principle that the members are just that—members, and not wards. Violating this principle would turn the area into a clinic with all of the implications of patients seeking therapy—and nothing could be further from the real spirit of the Hamilton Center. Opportunity for friendship in a warm climate of participation and accomplishment is the goal.

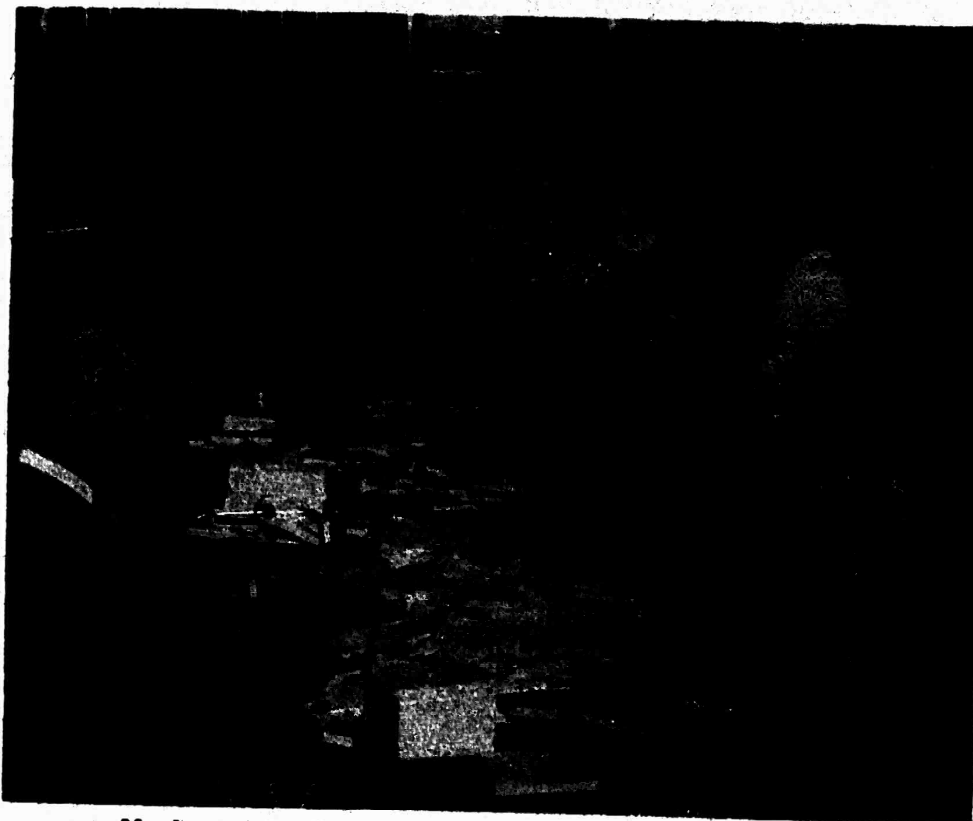
Service clubs provide money for special projects, bus tickets for members, issue invitations to their local-talent play rehearsals, and give transportation for special events—a tour of the city to see the Christmas lights, invitations to "pancake breakfasts," opportunities to visit an ice show, and on and on as ingenuity begets ingenuity.

Girl Scouts often act as hostesses for the Center. They and the YWCA provide outings at camp for the Senior Citizens. The Red Cross Motor Corps provides transportation one day each week for those unable to get to the Center because of physical disabilities. The local safety council presents a program on some safety factor once a month. Flags have been presented by patriotic organizations. Such thoughtful gestures are frequent and the opportunities seem unlimited.

In turn, the Senior Citizens share their talents. They dress dolls for the Salvation Army "Christmas in Every Home." They collect food for the baskets. They help with the registration of requests for the baskets. They assist by passing out safety information to each purchaser of an auto license, by collating thousands of safety booklets, and by parking cars for rallies.

One hundred thousand envelopes have been stuffed for various agencies whose own staffs were too limited for special mailing drives. Groups of women members have served as babysitters at large church meetings where as many as 15 to 100 children need supervision. The members have been involved extensively in the making of hospital bandages.

