

# *Friends of Kentucky Libraries,* *Incorporated*

NEWSLETTER  
February 1968

## HOW TO COMBAT EMERGENCY IN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS -- 1,000,000 in 1967!

Members, Friends of Kentucky Libraries, Incorporated:

This organization is concerned over the following article written by Vice-President Humphrey, published in AMERICAN EDUCATION, September, 1967. (Excerpts only are quoted below.)

Mr. Humphrey speaks of the "agonizing reappraisals of our educational system...needed today," and the "annual dropout statistics which forecast a growing sub-culture of poverty and joblessness with all their attendant social ills." He suggests that all segments of every community engage in the task of keeping young people in schools - "business, labor, government, housewives, doctors, lawyers,... - all kinds of people." He says that business and labor can work... "to provide part-time jobs for young people who need them to stay in school." He adds that "We should implant a career preparation consciousness in our schools. This would enlarge the number of options and alternatives open to individual pupils - both in terms of job opportunities and higher education." He ends his article with the statement: "In every community across the nation, there are people who are willing and able to help the schools - and the kind of help they can provide puts no dent in the tax base."

The question is - What can members of Friends of Kentucky Libraries, Incorporated, do, through public libraries, to help disadvantaged children?

Your directors have considered the problem, studied it, and talked with educational leaders about their experiences, trying to arrive at some practical suggestions. How, using only volunteer workers and with the least possible expense - two limitations which must be accepted - can we be of the greatest help to these young people?

First of all, each community has within it a number of people who are both qualified to assist and willing to do so if they are asked. Some may need instruction on how to teach. Retired teachers could be offered work to teach the volunteers, part-time, on very small salaries, to be provided by private funds, if they could be found. (Retired teachers are not allowed, by law to receive salaries from state funds.) Other volunteers, already qualified, need no further instruction.

A plan using only volunteers has already been carried out successfully in two junior high schools in Louisville under the name of "Team, Inc." - an organization made up of the kind of people listed above. One of the secrets of its success, we were told, is the fact that it is well-organized.

If Friends of Kentucky Libraries, Incorporated, and some other groups in the counties could collect a little money for salaries of those people who could teach the volunteer teachers, and if they could locate persons to direct the project, the plan could really benefit our state in this emergency. If, however, money is not available, valuable volunteer work could still be done.

We need more local groups of our association. We need a group in each county where we now have members but no central organization. The appeal of this project may inspire the formation of such groups - to save the children in their own communities - or, at least, to give them help and encouragement.

We would be glad for our members to be thinking of people or groups (clubs) in each county who would be good leaders for the work.

Some churches already have counseling and tutoring programs. These are normally carried out by church members. Facilities - Sunday School rooms, etc., are provided by the churches. The libraries could be of assistance in this program if church groups were offered the use of additional facilities at the nearby libraries - books, films, etc.

If you would like further material about this program, please let us know and we shall be glad to send it to you as it is gathered. We would also like to know what new work is begun, by various members and groups.

Enclosed is a list of possible volunteer projects. Please study them and select something for your group or yourself that seems to you feasible and exciting.

Issued by Executive Committee, Friends of Kentucky Libraries,  
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Possible Projects - to help School Dropouts (Actual or Potential)

Projects for relatively untrained volunteers: (In bookmobile or library)

1. Assisting the usually overworked library-drivers on bookmobiles. The offer of one day's work, weekly, for instance, would be welcome. These volunteers could assist students select books on the right age level. When necessary, booklists could be secured from teachers.
2. Members of our organization could take one child or a group of children to the library for a film program, story hour, etc., and encourage the use of library materials. (Any increase of interest in reading or learning may stimulate a child to stay in school. No coaching would be involved.)
3. Any member who belongs to some community service organization or church group that might become interested in the project is urged to bring it to the attention of that organization as soon as possible - remembering that the matter is urgent. Since some work has already been begun, the first step would be to find out what is now being done in your community. If some group is already at work, the members of it would no doubt be pleased to have volunteers representing the local library. When making the survey of other organizations, the member could offer any working group the use of library facilities to make the plan more exciting to the children - that is, films, music, etc. (The local librarian should be consulted before any offer is made, of course.)

Projects for those with some training in working with children: (In the library)

1. A group of volunteers or one volunteer could get from the school office (secondary or elementary school) a list of potential dropouts and could arrange to meet one or several young people at the library and coach them in whatever subjects the school people indicate. The volunteer can supplement the work of the schools, enriching it by the use of books, music, films, in the library. Teaching children to use the dictionary is one simple but valuable project which has been suggested by a successful volunteer.
2. Members who have a special talent could teach classes at the library in useful arts such as knitting, nature study, or simple handcrafts; to make youngsters feel wanted.

Project of business men

1. Men's groups could make a fine contribution by offering their services to talk, in the local library, to young people about the business world and give them advice about the necessity of reading and education.

Project for everyone

1. Formation of more local groups of Friends of Kentucky Libraries, Incorporated, and encouragement of more people to work for libraries and for this whole project with potential and actual dropouts.