



## *The fight against narcotic addiction:*

*"The process of rehabilitation is a slow one."*

There is a battered plaque over the doorway at 165 E. Broadway in New York City bearing the legend, "Veterans of Foreign Wars—Post #2." Above the doorway and the plaque is another, larger sign, which reads "Lower East Side Information and Service Center."

The Center, with its vague name, is headquarters for a war of another kind. The six VISTA Volunteers assigned there are fighting dope addiction—a condition which has strong roots in the ghetto.

Dr. Yves Kron, medical director of the Center and a psychiatrist by profession, says of the Volunteers, "I think they are extremely valuable to us. As a psychiatrist it is not so easy for me to establish contact with many of the street addicts. To them I am a strange and foreboding image. When they come to me they have already decided to be helped—to accept treatment. What I need are people to seek out the addicts and motivate them to come for treatment."

"The VISTA Volunteers we have here identify very much with the boy in the streets. Each one is extremely valuable, very precious. Why? Because he does not give the addicts the impression of being a law enforcement officer, which is a very good approach."

A good approach but not an easy one. The stranger in the street is sus-

pect and for the addict, who is always vulnerable to arrest, the stranger can also be dangerous.

The addicts' suspicion also keeps them on the move. Herb Barish, social service administrator at the Center, told how Volunteer Jerry Breen, 23, copes with his job of liaison between the Center and addicts. "Breen has a difficult job. I'll give you an example. We had located a group and were working with them in an area in which a murder had taken place. The police started investigating and their presence in the area caused the addicts, for the most part, to move to safer surroundings. We developed another area and the same thing happened. Every so often we can expect to move to another section of the community. We must be by necessity something of a mobile unit."

Until the neighborhood knows and trusts the Volunteer he must move cautiously. Charles Carr, 25, explained: "It is very difficult, if not impossible, to go to a person and say, 'I know you are a drug addict and I am going to see that you get off drugs.' It's not done that way."

Carr's work illustrates how it is done—how the Volunteer becomes a part of the community. He has started a tutorial program, using neighborhood residents as tutors, and is working with a group of mothers who have

formed a block club to fight for increased welfare benefits.

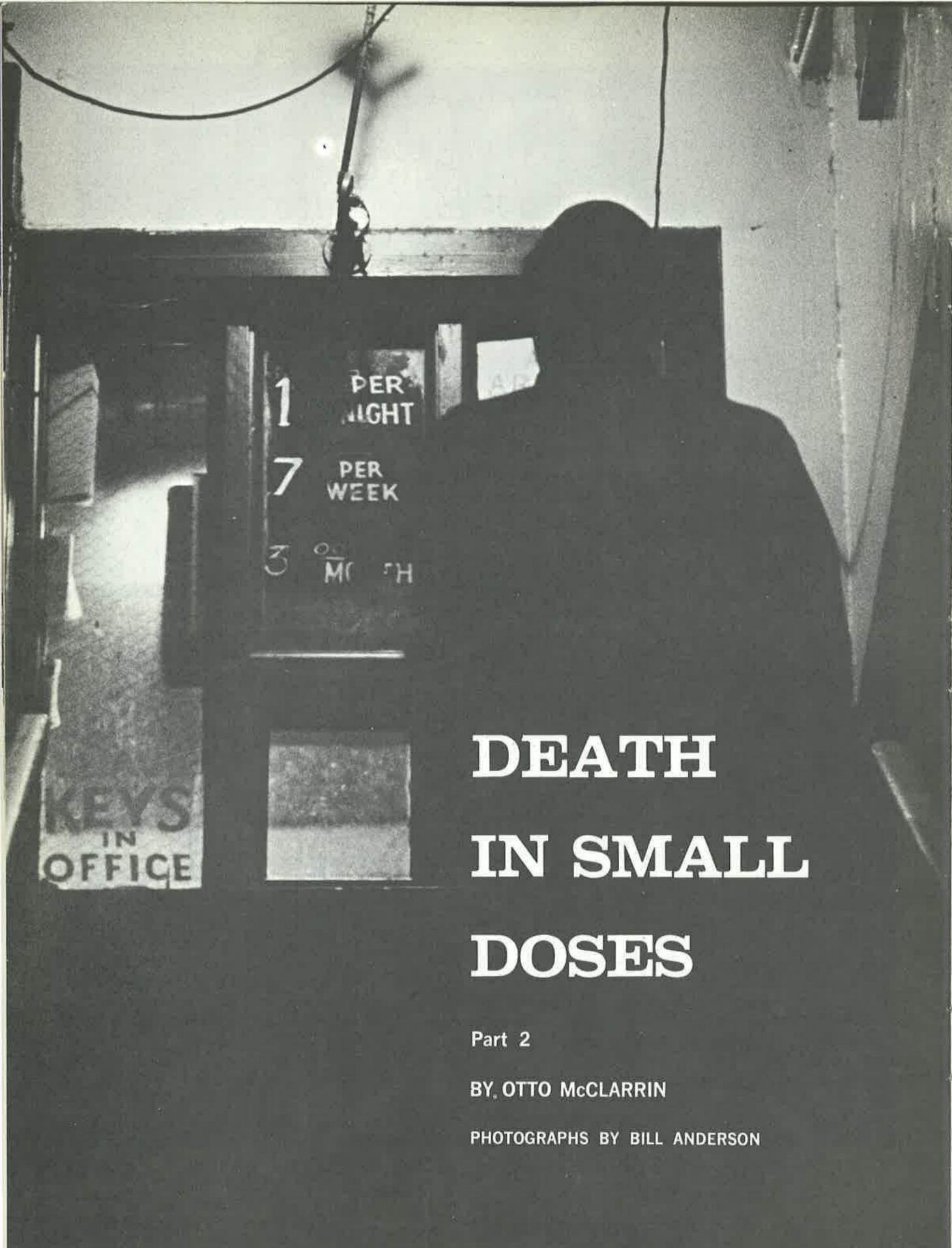
Carr, like another Volunteer at the Center, Larry Gossett, believes that working with the children is important. To the slum child, drug addiction can be the badge of adulthood. It is the job of the Volunteers to substitute other, less dangerous symbols.