The implications of this for those who volunteer to serve at the Center are clear. They must volunteer with a sense of "what I do" with the members and not what may I do to or for the members.



Members of the Center help in community organization projects.

Even where volunteers teach a specific subject or counsel in a single area, they are at the Center as participants and not as principals.

College and high school students assist. The participation of younger volunteers, particularly during vacations, brings color and liveliness to the Center. One young person summed it up simply: "I like being here. I don't feel that I'm here to take care of people who don't know how to take care of themselves. I learn a lot. I enjoy the friends I make. It's more like being in a family than anything else. I guess I just like people."

### *Community Groups Cooperate*

Regular visits are made to the Center by representatives of agencies and organizations whose programs are pertinent to Senior Citizens. New services are described, questions are answered, after which the speaker joins the members at the coffee break for a get-acquainted time. Doctors, lawyers, hospital directors, nurses, dietitians—many community and professional leaders are enlisted for assistance.

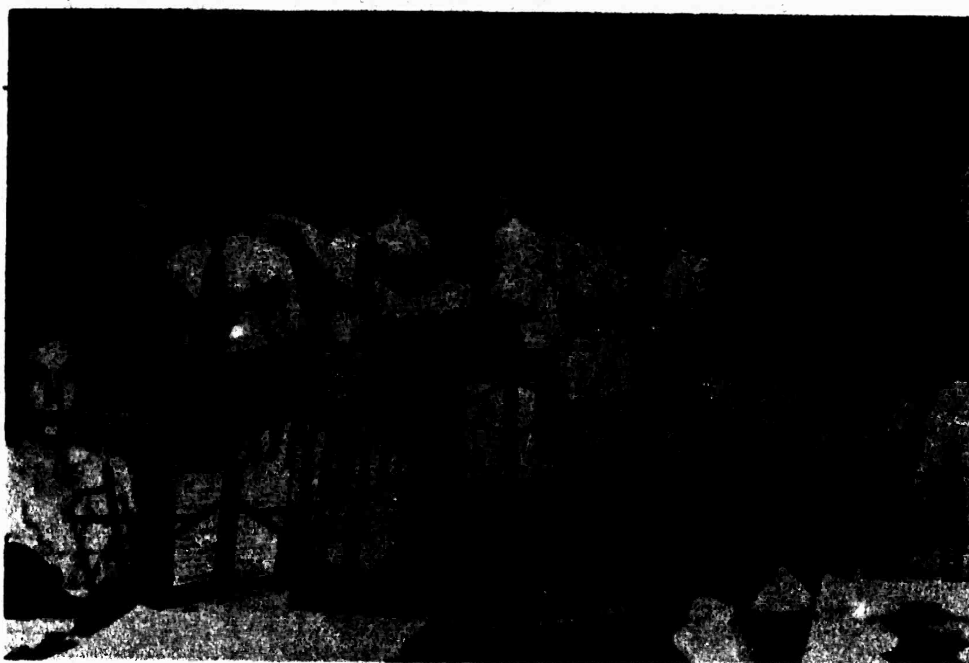
Some community groups provide programs for fun. Anything that is interesting, instructive, informative, or "just plain fun" is fare for

the Center. There are instructive lectures, school choruses, movies, dancing school presentations, and colored slides of many lands.

The Senior Citizens' orchestra and chorus have provided programs for service clubs, hospitals, Grange meetings, and many other groups.

The Center's experience with service activities indicates that the possibilities are extensive and that excellent cooperation can be expected with proper publicity and properly expressed appreciation.

The community is kept alert to each new step of growth by the cooperation of the local press and radio, and by talks given by board members and staff members. The director has a history of the Center's growth and program development illustrated in colored slides which is presented to community groups on invitation. :



Senior citizens enjoy dancing to the music of their orchestra. Members of the orchestra have all played in bands and orchestras before joining the Center.

