

Over 50? In Southfield Life Is Exciting!

By CAROL KATZ

Willow Lippert is a Southfield resident who is wholeheartedly dedicated to making those olden years truly golden.

As director of Southfield's extensive "Over-50" program, Mrs. Lippert takes an innovative approach in reaching the 10,000 residents of her city who are over 60 as well as many who are below that mark.

Last winter senior citizens and teens shared a ski'n sea weekend at Harbor Springs, enjoying the unacustomed benefits of each other's company. "Parents are often frightened of teenagers," explained Mrs. Lippert of the program's success, "but people in the senior years react to them very differently."

A SEPTEMBER 9 COMMUNITY CONCERT from 2 to 6 p.m., hosted

by Southfield's over 50 residents, will feature Tusco Heath, a folk singer with a decidedly country western flavor. Ice cream will be served by the senior adults to emphasize the feeling of an old fashioned get together. The concert will be held out of doors at the Civic Center.

A travel program provides senior adults with various opportunities to see the world. A 10-day trip to New England is scheduled for September 18; a 15-day trip to Hawaii is planned for October 6 and a four-day jaunt to Chicago will take off on November 23.

So enthusiastic has been the response to the travel program that Mrs. Lippert says many participants do their packing a full three weeks before their trip and talk about their plans frequently until they actually take off.

A monthly newsletter, put out by

the senior citizens, emphasizes topics of specific interest, such as social security, nursing homes and tax breaks for the elderly. Circulation has reached over a thousand.

In addition, there are a whirlwind of other regular activities for senior adults in Southfield, including cards, luncheons, hiking through the nature trails at the Civic Center, an arts and crafts program as well as casual drop in affairs.

Nor are all programs pre-planned and pre-canned for senior adults by Director Lippert. She encourages participation of members through such assignments as making reservations, taking deposits and coordinating various programs.

SOME SENIOR ADULTS, having begun as volunteer clerical workers, now receive payment from the City

"Often, people are afraid of going into a period of life that they feel holds a nothingness," she explains. She would like the senior years to be viewed as a beginning rather than an end.

Retirement can create very traumatic problems for a couple. Round the clock togetherness, it seems, requires some major adjustments to be palatable and pleasant, Mrs. Lippert explains.

Living within a limited income is another difficulty which the majority of elderly people must cope with. There are in Southfield a certain number of elderly people who live very well, but the great majority, in Mrs. Lippert's experience, are forced to live with careful frugality.

"The rest of the community often looks down on older people," continued Mrs. Lippert who finds that

RETIREMENT HOUSING: A MATTER OF CHOICE

Retirement housing is many things to many people. Because retirement involves a major change in life style, it usually necessitates a change in environment and in living quarters.

Experts point to a number of alternatives, all with strengths and weaknesses, that retirees can consider before finding a suitable place to settle down.

THE FAMILY HOME, because of emotional and financial factors, is for many older people a good choice. It is probably paid for and the memories that it contains can be a source of comfort for many people.

But because it was probably purchased at a time when children were all at home, it is often too big for just a retired couple. Such tasks as cleaning second floor windows and repairing upstairs gutters make maintenance a problem for many.

Renting an apartment can mean a carefree life for many elderly people. There's no maintenance involved, and there's a good deal of flexibility. Apartment dwellers can take off on worry free vacations as often as they wish; they can sublease their quarters or they can easily move on to another place when their lease expires.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO CHOOSE an apartment that is close to shopping and community facilities. One within walking distance of public transportation is a highly desirable point for many older people.

A happy choice for many people, apartment dwelling is not recommended for those whose pleasures lie in gardening and puttering about their workshops.

Trailer living, formerly considered to be a refuge for transients and people hanging on to a marginal mode of existence, has become very respectable, especially among retirees.

Still much less expensive than

houses, trailers have become ingenious in design with nearly everything including range, refrigerator, beds and sofas, being built in. Housework in a trailer is very minimal.

Location, here, is especially important. Many trailer parks, while lovely in scenery and landscaping, are too far from the amenities of civilization—doctors' offices, stores, recreational facilities—to be a good choice for many older people.

RETIREMENT HOMES are usually regarded as a haven for elderly people with health problems or those no longer able to cope with the mechanics of daily life. There are senior adults, however, still in fine health, who prefer these homes above all other modes of living. Here daily needs, including meals and health care, are met regularly and, of course, there is built-in companionship with the other residents.

Newly retired persons are advised to keep their eyes on the better retirement homes in their community. When and if they decide to move into one, they'll have an idea as to what is available.

Living with children, while sometimes necessary for financial reasons, is usually not advised. Such a living arrangement, it seems, seldom works out well, although people who are doing it will try to paint a rosy picture of its joys.

Striving to please and to adjust to a different generation, retired parents often come to feel hampered in their daily living habits; soon enough they retreat to a bedroom or to the outdoors just to maintain their privacy and sense of independence.

There are many things to consider in deciding on a retirement residence. Children, friends and neighbors—helpful and well meaning as they are—will seek to give advice, but in the long run, the choice must be made by the retirees themselves.



of Southfield for their efforts during busy periods.

"Some of the youngest people I know are 85," comments Willow Lippert about the people she works with.

"Retirement can be very bewildering," she adds. "I find it a real challenge in providing more options to senior citizens in their daily lives."

What are the biggest problems of aging? Mrs. Lippert points to several.

senior citizen programs themselves are often belittled, as well.

Nevertheless, she is going ahead at full steam. The entire lower level of the Southfield Parks and Recreation Building is being handsomely remodeled for use by senior adults, thus enabling an already lively program to expand considerably.

Southfield's senior citizens are well served, if they choose to be, by their city's recreation program, facilities and its enthusiastic leadership.



SENIOR CITIZENS joined Southfield teenagers in a ski'n sea weekend at Harbor Springs last winter.