Gossett, 22, said, "Many of these kids are chronic glue sniffers. This is one of the first stages leading to drug addiction. Many of the kids smoke pot and many of the older teenagers are already addicts."

Gossett has found that the most difficult part of the work is fighting the hopelessness of the youngsters. "They're just psychologically beaten down. Their theme seems to be 'I'm not going to make it. The "Man" is not going to let me make it. Why should I try?'"

Carr and Gossett, along with a social worker, take the youngsters on visits outside of their area. They take them ice skating, roller skating, to shows, to museums, showing them the world that exists beyond the ghetto.

"We place a lot of emphasis on the preventive aspect of our work," Gossett explained. "We want the kids to get interested in people and things other than their little neighborhood, where the big thing is being a good



# DEATH IN SMALL DOSES

Part 2

BY OTTO McCLARRIN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BILL ANDERSON



VISTA Volunteers assigned to the Lower East Side Center, (l. to r.) Larry Gossett, Walter Chin, Rod Devellis and Charles Carr, talk to the medical director, Dr. Yves Kron.

hustler or a drug pusher . . . or getting high. That's why we place so much emphasis on trips out of the neighborhood."

Another of the Volunteers at the Center, Walter Chin, 29, works almost entirely with addicts from nearby Chinatown. The Cantonese-speaking Volunteer acts as an interpreter for the Chinese addicts, most of whom are in their 60s. Said Chin, "Most of the Chinese addicts are referred to us by hospitals or jails, though some just walk in off the street. They come here mainly for concrete services, like welfare or medical care. Many of them have difficulty speaking English so I interpret for them."

Rod Devellis, 24, talked of another part of the Volunteers' work—dealing with "intakes," the Center's term for addicts who are referred to them by other agencies. "At first I started out

performing concrete services, rather than therapeutic counseling," Devellis said. "I didn't feel qualified to administer therapy. But regardless of what services you perform, personal things come up. Not just the typical welfare type problems such as housing, but other problems that grow deep within a person."

Devellis cited an example: "A man who came here kept explaining how he felt when he came out of prison. He said again and again that he had this icy feeling. I interpreted this as loneliness and the typical depression I imagined a person would feel on coming out of jail and facing society again."

