Women lifers train to care for retarded

Women inmates of the Detroit House of Correction are being trained to help care for the mentally-retarded in a new federally - funded program.

The training program is being administered by the Plymouth Center for Human Development, the Detroit House of Correction and Schoolcraft College.

Funded with $68,880 in federal funds and matching local funds of $35,020, it will involve 50 women over a 44 - week period in on - the - job training experiences working with the mentally retarded at the Plymouth Center.

The students will study practical nursing skills plus basic principles of child development and behavior modification. Instruction will be provided by Schoolcraft Community College.

The program is one of several innovative projects initiated at the Detroit House of Correction by Supt. John Amberger, to upgrade and strengthen rehabilitation work at that facility. It is the first one in the nation involving cooperation with a residential facility for the mentally retarded.

Dr. William M. Womack, superintendent of the Plymouth Center, believes the program will be beneficial to the residents of the Plymouth Center as well as the women who will participate in it.

"We have found the women to be highly motivated and eager to learn," he said.

"They have related well to our residents who we believe will benefit greatly through the additional attention they are receiving. Our job is to train and educate our residents and if we can also assist in the rehabilitation of women from the House of Correction in the process, everyone comes out ahead. This program provides a vehicle for doing both."

The Plymouth Center for Human Development, previously known as the Plymouth State Home and Training School, is a 1092 - bed facility for the mentally retarded operated by the State Department of Mental Health, with Dr. E. Gordon Yudashkin, Director.

Lee Brimhall, president of the Plymouth Parents' Association, sees the program resulting in improved services to the mentally retarded at the Center.

"As parents and advocates of the retarded children, we view this program in a very positive manner and it is our opinion that the success of the program will result in a more effective delivery of services to residents of Plymouth," he said.

Dr. Womack also commented that, "those of us who work with the mentally retarded are familiar with the devastating effects of labeling people as 'retarded' or as 'convicts' rather than looking at them as human beings with individual characteristics, potentials, and abilities.

"We believe prisoners are human beings, most of whom if given a fair chance want to resume socially useful lives in the community.

"This program will provide that opportunity for those who want to take advantage of it. The staff of the House of Correction, Schoolcraft Community College, and the Plymouth Center have carefully screened all of the women participating in the program and we are confident the project will be a success."

Merwin Brace, President, MSEA Chapter 71 at the Center, said of the program:

"Because of the comprehensive screening of the inmates and because of the skilled supervision available, we are satisfied that the project is being handled in a way that will benefit our residents and we are pleased to join with the Detroit House of Correction and Schoolcraft Community College in what might well become a model for prison training and reform."

Mrs. Marie Hardrick, President of the Plymouth Center Local 1837, said her organization also enthusiastically supports the project.

"We welcome the opportunity to work with the women who are taking part in this program," she said. "Our members will do everything they can to help train them so they will have a better chance when they are released. It is the least we can do to help these women who are trying so hard to help themselves."

IGNACIA VASQUEZ is preparing to graduate from high school this spring. Thwarted in her pursuit of an education in Mexico, she overcame the language barrier and took up the high school curriculum in Southfield.

She follows a dream to earn an education

By LORAINE McCLISH

A young Mexican woman who says "I never dreamed of finishing high school so I can't let myself get scared to go to college" has taken a long and arduous route to pursue her education.

But perseverance appears to be winning over the obstacles for Ignacia Vasquez who is getting ready to graduate from high shool this spring. She lives with the Robert Solomon family, at 31588 Stonewood, Farmington, and will finish up five years of schooling in Southfield's community schools in June.

Of her life in the Detroit area, she says, "I landed in a good place."

There are no educational requirements for citizens in Mexico, "and especially not for poor people," she says. She is called Nacha, a Spanish nickname, by the Solomon's three daughters.

She had "very little education, not even three years when I was a little girl. My parents were divorced when I was quite young. There was seven children, no help from the government, no welfare."