Not only is there evident cooperation from the press and radio, but industry, merchants, the county fair board, the public library, banks, and public agencies have been generous in giving space for displays of pictures and craft products of the Center. The local newspaper provides weekly (or several times a week) publicity covering all phases of the program. The local radio station provides two Center programs a week as a public service. One 5-minute program covers the complete activity schedule for the week. The second is a 15-minute program presented by members with music and reminiscing of their and Hamilton's past. A nearby university and a school of nursing have visits to and tours of the Center as part of their regular

curriculum. A discussion of the program and the challenges of aging are highlights of these tours.

### *Features of the Program*

A detailed account of the many program features is to be found in Part IV, "Activities of the Center," beginning on page 21.

With a large and varied membership, a wide and interesting range of programs is maintained to offer something of interest to each member. The program grows as new interests are discovered. Each suggestion is tried and given a fair trial. However, if a program does not "go over," it is dropped and something else tried. Out of experience in identifying interests of members, three types of programs have evolved:

**Recreation : To keep the body alert.**

**Learning : To keep the mind alert.**

**Service : To keep the heart alert.**

Seventy member committees give direction to activities within these areas of individual and community concern. Specific activities and features of programs that have had "survival value" in the Center are included in Part IV.

# PART 3

## Part III

### The Center Evaluated

**W**HAT WERE THE MAJOR PURPOSES of those who initiated plans for the Hamilton Senior Citizen Center? To what extent have these purposes been achieved?

Development of recreation, learning experiences, and community services for and by older persons was clearly the basic objective of those who launched the program. The discussion that follows is relevant to these purposes. The analysis may be helpful to communities involved in, or about to undertake, a similar development.

Members and families of participating members were asked to evaluate the Center. The following are typical of the comments:

"This is our second home."

"I don't know what I did before we had the Center."

"The Center could do without us, but we can't do without the Center."

"I hadn't played an instrument for years until I came to the Center and started playing with the orchestra."

"We have had a whole new life since we came to the Center and entered into the activities."

"We like belonging to the Center and the companionship of people our own age because we don't have to compete with younger people. We can be ourselves."

"We can do what we want to here without fear of being laughed at by our children or other young folks."

Families and friends of Senior Citizens made comments like these:

"Dad is so much happier since he has found old friends and made new ones and is taking part in the crafts. He isn't so tired or so crabby."

"Mother is a new person since going to the Center. She has made so many new friends and has so many new interests and so much to talk about."

"My aunt feels so much better than she did before she started going to the Center. She has found new interests and doesn't have so much time to think about how 'bad' she feels."

"My neighbor was in the hospital and couldn't wait to get out so she could get back to the Center to keep up with what was going on there."

The growth experience of the Center is significant. Beginning with 7 members in 1954, the Center membership has grown to 1,150



in May 1961. Both on a quantitative and a qualitative basis there is reason to believe that Center activities are meeting some of the need and interests of older persons.

### *Community Services*

Has the Center developed significant programs in the area of community service? The specific community service programs are set forth on page 26. The record indicates that each year the membership, working through committees (now 70), discovered and developed new community services. Illustrative of the many services is the Friendly Visitors service. In Hamilton some 350 elderly persons, "less fortunate" than most of the members, are homebound residing in nursing homes, or hospitalized. Through systematic arrangements and transportation, the Center has made it possible for members to visit those older persons whose physical burdens are the most severe.

### *Learning Activities*

Has the Center fostered learning activities of interest to the members? The specific features of the educational programs are given on pages 21-23. Again the record shows growth in class instruction and informal grouping of members who choose to expand their intellectual interests. Motivation has clearly been uppermost in the minds of Center leaders who have stimulated learning activities. Challenging types of artistic, cultural, and intellectual activities have grown out of informal association, and scheduling arrangements have been made sufficiently flexible to accommodate most of the interested members.

In the judgment of Center leaders, motivation for educational experiences has resulted from the informal approach which in essence is succinctly expressed in the following words:

In a pleasant physical and social environment the new members may sit and watch. As they see interesting learning activities underway, many find new interests and ways to sharpen old interests. There is no effort to crowd the individual into an educational program until it strikes the spark of interest, but there must be creative leadership in setting up educational programs that call for instruction and leadership from within the Center and from the rich community resources.