"I discussed it with Dr. Kron. He told me to ask the man whether this icy feeling meant loneliness or was he describing something physical. The next time he came in I asked him.

Sure enough, he was describing a physical feeling. He felt cold inside. Very, very cold.

"Later Dr. Kron said this was typical of someone who has no defense—a schizophrenic individual who needs complete supportive therapy. We decided that we would have this person turn to us for all sorts of support. We would be his defense for awhile and maybe then he would start to pick up some defenses for himself."

Much that is known about narcotic addiction is at best an educated guess since it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics on an illegal activity. Increasingly, people are coming to agree that addiction should be treated as a medical, rather than a legal, problem, but there is still a need for more information. John Goff, 22, in addition to working with addicts at the Center, is helping a staff member prepare



Walter Chin works almost entirely with addicts from nearby Chinatown.

**Please send me complete information on how I can become a VISTA volunteer.**

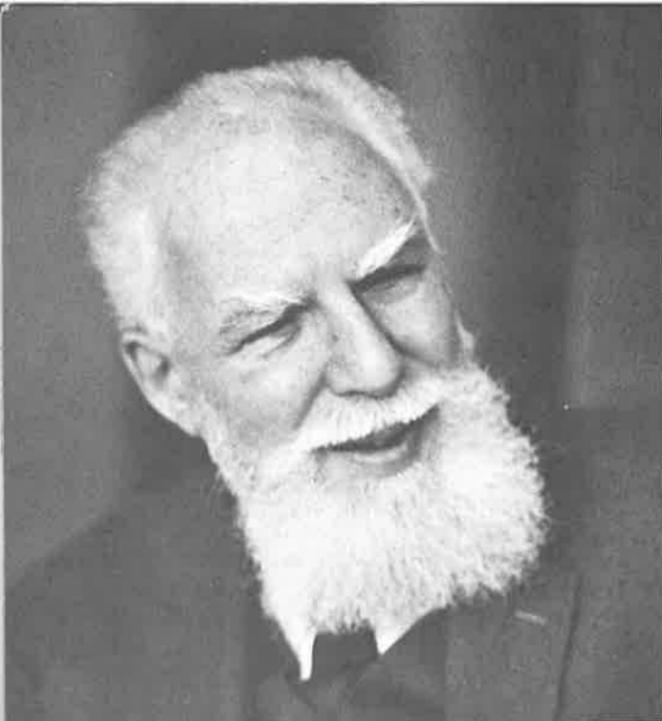
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Dr. Yves Kron, medical director of the Lower East Side Information and Service Center.



John Goff.



Larry Gossett talks to a young man at the Center.



Charles Carr checks out a map of the area.

statistical data on the Center's clients, which should contribute to the overall knowledge of addiction.

Goff calls the work with addicts highly frustrating. "You spend some time with an addict—thinking that he has picked up some insight into his problems—only to have him fail to keep appointments for a few weeks. You learn that he's gone out and is really hitting the drug hard again."

Goff draws a comparison between the behavior of addicts and that of children: "They are very dependent and they have very demanding personalities. They are so ready to take anything that you may have to offer. It doesn't even pass through their minds to give something in return."

Goff expresses the philosophy of the Center when he says, "To me the whole process of rehabilitation is a

slow one. You can take an addict off drugs a hundred times and still, somehow, he doesn't dig himself. He doesn't get a view of the way he really is.

"So the treatment of a drug addict, it seems to me, is not just limited to the one facet of eliminating the use of the drug. He has to develop a hopeful personality and that requires a very long period of psychological and psychiatric counseling."

Edward Brown, executive director of the Center, sees the Volunteers as "transitory authority figures" for the addicts. He said, "Once we had a former addict on our staff who spent his time contacting addicts on the street. He represented a kind of peer group to the addicts. At the other extreme was the professional staff, a kind of ultimate authority. The VISTAs are

not peers. They are not authorities. They are people whose training and experience fall somewhere in between the two. The role they play is very useful to the addict."

Although the Volunteers say they have found satisfaction in playing the role, they all speak of the frustration it involves. Charles Carr describes his reactions: "You get so terribly involved in the lives of the people and you wonder if there's any hope for them at all. You start feeling very depressed and pessimistic. It's really interesting—how you can come out of it at all. But you do."