There is little recourse in a situation like that, she continued. "You go to work outside the home."

She made one try to get back into school. "But they just don't like to let poor people go to school (in Mexico). That was when I got the idea to come here."

She applied for a job as a domestic from Mexico and spent three months in New York City, "that even with no English was still easier living than in my country."

A return to Mexico brought her greater unhappiness and frustration and she spent most of that time trying to find "people who knew people who could get me in touch with somebody here."

In spite of her obvious determination and the fact that she did get here, she interjects her conversation with references to her shyness.

She had difficulty meeting new people. Was embarrassed to speak in class. Was upset when a paper of hers was read in class.

She is the first to tell you that her first sessions in Southfield Community Schools' English for the Foreign Born was "very hard, very hard. I was scared of everything. Learning to drive was the worst. It took me three years to get a license."

At a time when she was still underved by the language problem, she credits Mae Wright, a substitute teacher in the Community Schools, for "pushing me out of the English class into high school (studies)."

Now she is finding so many things to do "I can't find time to take advantage of them all." She pursued the high school curriculum through the summers and did find time to take swimming lessons ("I'll never give those up") and typing. On her agenda for the future are judo lessons and flower arranging. "though I don't know when that's going to be."

She has a difficult time understanding the student who doesn't wait until June. when school is all over."

It has been five years since she arrived here and it will have taken five years of school to get her high school diploma. She will go on to college but is not making any definite plans for a career.

"I've had so many disappointments, so many plans that didn't turn out. I'll just enroll in college and think of something when I get there."

In speaking of Mexico she says, "I love my country, but there is not that much to offer there. So many children and all of my nieces and nephews with no future. Only for a very strong reason would I go back. Otherwise I'm planning to stay here."

When a comment was made on her mod, defiinitely American shirt, she answered, "Oh, I don't spend near as much on clothes as I do for books. I just want to read and study for as long as I can."

WCCC has 4 courses on women

Four courses about women and their role in society are scheduled for the winter term at Wayne County Community College.

Registration is being held this week for classes beginning Jan. 14. Tuition for each three-credited class is $10.

The courses, offered last fall for the first time in the WCCC sociology department, have so far attracted mostly women students.

"But we are encouraging men to enroll," said Ms. Paula Reimers, instructor for the four courses. She added:

"Women's studies courses breed an enthusiasm among students unlike many other courses. Students relate the subject matter to their daily lives and their own problems on the job and at home.

Plymouth women get to 'snoop'

Gifts in paper bags will star in the "Snoop Party" planned by the Woman's Club of Plymouth on Friday, Jan. 11, at 12:30 p.m. in St. John Episcopal Church, 574 S. Sheldon.

Each member is asked to bring a gift—the kind she would enjoy receiving—in an open paper bag.

Mrs. Kenneth Merrill is chairman for the day's program. Mrs. John Boyce, tea chairman, will be assisted by Mrs. Lawrence Becker, Mrs. Gregory Dean, Mrs. Raymond Doty, Mrs. David Field, Mrs. Arthur Gulick, Mrs. Robert Petersen, Mrs. Arthur RinderKnecht and Mrs. Wayne Weimer. Mrs. Marshall North and Mrs. Edward Miller will be greeters.

Polonaise meeting set

The Polonaise Society, Lodge 3160, will meet Wednesday, Jan. 9, at 8 p.m. in the home of Mrs. Stella Graczyk, 34763 Spring Valley, Westland.

Oakway group meets Jan. 10

The Women's Association of the Oakway Symphony will meet Thursday, Jan. 10, at 8 p.m. in the home of Mrs. Samuel S. Gambino, 30930 Sudbury, Farmington. All interested in promoting the work of the community symphony are invited to attend.

Singles club plans party

Swinging Singles, 25 and up, will have a cocktail party Friday, Jan. 11, at 9 p.m. in Glen Oaks Country Club, 30500 W. 13 Mile, Farmington.

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