

New Horizons Activity Resurrects Lives Of 29



By ELIZABETH WISSMAN

For 29 mentally retarded persons from the Farmington area, life now has meaning—it is no longer aimless, empty, isolated.

Responsible for resurrecting these unfortunate human beings from lives of utter desolation is New Horizons, the sheltered workshop in the converted cattle barn behind the YMCA at Drake Rd. and Grand River.

Opened in January 1967, the workshop is one of two operated by New Horizons of Oakland County, Inc. The other is in Madison Heights and employs 70 retardates.

NEW HORIZONS is motivated by one purpose—"the mentally handicapped are good workers; what they need are good employers."

"The workshops are making taxpayers out of tax burners," is the way J. Lyle Winslow, New Horizon president, puts it.

Those employed in Farmington New Horizons range in age from 16 to 28, with a mental age median of eight to 10 years. Some have been stigmatized at home for five, eight, and 10 years.

Only a few have had previous work experience beyond the scopes of homes, special education classes or institutions.

Most have proved themselves reliable, eager workers. There is practically no absenteeism.

AT WHAT KIND of jobs do these people work?

Mostly at jobs that are tedious and monotonous, like folding boxes, sorting machine parts, assembling conveyor links or filling containers with small parts.

"None of it is the kind of work that appeals to the mentally capable worker, but it is work essential to industry."

The mentally handicapped enjoy and feel secure with the familiarity of doing the same task over and over.

New Horizon's employees

work a six-hour day. They punch in on a standard time clock at 8:30 a.m. and punch out at 3 p.m., with a 15-minute work break in the morning and lunch from 12 to 12:30 p.m.

They are paid 80 cents to \$1 an hour. If competency increases, opportunity becomes possible for placement in a job in the community.

ENTIRE PURPOSE of New Horizons is to bring the retardate up to his fullest potential. Ultimate goal is placement in a job beyond the confines of the sheltered workshop.

By normal standards, the pay check a worker earns is low, but it does not include the all-important fringe benefits he

never had before—friends, social activities, recreation programs.

Most important, however, is the self-confidence he gains by knowing he is doing something worthwhile.

Although the job contracts pay the small salaries of the workers, no profits are left over for operational expenses.



EAGER WORKERS—Two employees trained at New Horizons, Farmington's sheltered workshop for the mentally handicapped, show deep concentration as they fold boxes which will hold dental equipment.

FARMINGTON Industries which contract work at New Horizons include Chestley Industries, Inc., Rapistan Incorporated, Keystone Conveyor Division, and Ekstrom Industries, Inc.

In addition to funds from sub-contract work, monies are also obtained from the state office of vocational rehabilitation and the Oakland County Mental Health Services Board. Private donations are also received from industry, individuals and fund-raising activities of the women's auxiliary.

Both facilities of New Horizons are supervised by a professional staff, with Dale Smith as executive director and Israel Hochberg as vocational coordinator. Mrs. Bonnie Myers is vocational evaluator, Mrs. Marilyn Byrne placement coordinator and Elton Lanksy part time social worker.

These supervisors divide their time between Farmington and Madison Heights New Horizons.

PRESENT FULL time in Farmington is Gilbert Fleming, in charge of the shop, and Kenneth Neal, shop supervisor. Also working with the employees are Mrs. E.L. Mosshammer and Mrs. Peggy Prentice.

Smith the executive director has stated, "It is easier to train handicapped workers to adapt

to society than to educate society to adjust to them."

BUT, KNOWING they may face unkindness and misunderstanding on the outside, the retardates are eager to advance to placement jobs beyond the door of the sheltered workshop.

Hochberg recalls a Farmington employee who in his two years at New Horizons had not spoken a single word.

When he finally broke his silence, the retardate's words to Hochberg were, "I want a job. I want to get out of here."

"We have others like this man," says Hochberg. "After they are here awhile, we have trouble keeping them from talking constantly."

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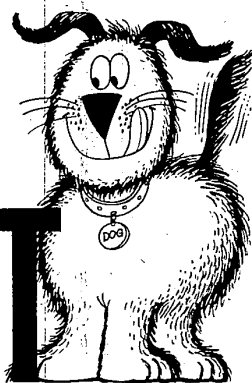
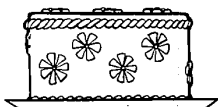
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DONE WITH CARE—Careful attention to detail is shown by this employee at New Horizons, Farmington sheltered workshop for the mentally handicapped. New Horizons employs 29 mentally retarded persons in its facility at Grand River and Drake Rd.

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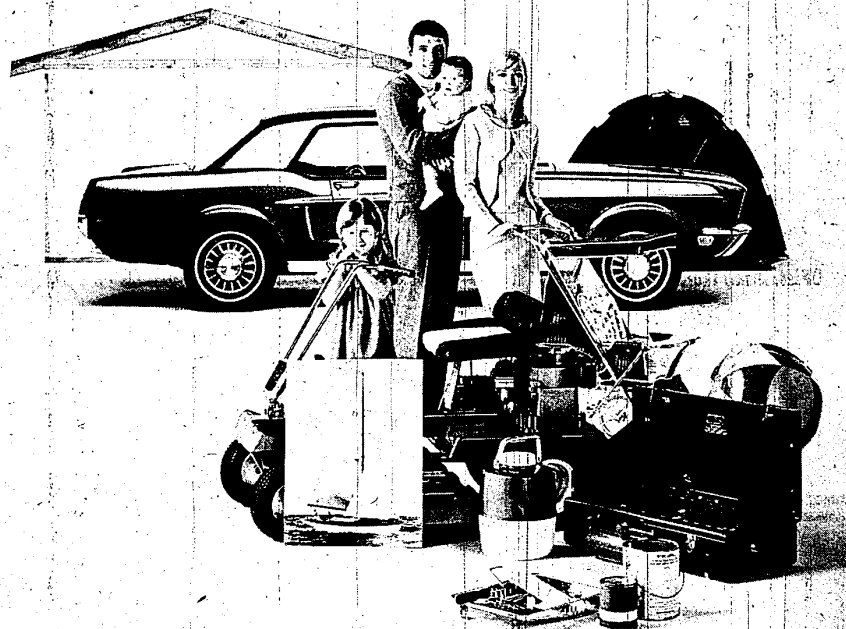
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