Said Rod Devellis: "This experience has given me a chance to stand back and evaluate myself. At the same time, I've been able to get a clear picture of what's going on in a part of the world I've never seen—this world of poverty. This will always be something that will concern me."

# New York's Far Reaching Addiction Program

The Office of the Coordinator of Addiction Program (OCAP) of the City of New York states that there are 100,000 addicts in that city. The Office, under the direction of Dr. Efen Ramirez, is attempting to rehabilitate these addicts and help them re-enter the community as productive citizens.

OCAP's program is a far-reaching one and includes plans to establish a medical and rehabilitation center for addicts on Hart's Island. The Island center will treat 1,000 addicts who have gone through correctional institutions.

But the work with the addicts is not the whole OCAP program. They feel that the addicts themselves are only part of the problem and estimate that for every addict there are at least nine other people who support them or are directly affected by their addiction.

Dr. Ramirez feels that to succeed in their programs they must involve the whole community. Family, store and

property owners, probational and correctional personnel, members of the teaching and medical profession and, most important, neighborhood children, must be made aware of their role in the prevention of addiction.

Ramirez has requested 104 VISTA Volunteers. The first twelve are already at work in six poverty areas in the city, helping communities deal with the problem of addiction. The Volunteers are trying to get relatives of addicts to join an organization where they can share their views. It is hoped that through discussion they can find solutions to addiction in their own homes and in the community at large. Volunteers work with this organization, Rehabilitation of Addicts through Relatives and Employers (RARE), which has 12 chapters in the city and meets weekly. The Volunteers also serve as support aid to the ex-addict workers, who train those who attend RARE meetings.

A similar organization, Addiction

Workers Alerted to Rehabilitation and Education (AWARE), aims at helping addicts through the people who have contact with them. At the five AWARE chapters in the city, concerned citizens meet to discuss addiction and establish guidelines for prevention.

In addition to working with both groups, the Volunteers may talk to groups of teenagers or teachers at a church or school on the problem of addiction. Some of the Volunteers use their spare time to work with pre-addicted youths. The Volunteers attempt to motivate them to self-help through involvement in their community.

Although the Volunteers work to prevent future addiction and increase public understanding, most of their time is spent working with the relatives of addicts, people who have lived for years with the knowledge of what addiction can do to a person.

# VISTA expands Summer Associate Program

This summer VISTA is expanding its summer program of VISTA Associates to include 2,000 volunteers. The program needs men and women who are willing to spend a summer living and working with people who need their skills.

The volunteers may be college or university students, teachers or professional persons who cannot, for sound reasons, spend a full year working with VISTA.

After a week of intensive training, VISTA Associates will spend a minimum of ten weeks living and working in poverty communities.

Areas which have requested VISTA Associates in 1967 include the following:

**New York City:** Associates have been requested to work in teams on 50 blocks in high tension target areas. They will work in organized recreation, remedial education, block renovation, tenant organization, and service referral. The volunteers will work out of store-fronts and live on the blocks, which will be closed to traffic 24 hours a day. While the majority of the volunteers will be drawn from New York

City area colleges, one or two in each team will be from the neighborhood. Sponsoring agency will be the Police Athletic League of New York City.

**Massachusetts:** Associates have been requested to provide additional impact for grass-roots organizations involved in community development, education, sanitation and health projects. Areas of concentration will include the slums of cities like Boston and Lowell, the outlying rural areas in the western part of the Commonwealth, and the migrant camps in the southeast. College students in the program will be from the state and a significant number of the volunteers will be drawn from the ranks of the poor. Sponsoring agency will be the Commonwealth Service Corps.

**Appalachia:** Associates have been requested to work in Eastern Kentucky, West Virginia and Southwest Virginia with the Appalachian Volunteers, Inc. The program will begin with a small force in April. It will grow to full force in the summer and a small group will remain through the fall. The AV's will build on the 1966 summer experience by concentrating on smaller target areas with Volunteers selected for spe-

cific skills (such as law students and medical students).

