

New hot lunch program benefits elderly in area

BY MARGARET MILLER

Some 80 senior citizens in Livonia are eating hot lunches each Monday through Friday under a brand - new federal program made operational the first of the year.

Some Westland retirees will be getting a similar program later, and one also seems certain in the Farmington area.

The catered hot lunches are provided under the U.S. government's Title 7 Older Americans Act. The nutrition program for the elderly is administered through the state and operated on a county basis.

Basically, the aim is to reach persons over 60 who most need both the nutrition and the social contacts the communal meal provides, but there's nothing hard and fast about such a limitation.

"We hope to get the ones who really need it and get them coming every day," said Ed Allardice of the Wayne County Senior Citizens Network, which began Jan. 14 a program of hot lunches in the McNamara Towers senior citizens' residence in Livonia.

"We want to serve as many people as possible at or below the poverty level as possible, but this is not hard - line policy," was the way it was put by Michael Yoelin, director of the Office of Economic Opportunity nutrition program for Oakland County.

Yoelin and two others closely connected with programs for the elderly described the plan for serving hot lunches and providing other services to a group of Farmington residents - most of them church - oriented - who gathered in University Hills Church in Farmington last Friday.

He said Oakland County administrators now have lunch programs going at six

Pontiac sites and 14 more are slated for the county.

"I think one will be in the Farmington area," he stated. The next step would be to find a site, he added, indicating a good choice might be a church located in an area where there are a large number of low - income senior citizens.

Although vague in answer to repeated "how do we make it happen there?" queries from the church people who represented likely volunteer aides, he emphasized that his office would be glad to receive offers from area churches.

Mrs. Nancy Bates of University Hills church, organizer of the meeting, added that her church office could serve as a clearing house for ideas on the program's operation.

Meanwhile, the program was winding up its first week of successful operation in McNamara Towers, the Livonia hope that offers low - cost housing for senior citizens.

An average of 80 residents a day participated in the first five days of the hot lunches, said Darold Jennings, director of the Livonia Housing Commission.

Those in the activities hall at one of the twin buildings Friday, enjoyed a lunch of meat loaf and gravy, beefs, potatoes, bread and butter, fruit cup and beverage for 50 cents.

Most were enthusiastic. "I was down against it at first," said Mrs. Marie Donovan, one of the diners. "I said we should be paying - we're not paupers here. When they set the 50 cent price, I decided to try it out. I've changed my mind - I think it's very good."

Her companions in the dining hall agreed the food was good and that having it available instead of having to



'I was against it --I've changed my mind.'
--Marie Donovan



cook a meal for one was most welcome. Also mentioned was enjoyment of the social hour.

Although the Livonia program welcomes senior citizens who do not reside in the Towers, the social aspects of the lunches will be a bigger factor in programs to be instituted in Westland and Farmington.

Allardice said a hot lunch program is planned in Westland, but he did not yet know when it would begin or where it would be located.

At the meeting in Farmington, Yoelin was joined by Henry Atling, division manager of field operations for the Oakland County Office of

Economic Opportunity, and David Batzka, University of Michigan gerontology student who has worked in Tonguish Creek Manor, a Plymouth residence for low - income senior citizens.

All three emphasized that volunteer help would be needed to operate such a program in a site like a church.

While the meals are catered, in Wayne County through Automatic Retailers Assn. and in Oakland County through the North-east Oakland Vocational Educational Center in Pontiac, volunteers are needed to help paid staff serve them, and many volunteer drivers are needed to bring senior

citizens from their homes to the serving site.

"The federal grant does not provide for any vehicles, so we are dependent for them on area schools, churches or businesses and on volunteer drivers," Yoelin said.

Yoelin and Atling added that definite efforts are being made to get from the government a commitment for a gasoline allotment for the purpose in this day of prospective rationing.

Yoelin also pointed out that the hot lunch program, which replaces the Title 4 pilot program that often was known as "Meals on Wheels," is broader in concept than was the one that provided delivered meals. It also is designed to provide a variety of services other than meals to the seniors, he added.

"Meals on Wheels did offer a lot of positive things," he said. "Starvation was headed off in many cases. But perpetuated and increased was the feeling of isolation that so much dominates the lives of many elderly people."

"We realized that for many the delivery of that meal was the one thing to look forward to and they would sit in their rooms all day waiting."

He listed other services that the new program hopefully will provide.



LUNCHTIME in the McNamara Towers senior citizens' residence in Livonia means a busy activities room since the beginning of a federally - funded hot lunch program. (Observer photos by Harry Mauhe)

Among these supportive services is outreach, "getting to those in the community 60 and over who are most isolated and those who don't immediately know about the program."