### *Recreation*

Has the Center met the recreational needs of members? The specific features of the recreational programs are given on pages 24-25. It

is significant that recreational activities were emphasized in the early development of Center programs. "That is what they wanted to do," say the staff leadership. Out of the imaginative leadership of members developed an extensive program of recreational activities.

### *Expansion to Other Communities*

Has the Center influenced other Ohio communities in developing similar programs? As a result of numerous inquiries, leaders of the Center felt that a sharing of ideas on a statewide basis might prove helpful. In March 1958 eight centers in Ohio sent representatives to the Hamilton Center to exchange ideas, talk over problems, and to consider the forming of The Ohio Association of Centers for Senior Citizens. The response was positive, and other meetings followed. With the help of national and State leaders, a constitution and bylaws were drawn and ratified in September 1959. Eleven centers are at present active members of the State association.

### *Broadening Influence of the Center*

Has the Center influenced community thinking about older persons and their potentialities? Precise cause and effect relationships are not demonstrable, but the consensus in Hamilton, as discovered by an "outsider," is that community thinking has been focused (and sharpened) on a wide range of the more obscure problems and potentials in the older age group.

The broadening influence of the Center is reflected in recommendations of the Butler County Committee on Aging released Friday, April 1, 1960, in the Hamilton Journal & Daily News. The local committee reported nine services for older persons that are needed in the county. These include additional day centers and clubs; more friendly visitors for shut-ins; care for sub-acute, chronic, and long-term illnesses; a job placement bureau; adequate housing facilities; a clinic for the aging; rehabilitation and/or therapy for nursing home patients; and better preparation for retirement.

The committee recommended employment of retired talent in industry and education. Regarding education and recreation for older persons, the committee recommended that education courses and planning for retirement be developed by schools, by management and labor, with special attention to housing, medical care, employment, recreation, and income maintenance. The committee suggested that citizenship classes for the foreign-born aged be established in the

adult education program of the schools, and that literacy and fundamental education be extended in the older age group.

The report identified 10 private agencies and 7 governmental agencies providing services for the aged in the county. It listed 17 nursing homes, 5 hospitals, the Public Health, Nursing League, and the Lower Miami Valley Guidance Center, as institutions and agencies furnishing health and medical services.

Three of the county industries have preparation for retirement programs. Six industries have hospitalization for retired persons. Two industries have limited facilities for using the talents of retired persons. Two other industries are considering these programs for the future.

The report reveals that two unions have "preparation for retirement programs," and that other unions have committees studying these programs. Several unions also have committees studying the use of the talents of retired people.

Most important is their recommendation for a continuing committee to implement the recommendations and "to keep moving ahead in this field."

There is ample evidence that the Hamilton community and Butler County are looking at the total needs of older persons. They are assessing their resources, taking measure of unmet needs, and encouraging action to meet the realities and challenges of aging.

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Is there any one central idea that might be said to epitomize the spirit and "practical workings" of the Center? The local consensus is that *usefulness and purposeful living* spell the dominant spirit of the Center. Keeping active in the stream of life where older people are needed and wanted is an experience many find rewarding at the Hamilton Senior Citizens Center, whether they be agile or in wheelchairs. In and through learning activities, recreation, and community services something difficult to measure, but nevertheless real, has been added to the quality of living in Hamilton, Ohio.

Part IV

# Activities of the Center

## Learning

Projects	Activities	Leaders	Meeting Time
Creative writing-----	Actual creative assignments in prose and poetry, drawing heavily on recollections of area and its peoples. Some selections chosen for use in Newsletter. Some playlets used by the drama group.	Trained volunteer teacher-----	Twice a month.
Book reviews-----	Interesting, informative, and humorous books are reviewed by members or volunteers to a group which sews or quilts or does other handwork while listening. A discussion period follows in the "Cleaners" Club.	Member chairman; trained volunteer as cochairman.	Once a week.
Painting-----	Work in water colors includes making cards for the sick and parties for card parties. Work in oils involves learning techniques and actual work in copying famous originals or doing life portraits of fellow members.	Trained volunteer teacher-----	Do
First-aid study-----	Red Cross course in first aid-----	Red Cross instructor-----	Do.

