



MS. TOLBERT HELPS



RESIDENTS FILL THE HALL

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## Williamsburg Convalescent Center

# 'We've got it better here than most'

By LORRAINE McCLISH

The sign in the lobby read "November Birthday Party: 7 p.m. The Mercyaire's" and the guests came in wheel chairs, on crutches or with the help of nurses to fill the social hall of Williamsburg Convalescent Center.

"A few years ago you might have found five or six people down here, now every month we have a larger crowd. We get more and more residents to come down and their families come to join them for the parties," said Debbie Tolbert.

Ms. Tolbert is activities director for the center who gave credit for the party spirit to Frank Agular who has taken it upon himself to be a one-man solicitor of talent to bring entertainment to the center's 110 residents.

Agular got into the talent-soliciting business through his affiliation with the Christian Service Committee of St. Alexander's Catholic Church and works with "about a dozen people putting some life into the place."

THE COMMITTEE comes in for arts and crafts sessions, and some of the results of this can be seen in a bazaar on Dec. 10. The volunteers give bingo games, the youth of the church helps out with the birthday parties.

And a "most important service is our beauty salon," Doris Webb heads up the group of women from the church who handles the beauty salon operations with appointments every week. "I don't have to tell you how important that is."

"We're lucky here," Ms. Tolbert continued, "we've got it better than most."

Ms. Tolbert's job is to plan daily activities for 110 persons whose ages range from 21 to 99. She is working not only with age range and individual likes and dislikes but all the multiples involved with a wide variety of handicaps. "So all activity directors have to depend on volunteers," she said.

When she took over her job, a year ago, "a lot of time was spent going to churches and organizations begging for help. But thanks to Frank and his committee we have more than just parties for holidays, which is the usual."

AGULAR'S JOB has not been easy. In setting out to supply quality entertainment for a birthday party every month, "I began with the Yellow Pages and for the first time in years my phone calls exceeded those made by my kids."

The results he said for one month "might be 20 calls to get one maybe."

Even so, he has come through with one a month, "always something lively and peppy."

The Mercyaire's, a 20 member girls glee club from Our Lady of Mercy High School, certainly filled Agular's criteria. They displayed vocal, instrumental and dance talents along with a touch of humor, then visited with their audience after the performance with birthday cake and punch.

Corsages were given to those with November birthdays by St. Alexander's Youth Group and gifts, from month to month, Ms. Tolbert said, "are whatever we can get."

An adjunct volunteer service that has come to the center in the past year stems from a group of teachers in the Luvonia Public School System headed by Gloria Maube. The program they bring is called "Reality Orientation," a self-explanatory term which helps those who are completely or somewhat out of touch get back into social activities.

"And it works hand in hand with what Frank is doing. That's why we have the crowd here tonight that we have," Ms. Tolbert said.

In this same behalf the residents are responding in bigger numbers to the movies and book mobile offered by the Farmington Community Library.

AS PLEASED AS Agular is about what is happening in Williamsburg these days, he's now taken it on himself to be concerned about other nursing homes "where there are others just as sick and just as lonely as these people. Why isn't there more community involvement? Aren't the people in these homes part of the community?" he asks.

When Ms. Tolbert was asked if there were still any holes in the activities calendar that needed to be filled, she answered, "They sure have a lot of time unfilled on the weekends. They need somebody to talk to, somebody who will listen to them, somebody who will write a letter for them."

As we were filing out of the social hall leaving the birthday party, an elderly gentleman approached Agular and said, "What are you going to have for us next month Frank?"

He answered, "It'll be a surprise."



FRANK ANGULAR VISITS



DEBBIE TOLBERT

Photos by  
Gerry Gazda



PERFORMERS CHAT WITH RESIDENTS



THE MERCYAIRES