

Migrant Worker Program in Area 'Starting to Roll'

By CONRAD PRANGE Staff Writer, The Statesman

Such everyday facets of modern living as rummage sales, baby showers, picnics, health lectures and celebrations were participated in this summer by thousands of migrant crop harvesting families in Oregon.

Work among the migrants, sponsored by the Oregon Council of Churches in cooperation with local churches and civic groups, is "beginning to roll," it was indicated at a state meeting in Salem Wednesday.

Six Areas

"This summer 30 paid and full-time volunteers worked in six migrant areas," said Miss Betty Whitaker, state director of the field program of the Oregon Migrant Ministry. She is a representative of the National Council of Churches.

"Although this represents an increase of about 30 per cent in personnel," she said, "we need more workers. There are about a half-dozen migrant-gathering areas in the state we haven't even touched. We figure we reach about one-tenth of the total migrant population in Oregon. We want to reach more."

Longer Program

Aim of the Oregon Council of Churches is for an eventual year-round program for migrant families based on local community participation. This would include work in educational, spiritual, vocational, social and health fields.

The Council also is setting up plans to study basic problems of migrant families, such as employment, health, sanitation and education with a view to initiating needed legislation, she said.

A big problem of migrant crop workers is acceptance by communities in which they are working. Already, Miss Whitaker said, Migrant Ministry workers have helped here.

Big Fiesta

At Nyssa the local residents were guests recently of Mexican-American crop workers at a big fiesta. There the work among migrants is pushed by the local chamber of commerce. It was also at Nyssa where 15 expectant mothers were the object of a mass "baby shower" complete with nearly 70 women guests and boxes of gifts.

A highlight of the harvest season for the past three years in the Hillsboro area has been a picnic participated in by community and migrant families.

Mobile Program

The migrant program in the Salem-Independence-Tayton area,

sponsored by the Salem Council of Churches, is unique, Miss Whitaker said, because it is a mobile one. A number of camps are visited daily by mobile units of Migrant Ministry workers. In other sections of Oregon the Migrant programs are established in semi-permanent locations.

The program is now being carried out in these areas: Hillsboro, Eola Village near McMinnville, Milton-Freewater, Salem, and Nyssa. A fall program will start soon in the Klamath Basin for the potato harvesters.

At Wednesday's meeting a group of Migrant Ministry workers told of various experiences in dealing with migrant problems. **House Payments.**

There was the hard-working, five-children harvester family at Hillsboro bent on saving at least \$100 from this summer's earnings in order to start purchase of a two-room house in Portland.

A 13-year-old partially deaf girl, working in a Tayton bean yard, was enrolled in the State School for the Deaf in Salem through efforts of the Migrant Ministry workers.

Health Kits

At Nyssa health kits containing among other things, tooth brushes and tooth paste, was given to children of Mexican families. For several days, reported the Migrant Ministry worker in that area, parents couldn't draw their youngsters from the bathhouses where they were spending all day brushing their teeth over and over.

At Independence a nine-year-old Spanish-speaking boy spent two hours a day for several weeks with a Migrant Ministry worker taking English reading and writing lessons. And, reported the worker, judging from the different styles of handwriting appearing on the boy's homework papers, his entire family benefited by the lessons.

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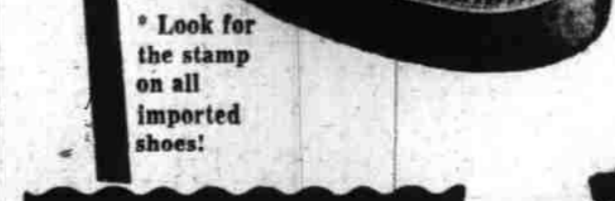


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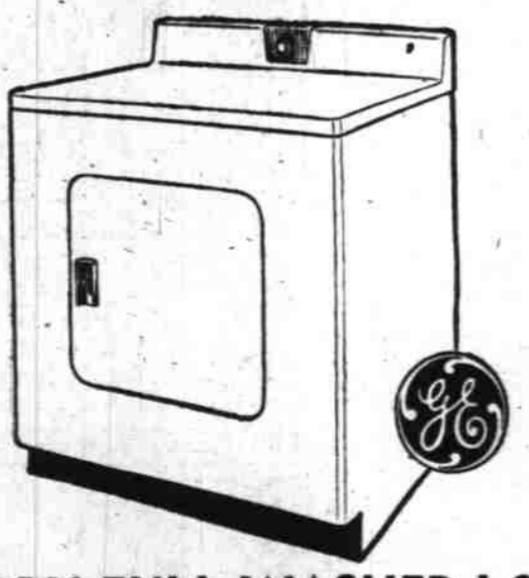
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