**Indian Reservations:** Associates have been requested to work on 21 reservations in northern Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This program was initiated by four students at Wisconsin State College at Superior who served as VISTA Associates in West Virginia during the summer of 1966. Volunteers will focus on education and recreation for teenagers, self-help housing, and health. Sponsor will be Wisconsin State College.

**Chicago:** Associates, recruited from Chicago area colleges and from the neighborhoods, will work with an ongoing employment program for older teenagers and with Chicago grass-roots organizations. Area students will continue their summer work during the school year, working under the direction of the program's sponsor, the Metropolitan YMCA of Chicago in cooperation with Hull House.

**Job Corps:** Associates have been requested by Job Corps to work in Centers across the country after orientation at Job Corps training units. The Associates will teach, lead programs in recreation and physical education, and serve as counselors.

**OEO Legal Services:** Law students will work out of selected OEO Legal Services Centers in cities and rural communities. They will go out into the neighborhoods with information in areas such as consumer education, legal rights, government programs, setting up co-ops and credit unions.

A number of other areas are under consideration for Associates Programs, including Northern New Mexico, North and South Carolina, and the West Coast.

Five hundred of the 2,000 VISTA Associates will be college juniors selected by VISTA and Peace Corps. They will be credited with advance Peace Corps training when they graduate from college in 1968. For information write VISTA Associates, Room 606, 1145 19th St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20506.

# American Youth Responding to VISTA Challenge

By RUTH MONTGOMERY  
News American Correspondent  
Hearst Headline Service

WASHINGTON, March 4—At a time when most of us are bewailing the moral decline, the selfishness and materialism of American youth, it is refreshing to report that young people are volunteering as never before for hard, unpleasant, financially unremunerative jobs with VISTA.

The domestic version of the Peace Corps is exactly two years old. At its inception many congressmen doubted that Americans—young or old—would enlist for drab work in local slums, without the lure of foreign travel, but applications in December increased 121 percent over the previous December.

Trainees for the first six months of fiscal 1967 topped the corresponding period in 1966 by 45 percent, and the total strength of VISTA was up nearly a hundred percent.

These volunteers live and work in city slums, backward rural areas and Indian reservations, receiving only a subsistence allowance, plus \$50 for each month served which is paid to them when they complete service, yet 3,400 of them are already at work, and a surprising number have reenlisted for

a second stint.

Sixty percent of VISTA's volunteers are under 25, but 12 percent past 50, and include retired teachers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen and craftsmen who find personal enrichment in helping their fellow man.

The need is so great that VISTA is now launching a Citizens Corps of unpaid, part-time volunteers. The goal is one million recruits, and VISTA Director William H. Crook confidently predicts that at least 100,000 will be at work by the end of the year, serving as tutors, recreation leaders, consumer educators and counselors for the poor.

Crook calls the new Citizens Corps "America's answer to the Red Guard," the destructive youth gangs that are rampaging through Red China. "This is 'cultural revolution' American style," he says. "It is in the honored tradition of the American citizen-soldier stepping forward in time of need to help solve his nation's problems."

The job that these unpaid volunteers are being asked to perform is not of the do-gooder or ego inflating variety. They will be working directly with

poverty-ridden people under difficult conditions in the slum areas where they live.

Poverty chieftain Sargent Shriver hopes to enlist hundreds of thousands of students, professional people and homemakers who are willing to donate up to 15 hours a week to campus or community projects.

Universities, mayors, labor unions and welfare agencies have asked VISTA for help in developing local citizen volunteer programs, and pilot projects are now being launched in Ohio, Oregon, Connecticut and the nation's capital.

MICHIGAN Gov. George Romney recently urged that all citizens contribute a "tithe of time"—one-tenth of the 40-hour work week—to volunteer work among the poor. He believes that four hours a week "spent in well-conceived voluntary effort at the local level could reshape America faster than federal programs ever could."

Numerous students have already volunteered to help with tutoring and adult education classes; others are organizing youth programs, recreation and consumer education projects.



Sargent Shriver recently announced the formation of the Citizens Corps, an organization that will utilize part-time, unpaid volunteers under the supervision of VISTA Volunteers. Left to right are VISTA John Sullivan, Shriver, VISTAs Susan Myers and Mark Cheren and William H. Crook, director of VISTA.