Many children and adults are today living in “beehive” housing developments. Gertrude H. Fitzwater, of Silver Spring, Maryland, discusses the special problems and opportunities which face persons residing in these apartment communities.

IT'S 8:45 A.M. and the last of the four Pinehurst school busses has just stopped across the street. Six-year-old Jeannie from the apartment above us is climbing aboard. With her usual hurried goodbye she just rushed out the door and raced for her last chance.

It's mid-June and the last week of school. No more busses to catch until September—and then only until February. By that time Pinehurst will have its own elementary school.

Two years ago there were no boys and girls in Pinehurst. For where Pinehurst now stands there were only woods—woods that were destroyed in order to construct living quarters for housing a rapidly growing population spilling beyond the borders of a large metropolitan center. Today that spot is a community of 850 two- and three-bedroom family units located in approximately eighty buildings. Family units, yes, and young children in abundance, but no stores, no churches, no community center, no school—and none within walking distance.

Although Pinehurst lacks organized community activities and institutions, there is abundant evidence of good and prosperous family living. An army of domestic help invades the development every morning and departs every evening. Trucks representing a variety of domestic services swarm into the development daily. Shiny new automobiles line the streets. Television sets are common and attractive well-furnished apartments are the rule.

Jeannie Likes Pinehurst

Jeannie likes living in Pinehurst. She, like other Pinehurst children, has many friends and playmates. For families at Pinehurst number two and three and four children. Jeannie can't step outdoors without finding her choice of one or several playmates. She does enjoy her playtime with them—so much so that often she doesn't want to leave them, even for a picnic or a trip to town. That's true in spite of the quarreling that so often goes on—here and in other parts of the development. After all, there are bound to be conflicts when so many children are constantly together in a situation that limits their play activities.

Children of different ages need to learn how to play together. Three-year-old Patty, who six months ago was Jeannie's only playmate, is gradually learning to give and take. The six-and seven-year-olds, in their way, are helping Patty to “belong.”

They're helping Larry, too. Larry is new to the development and, consequently, is finding his place in a new
play group. It hasn’t always been easy. Any new youngster has to prove himself and at times it has been convenient to blame Larry for a quarrel or a mishap. However, a new playmate is usually welcome and Larry is no exception.

Jeannie and her mother hope that Larry and the other new neighbors will stay for at least a year—long enough for Jeannie to have the same friends for more than a few months at a time. But chances aren’t too good. Moving vans—empty or loaded—are daily callers at Pinehurst and friendships are seldom permanent.

Playing together also means learning to share possessions—wagons, bicycles, dolls, doll buggies. It’s not always easy to live so close together and to do without toys like those other youngsters have. One bicycle and three six-year-olds presents its complications, particularly when doors are only a stone’s throw apart and the sidewalk and front yard belong to all. Quarreling is inevitable, but sharing also gets a good workout.

Responsibility and care of belongings are learned early. In a yard that belongs to everyone playthings go indoors when not in use. Jeannie and her friends must depend on adults to bring the bicycles and wagons down the stairs and outdoors.

Jeannie’s flower bed is flourishing this year. Last year the nasturtiums which she proudly planted did get their heads up above the ground only to have the power mower come along and quickly snip them off. But this year the zinnias are faring better. The bed is marked off with stones and stakes and string and the mower has passed it by. Neither are there dogs to dig up the flowers. Pets—dogs, cats, rabbits, a pony—don’t exist for Pinehurst youngsters. For pets and beehive apartments just don’t go together.

Carriages and Strollers

Larry’s six-month-old sister Cynthia is one of Pinehurst’s baby-carriage brigade. Here carriages and strollers abound. On fair days the sidewalks literally swarm with young children out for an airing, via stroller or carriage. Even on cold and wintry days many of them venture forth.

Jeannie and her friends often join the carriages and strollers as “pushers.” Year-old Peter down the way has learned to look forward to their coming. For Peter, an only child, their visits and his airing with them are highlights of the day. In Pinehurst children early learn to know and enjoy each other.

Rivaling the babies for the sidewalks are the toddlers. For them life is not so simple. Nor is it for their mothers. Six-month-old Cynthia can kick merrily away in her carriage while mother glances out the window occasionally to see that Cynthia is still happy. Peter’s mother asks Jeannie and Cathy to stay close by so that she can see them. But when two-year-old Peggy takes to the air Mother is right there. For the busy street is just outside the door, and the streets of Pinehurst are not for play.

