

as an additional activity for the girls, baton twirling was recently introduced in our school recreation program. First, the fundamental twirls and then the fascinating leg passes and high toss-ups were taught. Marching was presented along with baton twirling. At the end of the summer a festival was given at the Albuquerque public school stadium and the program was opened with an exhibition of baton twirling.

*Summer Round-Up:* The summer program was high-lighted by the sports night and other events, with several thousand children participating. This round-up was started with athletic contests such as pegging around bases, running around bases, relays and ball throws for accuracy and distance. These events were followed by a program of

rhythms and dance using Southwest cultures as its theme.

Events listed above were some of the popular activities of the past summer season.

This summer program was made possible through leadership of the superintendent of schools and the board of education. Various service clubs and social agencies contribute yearly to the camping program. Other groups lend personnel and facilities.

With the rapid growth of Albuquerque, with so many cultures in New Mexico, with changes in social and economic conditions, the ever-increasing need for a recreation program is a challenge which the schools have accepted in order to be of greater service to the people of Albuquerque and of Bernalillo County.

---

## *Adult Education Services Expand*

PAUL H. DURRIE

**Adventures into new fields of educational service to adults are described by Paul H. Durrie, Director of Adult Education, Public Schools, Des Moines, Iowa.**

ADULT education fifty years ago usually was identified with teaching English to immigrants newly arrived in America and with preparing them to take citizenship examinations. Today it encompasses a wide range of activities sponsored by libraries, public schools, university extension departments, newspapers, radio, television, public and private agencies, clubs, business and industry. It includes the entire pattern of educational activities conducted by and for adults. The transition has not

been an abrupt one, but rather a gradual expansion of the program to meet new needs, with constant changing of emphasis and adoption of new techniques and new media better to serve adults.

### STUDY OF PARENTS' PROBLEMS

In Des Moines for many years the department of adult education conducted family life conferences in cooperation with the local parent-teacher council. Specialists in this field were

brought in and new techniques were used. But the people who attended these conferences were usually the conscientious parents who were already doing a good job.

Last spring an all-out effort was made to reach a much larger number of parents and to make positive and constructive changes in their attitudes and practices. Planning committee members asked themselves first, "What are problems of greatest concern to parents?" They found they had some rather definite ideas on the subject. They next asked that each of the fifty-six local PTA units hold a meeting to discuss the subject and to turn in a hypothetical case study to illustrate the problem that was found to be of greatest concern to them. These problems were analyzed and their contents were synthesized into two case studies—one dealing with the question of allowances and the other with the social activities of children.

All planning committee members agreed these were important problems. The question they faced was how to bring these problems to the attention of all parents in the community, and how to get all parents to think about these questions and to discuss them as husband and wife and as entire families.

The committee decided to send into each home a folder containing the two stories. The folder was captioned *Home-work for Parents*, and many a child told his parents, "Here is some home-work for you to do!" The first page carried the questions, "What's the Idea?—What's *Your* Idea?" and explained why the help of parents was requested. On the day the folders were to go home

the newspaper carried a story explaining what was being attempted and broadcasting stations announced the project at various times during the day.

Results were gratifying. Of the 19,000 homes with children, 13,000 returned completed questionnaires. Returns were analyzed and the newspaper carried feature stories on the attitudes of parents toward these problems. PTA units discussed the returns to decide how accurately they reflected opinions of parents in their neighborhoods. Older children discussed the returns in their classes; while in each of the ten junior and senior high schools, panel discussions were conducted at which three parents and three children compared their ideas on these subjects.

Climax of this fact-finding activity was a public forum at which a specialist in family life education, Professor Ernest G. Osborne of Columbia University, discussed methods by which families may work cooperatively toward solution of their problems.

#### FILMS FOR DISCUSSION

Last year 903 discussions of current problems were held in Des Moines as part of the regular programs of community groups. Attended by a total of 45,509 persons, these discussions were usually started with the showing of a 16-mm film dealing with a problem of concern to the group.

Believing that thorough discussion of public affairs is essential to a sound democracy, the department of adult education has for eighteen years conducted a program of free public forums to encourage such discussion. One lesson learned in these years is that to be most productive, discussions should be

in small groups, composed preferably of people who know one another. In the early years of the forums, when money was available from the Carnegie Foundation, an extensive program of neighborhood forums was considered the most valuable part of the program. Since this was also the most expensive part of the program, it subsequently had to be dropped.

To recapture the values of neighborhood forums the films-for-discussion service was created. A library that has since grown to include a hundred films that will lead into discussion of important issues was secured after many previews by committees of the adult education council. Projectors were then purchased, and a person with training in group discussion was added to the staff. Projectionists were recruited, as were also a group of persons willing and able to serve as discussion leaders. These people gave of their time as a community service.

The best people are often the busiest. The staff found that few of these volunteers could attend the training course that was offered. The practice was adopted, however, of previewing films with those who were to go out with them and of discussing at this time ways in which the forthcoming meeting might most effectively be conducted. The person in charge of the films-for-discussion service attends as many meetings as possible. He observes how the discussion goes and reviews it with the leader in the hope that next time he can be helped to function more effectively.

This new service was publicized as "a packaged program—select some feature to meet your needs and interests."

As stated, local program planners welcomed this new resource and sent in many requests. Since inauguration of the service, the staff's main concern has been that of how to increase the quality of the work. It has encouraged program committees to come in and preview films and has counseled with them as to how their programs can be made more satisfying. The staff has tried to make mechanical details as inconspicuous as possible; to set up and test equipment well in advance; to furnish extension cords, reels of the proper size and spare lamps with every projector; to see that discussion leaders are well prepared; and to make reporting and the securing of equipment and films as easy and convenient as possible.

