



## Senior Center

*'A good way  
to spend  
an afternoon'*

By LORRAINE McCLISH

A growing number of persons are attending sessions at the Senior Center these days, lured by a new program which offers arts and crafts instructions.

"Senior Center is only a temporary name. The members will get around to giving themselves an official name once we get going," said Loretta Conway, who is the coordinator of senior citizen activities in the Farmington area.

But that the group has "got going" was in evidence this week with an unofficial head count of 60; roughly half again of what was expected.

The numbers at the craft tables were doubled. Seniors who had never before picked up a paint brush were trying their hand at oil painting. One gentleman in the group volunteered to build a couple of easels for the fledgling artists. Still others came with their income taxes to be done by a group of Oakland Community College students who volunteered their services.

Getting help with tax forms was a bonus for the Senior Center participants, "but it's all a part of the service we want to perform here," Ms. Conway said.

THE CENTER is located in the American Legion Hall on Grand River and is occupied with the arts and crafts activities every Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

The program was spearheaded by the Farmington Community Arts Council made possible by a grant from the Michigan Council of the Arts. It was put together with the help of the Farmington Art Foundation, (the service arm of the Farmington Artist Club) and the Senior Citizens coordinator for the community.

"We wanted to offer them something more than card playing or bingo," said Alice Nichols, who is a trustee for the art foundation and a volunteer instructor at the center. The belief that something more was going to be accepted stemmed from

questionnaires given to those who attended the senior citizen seminar sponsored by John Wesley College last spring.

It was not surprising to Mrs. Nichols that the seniors would take advantage of an offered creative, rather than a sedentary activity.

"Ninety minutes after they had been encouraged to try (painting) they had something down on canvas, something they had done themselves. It is a good feeling. And a good way to spend an afternoon, just trying something new," she said.

"They mill around, looking at others' work. Many don't limit themselves to one choice and have two or three things going for them. And they are a jovial group with a lot of humor."

"EVEN AFTER such a short period of time we can see a whole new social life opening up for them. They are getting back in the swing after maybe losing a loved one, or after retirement."

Mrs. Nichols believes that the informality of the center, and the "milling around" will lure others to take a crack at painting, an individual expression of creating as opposed to the step by step process of a craft that comes out of a kit.

"Painting brings more of a sense of accomplishment... demands a little more creativity and is a stop and think process so there is a little more hesitancy in just starting," she said.

Mrs. Nichols got involved in the center art activities through the art foundation that was set up as a non-profit organization to zero in on giving service, only, to the area. She has a list of 12 members of the group, all artists, who will be dropping in at the center to lend their expertise to the seniors who choose to pursue the art instructions.

Crafts that are offered run from intricate decoupage to simple napkin rings made of felt.

The accounting students from OCC will be back every week until mid-April to assist with tax forms.



Photos  
by  
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