Peggy and her mother spend a good deal of time at the nearest playground where she is learning to play with other youngsters. She handles herself amazingly well in the swings and on the bars. Each evening, immediately after supper, Peggy has her final trip to the playground. This last one is always with father and that’s a special treat.
Kite-Flying and Coasting

While Pinehurst with its scattered playgrounds and frequent wide grassy plots is ideal for young children, it offers no such facilities for older boys and girls and teen-agers. There is kite-flying in the spring and coasting on the hills during the infrequent winter snows. However, baseball playing is prohibited because buildings are too close together.

With no play space or recreation center no wonder the older youngsters become a nuisance to others and a problem to themselves. An alternative to doing nothing is to get out bicycles, roller skates, and wagons and join the babies and toddlers and their mothers on the sidewalk. Here they can be a menace to life and limb, for frequently they come whizzing by at unpredictable speeds. At other times, they take over the swings on one playground or convert another into a roller skating rink.

During the school year eleven-year-old Joan manages the safety patrol. For the full year she and her assistants have helped the little ones on and off busses and watched the streets as they crossed. Joan and her friends are also girl scouts, and they are busy with scout activities at least one evening a week. But it’s the long summer that presents the real problem. Joan and Tom are two of the lucky ones. They are off to camp for the summer. Other youngsters visit relatives and go off on family vacations. But many stay at Pinehurst and look in vain for the kind of recreational activities they need.

For the teen-agers, too, there’s the problem of what to do now that the long summer stretches ahead. Many of them will work. Bus lines to town are fast and direct and the bus stops at several spots within the development. It’s too bad, though, to have to travel away for all fun and recreation. And that is the case at Pinehurst at present.

Pinehurst Is a Friendly Place

Where there are children there are mothers, and mothers abound at Pinehurst. A large number are new to the metropolitan area and have few friends in the immediate or neighboring community. Their children attend schools several miles distant from the development, too far away to know the school and its teachers as well as they would like. But Pinehurst is a friendly place and soon they have learned to know their neighbors and often make a few close friends. There is chatting in the laundries, at the mobile market, while taking the youngsters out for their daily airing, and over an occasional cup of coffee. Husbands organize car pools and there are some cars available for joint trips to town. Sharing the baby sitting task and reliable sitters allow an occasional day away from home.

The opportunities for strengthening community life through activities for mothers are, however, still largely undeveloped. Women’s service groups do not exist in Pinehurst. A focal point around which such groups might be organized and available meeting space might easily provide the needed stimulus. A community betterment group, organized early in the development’s history is inactive, largely because of inadequate means of communication and lack of space for meetings.

The new school is eagerly anticipated by the many mothers of small children.
in Pinehurst. The possibility of developing interests and utilizing leadership potential among Pinehurst mothers is real and exciting. Through the school and its mothers Pinehurst can become a real community.

It is on Saturdays and Sundays that fathers are in evidence at Pinehurst—washing and polishing their cars, out with the toddlers or the babies in their carriages and strollers, helping with the family shopping, teaching a six-year-old the intricacies of bicycle riding. During the snowy winter days the hills are a mass of children and fathers and sleds. In the spring they're filled with fathers and children and kites. It's difficult to say who have the best time, youngsters or fathers. Fathers are business and professional men who commute to the city five days a week. For them weekends are for families and homes and play with their children. In terms of interests, enthusiasms, and unchanneled community leadership potentialities, the opening of the new school is eagerly awaited for what it can make possible in building good community living.

A Real Job To Do

This new school has a real job to do. When it is located right in the development and teachers see the environment in which boys and girls and their families live it can really begin to meet local needs. Of course, it will serve the school-age children. But what about other members of the community? Will the school be open evenings and summers? Will its teachers and officials see the job to be done and set the wheels in motion for doing it? Will the school program meet the peculiar needs of Pinehurst's children and adults?

- How about a curriculum tailored to meet the needs of Pinehurst's children? Why not let them have the experience of planting a school garden, or of keeping school pets?
- How about a nursery school? Admittedly not all preschool children could be served—for Pinehurst abounds with children. Teachers for the school? Mothers, many of them well educated and eager to participate, can be found in every building.
- How about an active P.T.A. and mothers' group? Mothers need only encouragement and opportunity to get them started on a round of civic and cultural activities.
- How about utilizing the potential in the fathers' group—leadership in discussion groups, in making needed school and playground equipment, in recreational programs?
- How about providing room for the many types of activities that make up good community life? Lights burning late every night tell the story of a school really serving its community.
- How about a summer recreation program—for the eight- to twelve-year-olds, for the teen-agers? How about utilizing teen-age leadership in working with younger children?

The parents of Pinehurst are certain they know what the answers to these questions should be. They have high hopes that the school people will give them full opportunity to help translate these answers into reality.