

Volunteers:

Each One—Teach One

Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a series of articles on the work of the Community Volunteer Service in northern Santa Cruz County.

By JEAN BAKER
Sentinel Staff Writer

Those of us who read take the skill for granted, scarcely remembering how or when we really learned.

But about half the people in the world cannot read or write.

In Santa Cruz County alone, there are 2600 adults over 25 who do not have more than a primary education, which means that while they may be able to read, write or use numbers, they are not skillful enough at it to meet the demands of the mass communications of this space age. They are known as functional illiterates.

These people cannot read a newspaper, book or billboard, fill out an application or write a letter, pass a driver's test, or read road signs. They find it impossible to meet the standards of entry level jobs.

How has this happened? For one thing, many people in this county are foreign-born, or they have been involved in migrant work, moving from place to place with their parents so frequently that they did not have an opportunity to stay in school long enough to learn to read. For other reasons, too, education has been cut short.

Many of these people want to learn to read but are shy or hesitant to admit that they cannot. A gardener, for instance, has always been given verbal instructions by his employer. One day, when she was to be gone, she left her instructions in writing and he was unable to work because he didn't know what to do.

Yet, he was afraid to admit he didn't know how to read for fear of losing the job.

In this series of articles, we have been discussing the functions of the Community Volunteer Service in northern Santa Cruz County. This same group has responded to the need to teach people to read by training volunteers to do this.

Mrs. Kathryn Merriam has been largely responsible for starting this program here. In fact, it was she who was concerned enough to arrange for a training workshop in this part of the county and brought Robert Likins of the Adult Literacy Center in Berkeley here to conduct it.

Today there are 58 volunteers in the "Each One, Teach One" reading program.

This system is the one that Dr. Frank Laubach, an American missionary teacher, introduced in the Philippine Islands while he was there from 1915-36. It has been adopted by many governments. In this program, simply stated, symbols represent phonetic sounds.

Mrs. Anne Strickland is the teacher-trainer in Santa Cruz County, and a steering committee, composed of Mrs. Merriam, Mrs. Robert Barnhart and Mrs. Vernon Garfield, oversees the program, sets up council meetings and plans for further workshops and training sessions.

Such organizations as the YWCA, Garfield Park Christian Church, First Congregational Church and the EOC lend their support to the program.

Where do teachers get the names of possible students?

Mrs. Merriam has gone to the banks, the State Department

of Employment, to the State Department of Motor Vehicles, to the Welfare Department, the schools, optometrists, doctors, the library, and numerous other places to inform people of the services these volunteers will perform.

At the moment, 20 teachers are working with 28 students. Some work individually, others in groups of three to five; however, larger groups are discouraged.

Training for the teachers is comprehensive. Preferably the teaching is on a one-to-one or one-to-few basis. Lessons are limited to an hour

or less and students are expected to buy their own literacy materials, available from Adult Literacy Centers at nominal costs.

Because the "new reader" (NR) does not have to come to his literacy teacher, the success of his learning greatly depends upon the teacher's skill.

The materials used must catch and hold the attention of an adult. It is recommended, therefore, that materials for them should be different from those for children. Literacy teachers are urged, also, to be cautious about making formal homework assignments.

According to Likins, who has adapted Laubach's theories, one of the most successful sets of guidelines in language learning is:

- hearing before speaking
- speaking before reading
- reading before writing

The greatest difficulty, of course, is teaching persons to read a language they cannot speak. For them to read the words they speak, a basic adult controlled vocabulary is recommended. Oral reading, rather than silent, is stressed at the beginning.

In addition to reading, the volunteers also teach their students to spell and to write. In several cases, too, English is taught as a second language.

Teachers are available and willing, and there is no charge for the service. If anyone in your family has expressed a desire to learn to read, refer him to the CVS, which may be reached by calling 426-0370.

Today's new reader may well be tomorrow's volunteer—as he learns he can teach, and the system continues.

(Next Sunday: The teachers and their students.)



Mrs. Kathryn Merriam, past president of the American Association of University Women, prominent civic worker has been the instigator of the literacy program in northern Santa Cruz County. She is now actively involved in the Community Service Volunteer program.

leask's big annual summer