Projects	Activities	Leaders	Meeting Time
Decorative arts.....	Regular arrangement of floral decorations brought to Center, with lectures and demonstrations.	Member chairman; volunteer teacher.	Daily for arrangements; once a week for classes.
Instruction in card playing.....	Card playing and other social card games with systematic instruction.	Volunteer teachers.....	Once a week.
Dance instruction.....	Free, professional lessons in dancing.....	Volunteer teacher from local dance studio.	Do.
Discussion groups.....	Discussion, comments, and study of a pre-determined subject, with the entire group entering into the discussion wholeheartedly. The subjects for discussion may be local history, current events, changes seen by participants, or trips taken by members of the Cracker Barrel Club.	Member chairman, trained volunteers; cochairman, members.	Do.
Ceramics.....	Painting, molding, finishing useful and decorative ceramic items, many of which are sold through the Center's bazaar.	Trained volunteer.....	Do.
Woodworking.....	"Whittling" with a purpose; one project has developed a complete set of regional bird figures, accurately scaled and colored.	Trained member teacher.....	Once a week officially, daily for many.
Handicraft.....	Baskets, party favors, birthday hats, textile painting, glass etching, basket-making, metalwork, etc.	Trained volunteer.....	Once a week.

Quilting.....	Quilts made for the Center and also for persons in the community.	Member chairman.....	Once a week officially; daily for many.
Men's workshop.....	Doll houses and furniture, bird houses and feeders, pipe racks, etc., for sale at bazaar. Cupboards, shelves, other fixtures for Center itself.	Member committee of professional carpenters.	Daily.

### The Performing Arts

Chorus.....	Regular part-singing, choral work at Center, occasional performances in community and for other groups at Center.	Trained volunteer or trained member.	Once a week.
Players group.....	Regular rehearsals for repertoire of short plays for presentation at the Center and before other groups in the community.	Trained volunteer director.....	Do.
Orchestra.....	Regular rehearsals for trained members, performances for events at Center (but not dances), and appearances in community.	Trained member chairman.....	Do.
Capers.....	Preparation of special program features for the center, ranging from a hula-hoop demonstration to recitals, national dances.	Member chairman.....	Do.
Square dancers.....	Rehearsal of extensive square dance figures, occasional program presentations.	Trained volunteer caller.....	Do.
Program committee.....	Meetings with staff personnel to plan special programs for parties, special events, drawing upon talents of all groups at Center.	Member chairman.....	Do.

Projects	Activities	Leaders	Meeting Time
<b>Recreation</b>			
Outings.....	Boat trips, visits to TV shows in nearby metropolitan centers, visits to other centers and tours of historical sites and industrial plants.	Special member committees.....	Periodically.
Picnics.....	With food and entertainment, sometimes by members, and transportation by bus; picnics held at local parks.	do.....	2 or 3 times during summer.
Golden wedding club.....	Composed of couples who have celebrated their golden wedding anniversary; regular social meetings with a special party in the summer.	Member chairman; volunteer co-chairman.	Meetings once a month; party once a year.
Membership dances.....	Regular evening dances for members who arrange for orchestras, decorate room, and collect donations to pay expenses.	Member chairman.....	Once a month.
White elephant bingo.....	Regular parties with members as callers and prizes consisting of "white elephant" gifts from members and friends.	do.....	Once a week.
Birthday parties.....	Birthdays of members are recognized at a monthly party, at which time "birth-dayites" wear special hats, "Happy Birthday" is sung by members, special program is presented, and special birthday cake is served.	Member chairman; volunteers.....	Once a month.