#### **Informality Is Stressed**

The best adult education program is informal. A friendly atmosphere which puts people at their ease and facilitates their making new friends is most desirable. The Des Moines program is working hard to create such a "climate."

The department at all times encourages instructional staff members to be friendly and understanding with one another. Each teacher receives a small handbook with the letter that confirms the arrangements made for securing his services. This chatty booklet expresses the nature of the department's program and gives its tone. Large teachers' meetings for all persons taking part in the program have been currently abandoned in favor of smaller meetings attended by those who work more closely together. These meetings often take the form of pot-luck suppers, teas and gatherings in homes. Teachers need to

know and to like one another, to help promote one another's activities and to do what each can to make the other person's program more successful. As a result the interior decorating teacher recruits people for the classes in flower arrangement, slip-covers and drapes and in furniture repair; the class called the "Ballad Singers" has learned songs that its members can sing and play on autoharps for the class in folk-dancing; and people in the upholstering classes feel welcome in the woodshops to do any repair work necessary.

A "coffee hour" has been established in most of the adult education centers to further the informal, friendly atmosphere. During class intermissions all participants may go to the cafeteria where coffee, milk, soft drinks and

cookies are available. Here people in one class meet those in other classes talk over what they are doing and discuss possible future activities. Occasionally a group puts on a demonstration during "coffee hour." Afterwards classes reassemble and continue their programs. Participants feel there is real advantage in having this intermission for relaxation and refreshment.

On the last night of each term, classes hold an open house. They continue much as usual but members invite family and friends to visit. Most groups prepare exhibits, and some sponsor an entertaining program during the coffee hour. The open house pays dividends in increased commitments and does much to recruit enrollment for the succeeding term.



*Courtesy, Independent School Dist., Des Moines*  
*Den Mothers learn arts and crafts for use in Boy Scout programs*

## TOPIC OF THE MONTH

This year the public forum programs are featuring a monthly forum on "The Topic of the Month." Topics treated are those selected as important by a great many people representing many community groups. Well-known speakers appear at these forums but only as the climax to a month's study of the problem by many community groups.

Groups using the Topic of the Month were promised newspaper publicity at the first of each month, a kit of materials giving program help, various kinds of visual aids, assistance in securing leaders, and a city-wide forum related to the topic. The kits of materials included:

- A statement which outlines the problem, gives background information and tells steps being taken toward its solution.
- An annotated reading list available in sufficient quantities for the program committee.
- A list of visual aids locally available at no cost or at a minimum cost to the user.
- Discussion guides which analyze the problem and show how it can be discussed effectively.
- Several suggested program patterns which show in detail some possible ways of conducting the program.
- Copies of pamphlets, magazine articles and other material which will enable members of program committees and panels to gain some degree of mastery of the subject.

### Decentralization Pays Off

One maxim of adult education is that it should be available at times and

places most convenient to the public. This often multiplies administrative problems but greatly increases the effectiveness of a program. The topic-of-the-month program and the films-for-discussion service are both examples of the department's effort to put this policy into effect in the field of education in public affairs.

In Des Moines, instructional programs also are sent out to all parts of the city to those who request the service. Nearly half of today's classes are held in the five adult centers (daytime high schools); while the other half are conducted in churches, community centers, YMCA's and YWCA's, grade-school community rooms, factories, department stores, banks, insurance companies, homes and at other locations scattered widely over the city. Usually the class is set up at the request of some group; for example, a PTA that wants a class in child development, a woman's club that wants an arts and crafts class, an industry that wants a foreman-training program, a union that wants training to meet new developments in its trade; a veterans' group that wants a square-dancing class. Whenever any group consisting of fifteen or more persons requests instruction it is given this service provided adequate instructional facilities can be secured and provided a competent teacher can be found.

### EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION

Since a television station has been established at Ames, the department of adult education has been wondering how it might go about serving the people of the area through this effective new medium.

Currently a major concern is to help people develop an appreciation of our way of life. Department members saw the need for a program that would cause people to re-examine their beliefs and in so doing bring to the foreground of their consciousness the merits of our democratic way of life. A series of televised film discussions was decided upon.

A committee worked several months on plans for the series. Television station WOI is an educational station, definitely committed to experimentation. Glen Burch, executive secretary of the Film Council of America, which is cooperating with WOI-TV and the department, was able to contact those from whom it is necessary to secure permission for televising films. The department of adult education succeeded in finding people in the area who would serve well as panel members. Many persons were brought into the planning and eventually a promising pattern was evolved.

"What Do *You* Think?" is a half-hour program scheduled for Monday evenings. A short introductory sequence shows several persons gathered around a television set in a living room. The set is turned on and the group views a film seven or eight minutes long, stressing a particular belief to which we pay lip-service. After the showing, the group being televised discusses some aspects of the problem of how we can live up to our beliefs. Trial

discussions have been found lively and interesting. They end with the statement, "You have heard *our* ideas, now what do *you* think?" Listening groups are encouraged to give by telephone their reactions to specific problems or to issues which are being posed. These calls are received and discussed during the program.

At the time the program was launched, all retailers of television sets were requested to furnish the names of all television set owners in the area. To these owners of sets, letters were sent telling of the new program and inviting them to bring their neighbors in to view this program and to discuss the issues. In addition, members of the executive committee of the Des Moines adult education council each agreed to see to it that at least one listening group would telephone in its reactions and report on the effectiveness of the program.

Good adult education need not be dry and pedantic. It has to meet people on their own level, be related to their current interests and meet their pressing needs. It starts with these assumptions and proceeds to broaden the horizons of the people. Adult education must be flexible and dynamic. It must constantly experiment with new techniques and new mediums. Perhaps this is one reason why adult education is the most rapidly expanding field of education today.

Copyright © 1951 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.