

# Kids Get a Chance Through Neighborhood Youth Corps

By PAULA CUNNINGHAM

Kids who have dropped out of school, have made a general mess of their young lives, and want to "start over" often are referred to the Santa Cruz County Neighborhood Youth Corps at 944 Front Street.

They come to NYC Director Joyce Wallace, unload their problems and ask her for "a chance."

"I listen to them. I can usually tell which are the sincere ones and those who will never come back to the office after filling out an application. I make them believe their ideas are important; that somebody does care what happens to them. So many of them have been put down so much they think there's no hope but still they are willing to try to 'make it' in the adult world if we give them a chance in our program," she says.

This June marks NYC's fourth year in Santa Cruz County. A part of the federal anti-poverty plan, NYC is an organization set up on the local level to help young adults from poverty-stricken families stay in school and teach them a trade or develop a skill that will enable them to lead a productive adult life.

The Santa Cruz Neighborhood Youth Corps started out in 1965 under founder-director Colonel Kelly Bryan as a 12-week, \$63,000-budget, city-sponsored summer program. It involved 250 youths, ages 16-22, and proved so successful that it expanded into a year-around program. Since then, approximately 3000 young people have either worked in or been exposed to NYC. The corps went county-wide in September 1966 due to need, making it county-sponsored, and the 1968-69 budget is the highest ever at \$302,670.

The corps operates on a yearly contract basis with the Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., according to Mrs. Wallace. The federal government provides 90 per cent of the financial aid, the local government picks up the remaining 10 per cent.

ills, such as the telephone bill, with appropriations from the general fund. Each year NYC renews its contract with the Department of Labor.

"It is very difficult to develop a contract with the money which is allocated to the program by the Department of Labor," she says. "The government demands certain standards—a quality program with inadequate funds."

Mrs. Wallace joined NYC's original staff in 1965 as assistant director. In 1967 when Col. Bryan retired, the supervisors asked if she's accept the position.

"It was very flattering. I was the only woman director

in our region (California, Alaska, Hawaii) when I first took over."

Working with young people is not new to her. Prior to NYC she was employed by the Salinas High School District.

The corps deals with two groups: Kids-in-school and out-of-schoolers.

Low-income family poverty is the common bond. In-schoolers are kids struggling to stay in school but who cannot afford to buy school clothes, books, or lunches. Out-of-schoolers are kids who dropped school because they had to help support a wife and child, their own family, illegitimate pregnancy, drug addiction and numerous oth-

er reasons. The corps helps them stand on their own two feet and earn a little money by placing them in job training programs and giving them a small wage for their efforts.

"People don't come to us without a problem. Believe me, they have problems," the director emphasizes. "They have to come from a low income, practically destitute homes, to qualify for the program. They have to make up their minds to come in and talk to us. They must want to help themselves. We'll give 90 per cent if they'll give just 10 per cent."

Over the past three years 450 youths have been involved in the out-of-school program and 1600 in the in-school. Mrs. Wallace notes that the federal government has put a definite limit on the amount allotted to both the in-school and out-of-school cases. An in-schooler is allowed to work a 10-hour week and earn up to \$640. The out-of-schooler, because he is more dependent on money for survival, may work up to 32 hours weekly and earn \$2880 in NYC a year.

Job training is a major part of the NYC program. NYC enrollees receive skill training in non-profit organizations such as nurse's aides in hospitals, clerk-typists in city, county, and state government offices, parks and recreation maintenance work, mechanical training in the City Corporation Yard.

NYC trainees have worked 416,900 man-hours over the past three years up to March 1969 for payroll earnings of \$541,970.

However, job training is not the ultimate goal of the Santa Cruz Neighborhood Youth Corps.

"School before work is mandatory," declares Mrs. Wallace. "Out-of-schoolers are the most challenging. We will do everything, even stand on our heads to keep a kid in school. Before they can report to work they must attend school. Education is our main concern, though job training is equally vital



One of Director Joyce Wallace's NYC graduate 'winners,' Earl Neve, comes back for visit. Below, Barry Love, is current NYC enrollee working at City Corporation Yard.



Youth Corps graduate Sharon Holloway now is secretary in the district attorney's office.



Center for Boys. He worked nine months in NYC under Supervisor Shay Gilmore. He joined the Army last March and now is serving his country in Vietnam and will get an honorable discharge next spring.

● Sharon Holloway. Came to NYC as an 18-year-old divorcee with one child to support, jobless, and no high school diploma. Was determined to keep her daughter, Lisa. Was placed in public guardian's office by NYC. Now is on county's payroll as stenographer beginner and will be getting diploma this June.

● Earl Neve. A high-school drop-out, he had used psychedelic drugs. His probation officer referred him to NYC after Earl had been set "straight" by the Drug Abuse Preventive Center. NYC assigned him to City Buildings Department where he worked under direct supervision of Gunner Haskell. He couldn't use hands productively at first because of nerves, and smoked three packs of cigarettes a day. Mr. Haskell showed a sincere interest in him, and got him to cut down on smoking. No visible improvements in three months until Haskell's unexpected death.

A one-time hippie-type, Earl dressed up in a suit and went to Mr. Haskell's funeral. He started to show first definite signs of improvement and was reassigned to the city parks and recreation maintenance work. Gardening work outside in fresh air helped him.

from parks maintenance to Soquel Elementary School District transportation and took care of minor repairs and mechanical maintenance. He improved to the point that he obtained a job with a service station and left the corps this year at the end of January.