<p>Holiday observance</p>	<p>Each special holiday or event is observed by a party with games or pertinent program, with special party food and appropriate decorations.</p>	<p>do</p>	<p>As often as possible.</p>
<p>Volunteer party</p>	<p>A special party is given by the members for all volunteers honoring them, and showing appreciation for their help and generosity. Small gifts are presented and a special lunch is prepared for them with special program presented.</p>	<p>Member chairman</p>	<p>Once a year.</p>
<p>Special programs</p>	<p>Colored slides, movies, dance revues by local dancing schools, musical programs, talks by local speakers, programs by local and nationally famous talent, or any other program available and interesting.</p>	<p>Program chairman, special staff help.</p>	<p>Once a week.</p>
<p>Recognition parties</p>	<p>Special recognition parties are arranged to give credit for member committees, workers, or chairmen who have done an especially good job on a project. Recognition programs are presented, party food is served, or a covered-dish luncheon is enjoyed by the membership.</p>	<p>Special staff assistance, volunteer help, member chairmen.</p>	<p>Periodically.</p>
<p>Retired-employee meeting</p>	<p>The retired-employee members of a local firm meet at the Center twice a month on a specified date. This group has its own officers and has a regular business meeting. Program is furnished by the Center.</p>	<p>Members and representatives of the local industry.</p>	<p>1st and 3d Tuesday afternoons of each month.</p>



Projects	Activities	Leaders	Meeting Time
<b>Community Service</b>			
Hospital assistance.....	Sewing, making up sets of sutures, making newspaper envelopes for bedside use, making bags for use of local hospitals, under direction of hospital staff representative.	Member chairman; volunteer co-chairman.	Weekly.
Cancer project.....	Old white shirts are renovated and made into bedshirts; sheets are made into bedpads, gauze is made into bandages for use by cancer patients.	Member chairman; volunteer co-chairman.	Do.
Local service agency assistance.	Envelopes are stuffed for local service agencies needing special help at dates of information mailings.	Member chairman	As needed.
Safety and accident prevention.	Members are active in local safety council. During special periods, Senior Citizens assist council by assembling booklets, distributing safety information, and acting as car-parking attendants for conferences. Senior Citizens orchestra and chorus have presented programs at safety rallies.	do.....	Yearly.

**Special Assistance for Members**

Alterations assistance.....	Helping members make minor repairs and alterations on clothing.	Trained member leader.....	Once a week, or as needed.
Social Security information.....	Representative of local Social Security office visits for personal consultation on details of Social Security claims, adjustments, etc.	Social Security representative.....	Twice a year, or as needed.
Medical consultation.....	Group meetings and private chats with members to give advice on dental and general hygiene, care of the sick, etc.	Local doctors, dentists, and nurses.....	Several times a year, as needed.
Legal advice.....	Meeting between local attorneys and members for general review of legal matters of particular interest, such as wills.	Local attorneys.....	Twice a year, or as needed.
Banking and finance.....	Representatives of local banks meet with members to discuss saving plans, investments, and give advice on how to budget with a fixed income.	Local bankers.....	Do.
Aid for aged.....	Representative of State-aid-for-aged program visits for up-to-date information on aid for the Senior Citizens, personal contact, and clarification of assistance program.	Aid for aged representative.....	Twice a year.
Family service.....	Representative of local family service program explains services available to Senior Citizens, aids members who need services of agency.	Family service representative.....	Once a year.

Projects	Activities	Leaders	Meeting Time
Hospital and medical counseling.	Hospital representatives help allay fears of members regarding hospitals, new medical and nursing methods, and answer questions regarding nursing care and proper administration of medicines from the nursing viewpoint.	Hospital superintendent or registered nurse.	Twice a year.
Nutrition	Trained dietitians present new ideas in food preparation, balanced diets, clever suggestions for meals for small families or one person.	Trained dietitians.	Three times a year.
Clothing	Courses in proper and interesting dress for the older woman are held with clever and smart ideas for making the most of the mature figure, a limited income, and a basic wardrobe. Course results in better dressed and more smartly dressed women.	Trained ready to wear saleswoman.	Course once a year.
Cosmetology	Discussions and demonstrations of the proper use of cosmetics and hair care and styling for the mature woman, helping them to look properly "made up" and "smarter".	Trained cosmeticians and hair stylists.	Once a year.
Home visitation	Regular visits with shut-in members.	Member chairman; member helpers.	At least once a week.

		Member chairman for each hospital.	Do.
Hospital visitation	Regular visits to members in local hospitals		
Greetings	Sick cards, signed by members, sent regularly to those in hospitals and shut-in at home.	Member chairman	Once a week.
Memorial services	Plan and carry-out memorial services for deceased members, invitations to families, arrangement for talks by clergymen, music.	do	Once a year.