Other supportive services include transportation, escorting the elderly to appointments, if vehicles are available, information and referral, health and welfare counseling, nutrition education, shopping assistance and recreational activities.

Home delivery of meals to those really unable to join in a community program will constitute about 10 per cent of the program, administrators from both counties indicated.

'6-Foot Pygmy' visits

BY MARGARET MILLER

A rugged six - footer came to Livonia last week to talk about why the Pygmies of central Africa should be saved from threatened extinction at the hands of western civilization.

And Jean - Pierre Hallet did so effectively that women in the Livonia Town Hall audience bought up a big stack of his \$10 book, "Pygmy Kitabu," which tells about the short - statured people and is being used to raise money to help them survive.

Hallet, born of Belgian parents in the Congo, has spent most of his life in Africa. His adventures have brought him close to death so many times that he said the women at the celebrity luncheon:

"Cats may have nine lives but I have already 19. So I

have to be careful not to slip in the snow in Livonia."

Hallet, born in the part of Africa occupied by Pygmy tribes, said he had been with them a lot before deciding to spend 18 months in their midst, cut off from other civilization.

"The Pygmies are my adopted people, a beautiful people," he said. "They use so little from nature that they do not deplete. I have never been so happy as when I was with them, because they repose the mind."

They are a danger of extinction, like a number of other primitive peoples in other parts of the world, he said, because "the civilized world is taking more and more of their forest for uses like coffee plantations."

"They have asked me quite

a few years ago to help," he added. "And I say to them as

long as I shall live this shall be my only interest."

Hallet said his book on Pygmies, his fourth about Africa, is the result of life - long study and seven years' concentrated work. It shows them, he said, to be not only the original people on the African continent but the earliest humans on earth, "the people of the Garden of Eden."

"This is controversial, but I have proof," he stated.

Hallet said physical characteristics of the Pygmies link them, not to the black man "who has been in Africa for more than 10,000 years," but to some of the earliest human types that have been discovered and to the Egyptians.

Also, he added, there is in the Pygmy lore a story of an immaculate mother and an avenging son, and such a story in Egyptian lore is believed by many to be the fore - runner of the Christ story in the Judeo - Christian tradition.

The speaker had anecdotes showing Pygmy attitudes toward Western civilization. One concerned an old man who saw a radio and said he "felt sorry for a person so degraded he can't sing his own song but needs a little box to do it for him."

And a Pygmy watching a Boeing 707 plane overhead was quoted by Hallet as saying:

"You may think that is a great achievement, but I don't think so. It's a fake bird with very stiff wings. The sky is for birds, the tree is for the monkey and the river is for fish and we are better on land."

Hallet defended the South African government's policy of apartheid.

"With much courage and perhaps much wisdom, it has decreed that each race should stay with its own kind and not acquire the bad characteristics of the other," he said.

"This is the law of the animal kingdom. Different species of zebra have different characteristics - some can

run fast for life on the plains and some can climb well for living in the mountains. They graze together and live together in peace, but they will never mate.

"We are in a fad of phony liberalism that says everyone should be in one big melting pot. But that is stupid. It doesn't really exist. The problem with one world is that we lose the family. And the Pygmies know the family is what is important."

At the luncheon in the Mayflower Meeting House in Plymouth, Hallet gave a description of how he lost his right hand, an accident that he said brought him close friendship with the late President Eisenhower and made him "sort of an unofficial White House adviser on African matters."

He said a Pygmyd people in the southern Congo were stricken by famine, and he decided to get a large supply of high - protein food to them quickly by dynamiting a lake to kill quantities of fish.

"This was against the law," he said, "but I felt people were better than fish."

The last dynamite charge he was setting from his boat exploded in his hands, he related, so he had to swim among crocodiles to get to shore - "the trick is to stay vertical because their jaws are rigid and they can snap only on horizontal objects."

From there it was necessary to walk two miles to his truck, back it three miles through the forest trail because there was no room to turn around and then drive eight hours over rugged road to the nearest hospital.

"I was about dead when I got there," he said, "but I resent the treatment they bring. I say I will get to the bed on my own, as I have come the rest of the way on my own."

Hallet's books may be ordered through Joe J. Pier-Hallet Productions, 5350 W. 79th Street, Los Angeles, 90045.

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SUE KEMP of South Africa, one of the four American Field Service students attending high school in Livonia this year, talked to Livonia Town Hall speaker Jean-Pierre Hallet about the Pygmies of Africa and the book he has written concerning them. Town Hall receipts help support the AFS program in Livonia. (Observer photo by Bob Woodring)