"Oh, we cried, the both of us, when he left NYC," remembers Mrs. Wallace. "He was a changed person."

"When he finished the corps he had regained self-confidence and self-respect. He told me when he left, 'Don't worry about me, Mrs. Wallace. I have it in my mind that I can make it. I want to leave your program now so I can make room for someone else who really needs you like I did.'"

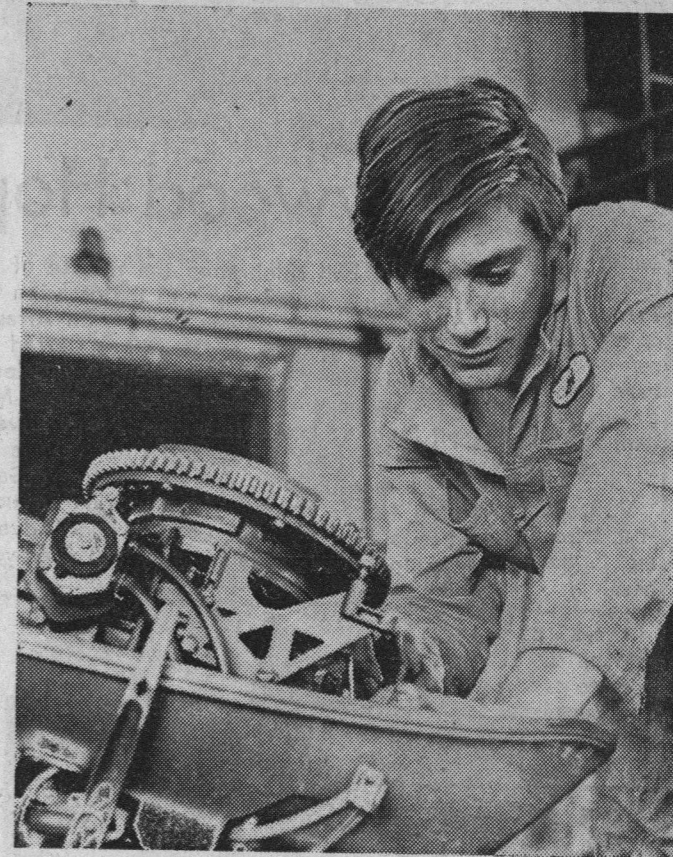
● Then there's Barbara Hunt. A school drop-out at 15, mother of two at 17, a non-supporting husband, unskilled with no parental guidance. She had enough desire and determination, however, to start a new life for herself and her children and came to NYC for help.

She didn't make it the first time, but she came back in June 1966 and now is self-supporting and holds a clerical-typist position at UCSC.

"If Barbara could do it, anybody can," says Director Joyce Wallace.

It's kids like Barbara that make Mrs. Wallace, assistant director-counselor Elmer Brudvig and secretary-counselors Norma Byrd and Vicki Romandia believe in Neighborhood Youth Corps.

(Next week: What's it like...



Sunday, Mar. 30, 1969

Santa Cruz Sentinel -29

LEONARD J. LIEST, M.D.

announces the opening of his office for the practice of Psychiatry

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government's share is \$254,100 and the county's tab is \$48,570.

The county's sponsorship does not mean extra taxation. Director Wallace explains that the 10 per cent support is largely given in the form of office supplies, building space, office maintenance. The county also covers NYC's



of our program. "Thirty-two out-of-schoolers have received their high school diplomas, after joining NYC. You can't imagine what an accomplishment you feel when you see a drop-out get his diploma. That just makes everything worth it."

She smiles. "So we don't have 100 per cent winners in NYC—but we have enough kids who are, to make the corps worthwhile."

Here are three winners:

- Cal Richards. Came to NYC, friendless, a high school drop-out, fresh out of Sacramento's California Youth Authority Correction

Diane Talbert, NYC enrollee, attends high school at night and during day works in the public guardian's office.



Nanette Nielsen, NYC enrollee is developing stenographic skills in the County Clerk's office.

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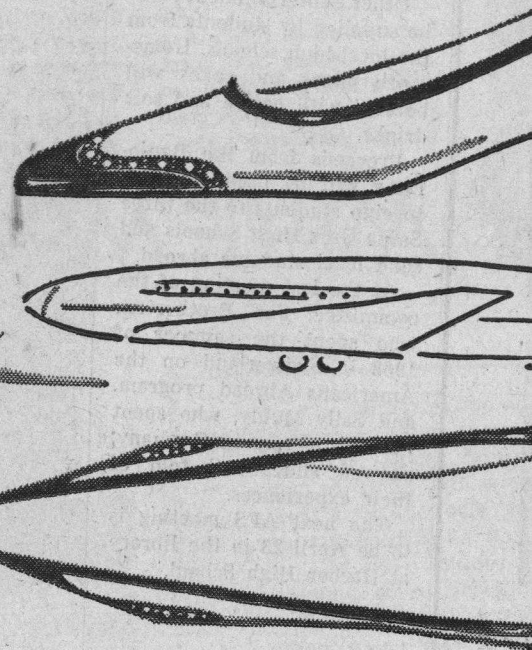
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