### Communication With Members

Welcome committee	Greet new members, stay with them until they make friends, and find their own way into activities of the Center.	Membership chairman; volunteer cochairman.	As needed.
New member indoctrination	Meeting between new members and chairmen of all committees to explain committee functions, activities, and help newcomers to find outlets for special interests.	Member chairmen; chairmen of all member committees.	Once a month.
Newspaper	Collect and write items about Center activities; members distribute to members and to interested persons in the community.	Volunteer editor; center staff; member editor.	Issued once a month.
County Fair display	Display of arts and crafts at County Fair. Members on hand actually working at craft assignments. Also, a display of general information about the Center.	Member chairman; special staff help.	Once a year.

Projects	Activities	Leaders	Meeting Time
Community displays-----	Posters, craft displays, information about Center prepared especially for use in banks, show windows, etc.	-----do.-----	Periodically.
<b>Securing Funds</b>			
Bazaar-----	Major fund-raising event of the year. Craft groups make materials all year long. Bazaar receives wide community support and publicity, stresses really useful and worthwhile items. Income goes to-Center budget.	Member chairman and committee-----	Once a year, usually in the fall.
Card party-----	Afternoon and evening bridge; proceeds from tickets cover prizes, refreshments with-remainder going to general budget of the Center.	-----do-----	Once a year.
Dance-----	Dance for friends in community with ticket funds assigned to specific purpose (e.g., a "Raise the Roof" dance to pay for new shingles). Music by local, professional band.	Staff and volunteer helpers and committee.	Do.

**Center Housekeeping**

Care of house plants.....	Watering, tending, arranging house plants and raising of seedlings in spring.	Member chairman; member helpers.	Daily.
Yard and windows.....	Cleaning windows, mowing grass, cleaning grounds.	Member chairman; crew of men members.	Once a week.
Kitchen.....	Prepare and serve special lunches and coffee breaks, plan menus, order food, maintain kitchen and equipment.	Member chairman; volunteer co-chairman; volunteer and member helpers.	Do.
Storeroom.....	Assistance to staff in keeping all materials and supplies in order and labelled.	Member chairman; member helpers.	Do.
Dusting.....	Straightening, dusting, keeping interior of Center clean, homelike, and neat.	Member chairman; crew of 2-4 women members.	Twice a week.
Library services.....	Catalog donated books, keep in order, re-place and arrange properly on shelves.	Member chairman; member assistant.	Daily.
Reception.....	Register each member upon entering building, keep registration record book in order.	Member chairman; member helpers.	Do.
Hospitality.....	Act as hosts and hostesses on all occasions.	..... do.....	Do.

**Communication With the Public**

Newspaper publicity.....	News releases are given to local newspapers for all events at the Center. Special publicity pictures are released throughout the year to acquaint the community with the program presented at the Center. Stories highlighting classes, groups, and events are released at intervals.	Special staff.....	Weekly.
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Projects	Activities	Leaders	Meeting Time
<p>Radio publicity.....</p> <p>Open house.....</p>	<p>A 15-minute program is taped at the Center weekly. The program is composed of music by the chorus and the orchestra, highlights of the program are discussed, members reminisce about changes seen during their lifetimes, and local Senior Citizens in prominent positions are interviewed. The program is broadcast as a public service.</p> <p>Once a week a 5-minute broadcast is presented giving the week's program in detail, with special emphasis on the various classes, groups, and projects.</p> <p>To better acquaint the community with the entire Senior Citizens project, a full week of <i>Open House</i> is presented by the members of the Center once a year. All people of the community who have donated time, service, money, gifts, or talent are recognized at this time. All the performing arts groups prepare programs for each day, and tea is served in the main hall each day. Special publicity is presented through all publicity media. Invitations are issued to all people in the community.</p>	<p>Staff and members.....</p> <p>Staff.....</p> <p>Special member chairman; special staff assistance; volunteer assistance.</p>	<p>Once a week.</p> <p>Do.</p> <p>Once a year.</p>