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151 Who Care About Young Probationers



LECTURING TO the 151 volunteers is Dr. Charles J. Ruckhaber, chairman of psychological services of Livonia public schools.

"Young people will see that someone cares, someone who isn't getting paid for it." That, according to William O. Stiles of Redford, director of probation of the 17th District Court, is the main value of the training program for volunteer probation officers (VPO) now in progress at Madonna College.

Begun in September, the program is training "paraprofessional" volunteer probation officers. They will supplement paid, professional officers in rehabilitating youthful offenders in the northwest Wayne and southwest Oakland Counties.

The program is directed by Sister M. Andretta, Madonna dean of students, and co-directed by Frederick Stefanski, new academic dean at Schoolcraft College. Both colleges are cooperatively sponsoring the program.

"THIS PROGRAM WILL provide an outlet for the problems of youth unable to get professional counseling," says Mr. and Mrs. Lance Johnson from Westland, one of several couples in training.

"The young people will talk more to us than to the police because they will be able to relate personally to us."

A total of 151 volunteers—young and old, businessmen and housewives—are in training. They are offering their services in an effort to correct the existing crime problem.

According to recent FBI reports, a majority of crimes of violence is committed by persons who first appeared for misdemean-

ors in lower courts. These persons are usually between the ages of 17 and 25.

In the Livonia area, of 1,300 youths arrested in 1969, only 240 were referred for juvenile court services. The remaining 1,060 were not offered any benefit of guidance by the community. This is where the VPO program will step in to help correct the youths' anti-social behavior.

"I first heard about the VPO from a friend, and we both like working with people," said Mrs. Roseline Fodera, resident of Garden City and Canteen cashier at the Ford Transmission Plant. Her friend, Mrs. Muriel Keech, resident of Livonia and waitress at Canteen Corp., said, "If I can do anything in some way to help them get back on the road—I will."

THE IDEA FOR the VPO was conceived at a Livonia Human Relations Commission meeting. Services of Madonna College were offered by Sister M. Danatha, CSSP, president of Madonna and member of the Commission.

Dr. Eric Bradner, president of Schoolcraft College, offered assistance of his institution through the services of Fred Stefanski, then director of community services and the evening college.

The program is federally funded under Title I of the U.S. Higher Education Act of 1965, with contributions by Madonna College, Schoolcraft College and the district courts of the area to be served.

THE PROGRAM consists of two phases: theory and practice.

The theoretical phase, which lasted from Sept. 22 to Nov. 3, consisted of a series of lectures by the instructors and guest speakers.

Comprising the instructional staff are James H. Nugent, probation and parole officer of the U.S. Department of Justice's federal bureau of prisons; Kenneth Kirkwood, probation director of Michigan's 16th District Court in Livonia; and Dr. Jerry Tobias, associate professor of education at the University of Detroit and director of the youth program in Bloomfield Township.

Among the guest speakers were Dr. William Wattenberg, Wayne State University; John Neville, Wayne County Juvenile Court; Judges James McCann and James Mies, 16th District Court; George Lilley, Wayne County Juvenile Court; Dr. Ralph Guy, U.S. attorney of the Detroit Federal Court; Jack Kirksey, 16th District Court; and Dr. Charles Ruckhaber, chairman of psychological services, Livonia Public Schools.

The lectures dealt with such topics as deviant behavior, sentencing, the role and function of the VPO, drug abuse, infractions and violations, and case studies.

The second phase extending from Nov. 10 to May will let the VPO observe an experienced probation officer in action. He will then be given, under supervision, his own probationer to counsel. There will be monthly proba-

tion clinics to discuss the progress and difficulties of trainees and special seminars to meet the needs of individual trainees.

"The volunteers will derive most benefit from this second phase," Nugent said. "This will give them an opportunity to experience the real problem of youth when dealing with them personally."

ASKED HIS feelings in getting a probationer to work with, Doyle Furr, a Livonia resident and illustrator for Ford Motor Co., said, "I am looking forward to it. By helping someone else with his problem, I won't be concentrating so much on my own."

"Most people in trouble need someone to take a personal interest in them," according to Milton Laible of Plymouth, an eighth grade science and math teacher. "The VPO isn't being paid for what he is doing. Since the volunteer really cares, the probationer will respond better."

In the final lecture on case studies, Dr. Ruckhaber, Livonia psychologist, advised VPOs not to waste time diagnosing the history of the probationers' difficulties. Rather, they should concentrate on what they can do to help youth live effectively now.

"They are people. We must find them a place, not behind bars but in society." This was the theme of the lecture by Dr. William Wattenberg of Wayne State University at one of the sessions. This is also the goal of the 151 citizens dedicating their time and effort to improve their communities.



JACK KIRKSEY of the District Court in Livonia shows a probation report to Milton Laible of Plymouth and Laura Anderson of Redford Township.



YOUNG AND OLD want to help youthful probationers. These volunteers are Linda Dixon of Livonia and Hugh Smith of Garden City.



REV. W. HOWARD Schoff of Redford and Doyle Furr of Livonia will be among the "para-professionals" aiding District Court probation officers.



LEFT: Leaders of the VPO program (from left) are Dr. Charles Ruckhaber, Livonia public schools; James Nugent, U.S. Justice Dept.; Kenneth Kirkwood, Livonia District Court; Sister M. Andretta, Madonna's dean of students and director of the VPO program; and Fred Stefanski, academic dean at Schoolcraft and co-director of the VPO program.



RIGHT: A narcotics kit is an important tool for these volunteers—Mrs. Angeline White of Westland, Dr. Stanley Rogalski of Livonia, Wesley Rogalski of Plymouth.