

The spirit of LBJ

Poverty fighter continues drive to collect goods

By CRAIG PIECHURA

Fifteen years ago, B. Ford Thompson was spurred on to social action by a TV documentary about a poor coal mining town in Kentucky.

Watching the show, Thompson realized that the unemployed miners of Appalachia were living less than 20 miles from a campground he and his family had been vacationing for years.

"This was back in '63 when there was a war on poverty going on," Thompson recalls. "It wasn't long before that popped out and went by the wayside. Pretty soon, it was no longer cool to come to the aid of the poor. The 'war on poverty was just another fad.'"

Not to Thompson, though, and his students at Lederle Middle School in Southfield. Back in 1963 Thompson organized a candy and clothing collec-

tion drive that started on Halloween and ran until the Thanksgiving break. The drive is in its 15th consecutive year and from the looks of the donations already in, it'll be the biggest drive ever.

Students at Lederle, Bruce and Adler schools bring in part of the candy they collect on Halloween night.

FROM THE LOOKS of this year's loot, students aren't just donating the candy they don't like. Ten-cent Kit-Kats were in great abundance along with large bars of Butterfingers and innumerable Smarties.

Other students are bringing in clothes and shoes in good condition, though out of style or the wrong size.

Thompson says he gets donations from families whose children haven't attended Lederle in 10 years or more

but call every year to see if the collection for Kentucky is still going on.

Thompson and a friend, Harold Mowat of Rochester, will lead up Mowat's pickup Thanksgiving weekend and drive down to Manchester, Ky. They'll deliver the goods to Manchester Fire Chief Joe Jones' home, like they've been doing for 15 years. Joe and Verda Jones will undoubtedly insist that they stay for supper.

Verda Jones, who answers the phone for the volunteer fire department, explained that she and her husband make up boxes for poor families or families burned out in a fire. Thompson said it works out better if Jones does the distributing, because the people of Manchester are proud and would resent taking charity from an "outsider."

Ms. Jones says the economic pic-

ture is a little brighter in Manchester since the television special about the unemployed coal miners.

"THE TOWN'S building up a lot since then," she said. "There's a few shopping centers in town and a couple new coal companies. But some people are still having real trouble."

"Of course, there are others who try to get more than their fair share of anything like this," she said. "So we learn from the preachers and the teachers in school who's really in need. We make up packages with clothes to fit particular families. Otherwise, some people would take stuff they don't need if we let them get it themselves."

Some of the people who are most in need are often the hardest to get to

accept the gift package, Mrs. Jones said.

"There was one woman a couple years back whose house got burned down," she said. "Honey, get your bag and fill it real full." She said, "I feel so bad, can I pay you something for this? I told her she could put \$2 in the fund for the new fire truck."

Thompson is careful not to be considered a Christmas do-gooder in Manchester who forgets the area the rest of the year.

LAST SUMMER he and his wife, Marion, volunteered to help out at a summer school organized by Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) in nearby Oneida, Ky. His wife, Marion, taught reading to students at the Oneida Baptist Institute while he fixed

toilets, mowed grass and did maintenance work.

Thompson said he's seen graphic examples of Southfield's donations at work.

"A good example is at the end of the school year, they let me go through the locker room and keep the stuff the kids left behind. One year I found 27 pairs of used tennis shoes. My wife put them in an old ringer washer we have at home. Well, they had a Little League team in Manchester and they found feet to fit all but one pair of those tennis shoes. The wife of the fire chief couldn't find anybody who wore a size 12."

Persons who wish to donate clothes toys or candy to the Kentucky collection can contact Thompson at Lederle Elementary (354-8481) before Thanksgiving.

Workshop helps families resolve own conflicts

By JACKIE KLEIN

"Problem children" don't always come from broken homes. But about 80 per cent of young adults in Southfield-Lathrup Youth Services counseling program come from "problem families."

This conclusion by Jerry Jaster, youth services coordinator for Southfield Human Resources Department, was the impetus a year ago for a series of workshops on parenting.

The eight-week, 90 minute sessions called "Families in Growth" are sponsored by Human Resources and led by LaVere Burdette, a psychotherapist and certified marriage counselor practicing in Southfield. The cost for each session is \$15 per person or a fee participants can afford.

The Saturday morning workshops are in the Human Resource Building, 2800 Berg. For more information or registration, call 354-4689.

"Human Resources is stressing prevention services to help avoid devastating problems," Jaster said. "We learn from the kids that their parents want help. The workshops focus on family communication."

Ms. Burdette, who founded and directs the "Families in Growth" program, starts workshop group discussions with an overview of stages of development from infancy to adulthood.

"WE TALK about the ways people grow and participants discuss their own experiences," she said. "Through role playing and other group dynamics, parents learn to communicate and understand their own needs. They discover their problems aren't unique and other group members are supportive, not critical or degrading."

In one parent families, Ms. Burdette said, a mother may have custody of the children but knows the father has a role to play in their lives. In families where parents are separated by death or distance, different problems are involved.

"Separated parents believe they must shoulder the entire burden of raising the children and teaching them morals and values," she said. "But society, the community and the school system are involved in guiding those children."

"Parents who stay together because of the kids are only causing guilt,

anger and resentment among all family members. The couple blames their frustrations on the children and everybody suffers."

Ms. Burdette claims many parents fail to recognize the influences which affect their children and help form their attitudes. These include television, movies, department stores which dictate what young persons will wear and school teachers and peers. But, Ms. Burdette maintains basic values are established by families when children are very young.

"PARENTS CAN learn from their kids if they'd stop preaching long enough to listen," Ms. Burdette contended. "Listening opens the door for a child to learn from his parents. Communication can be non-verbal."

"Family members have personal needs. There's so much 'me and dad' because parents feel guilty if they're not including the kids in everything. Children should understand if you want to watch your favorite television program. You want to be alone sometimes, but you need support and love from your children. There's nothing wrong with telling your kids you need a hug from them once in awhile."

The workshop group defines elements of a family to see what's been left out. Ms. Burdette said, "Problems and happy moments are all important. So is grandma, the next door neighbor who makes cookies and something the teacher said. Even a smile can be remembered for many years."

Marriage, Ms. Burdette, is a separate unit in the family. Some parents lose their own identities, values and rights and exclude others because they're so involved with the kids. Ms. Burdette advocates couples should take vacations alone and learn to talk to each other in preparation for the children growing up and leaving home.

HUMAN RESOURCES also sponsors special "Families in Growth" events which are free and open to the public in the lower level of Southfield Parks and Recreation Building.

A recent film presentation, "You are What You Were Then," was seen and discussed by children and adults. Ms. Burdette is planning an 8 p.m. Dec. 6 lecture and discussion on holiday depression as well as other special programs throughout the year.

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