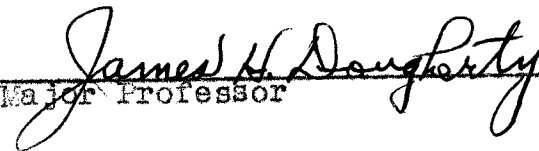
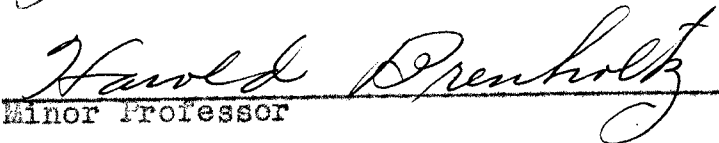


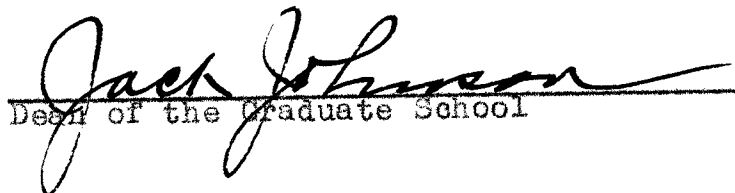
ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION
OF A YOUTH CENTER

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ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION
OF A YOUTH CENTER

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Youth centers are a comparatively new phase of the recreation program of America. They had their beginning during the war years when the adolescent group felt left out of the mushrooming activities. Fathers, brothers, sisters, and mothers were all busy with various types of war activities. Government agencies and thinking adults began to realize the need for the right kind of social and recreational activities for teen-age youngsters. The result was a new type of organization: youth centers. During the war years these organizations spread all over the country. Many of them closed when the war activities were over, but others have continued and have become vital parts of the recreation program of communities.

As a nation that has been aware of the needs and the values of its youth, the United States is particularly interested in the values and outcomes of these youth centers. If they are an asset to a community, what are the necessary factors which make for success? Why have some of them lasted and others failed? On what basis can they be established in

order to be of service to American youth? These are questions which motivated the present study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to make an investigation of the need for youth centers, the factors which are necessary for the successful operation of a youth center, and to evaluate the youth center at Denton, Texas, in the light of the information developed in the research.

Limitations of the Study

The investigation will be limited to a study of the literature in the field of education and recreation regarding youth centers, and to an evaluation of the Denton youth center, El Centro.

Source of Data

In a survey conducted by the Recreation Division of the Office of Community War Services in 1945, it was revealed that the oldest youth center reporting was the one in Colchester, England, established in 1939.¹ Sources for material regarding youth centers, then, will be recent ones. The United States government, in its efforts to aid and promote war-time youth centers, made a number of investigations and published various pamphlets on the question. Large

¹Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Service, Youth Centers, pp. 1-34.

business organizations, interested in the youth movement, have also made surveys.¹ In addition to these, a number of the more successful youth centers have published reports of activities and outcomes. All of these sources are utilized in the background material for this investigation. Factual material on the Denton youth center is taken from the records of the organization, and from various institutions and officials in Denton in position to judge the outcomes of the center.

Related Studies

The various studies made by like organizations have been valuable guides in the present one. In the survey of youth centers conducted by the Recreation Division, the following subjects were given attention: Who attends youth centers? Who starts them, sponsors them and pays for them? What help is needed from adults? What are the necessary facilities? Attention is given also in the survey to the ways of evaluating outcomes and to the expansion of other community programs for youth. The following conclusions were reached from a survey of more than three hundred youth centers:

1. The teens want glamor and know how to get it.
2. They have found they cannot stand alone; they need seniors to help, advise, and supervise.
3. They want to plan for themselves, do for themselves, have a place to themselves.

¹Royal Crown Cola, How to Organize a Teen-age Club, pp. 1-34.

4. Advance planning for a center avoids duplication, makes for solvency, saves headaches.

5. Cooperation with, not domination by other established agencies, adds strength.

6. Wide community support is a prerequisite for success.

7. Cliques should be avoided; a democratic good-neighbor policy is the sound rule.³

The Florida Association of Recreation Workers made a survey of the youth centers in that state in 1946.⁴ Fifty-six cities and towns in Florida were contacted to determine if they were operating a youth center, if they had operated a youth center and had failed, or if they were planning to organize a youth center. Inquiries were sent to the Recreation Departments in cities that had one, to the Chamber of Commerce in others, and to individuals connected with the schools or known to be interested in youth work in others.

Of the fifty-six cities contacted, seventeen replied that they were operating youth centers. Seven cities were in the process of organizing youth centers; three centers reported that they had operated a youth center but it had failed and was now closed. Six cities stated that they had no youth center. Twenty-three cities did not answer at all, and it was assumed that they had no youth center either.⁵

³Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Services, Youth Centers, p. 29.

⁴Florida Association of Recreation Workers, Florida's Youth Centers, p. 2.

⁵Ibid.

The age of members of the youth centers, the dues required, facilities, programs, youth councils, factors contributing to the success of a center, and the most important problems confronting such organizations constitute the subject matter covered by the survey. Findings of this study are utilized in a succeeding chapter of this research and hence will not be included here.

Another related study to the present one was made in 1945 by the Department of Recreation of Salt Lake, Utah.⁶ The research in this instance covered all phases of recreation for both adults and children, but one section of the report was devoted to the study of the clubs in the town for boys and girls. Five centers were in operation in the city at the time the report was made: Elks' Boys' and Girls' Club, Fairmont Boys' and Girls' Club, Jaycee Boys' and Girls' Club, Kiwanis-Felt Boys' and Girls' Club, and the Rotary-Y.M.C.A. Club. The actual attendance at these clubs for the year was 147,211, which was an average daily attendance of 458.70 for each organization.

The philosophy underlying the entire youth movement and the establishment and maintenance of youth centers is well expressed by the conclusions of a study made of "Teen Trouble" by the National Recreation Association:

⁶Department of Recreation, Annual Report of Public Recreation Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Above all, the teen age boys and girls must be shown for themselves that democracy really works, that it is a priceless heritage that was fought for and won by our forefathers, and must never be taken for granted; that our government can be trusted; that they are a great and indispensable part of our nation, destined to play the main role in setting up and maintaining any new world order; that such a role calls for intelligence, hard work, and a deep loyalty from each one of them.

In our relationships with them, at home, at school, in the recreation program, in the church, and in the defense work we must be friendlier, more patient, more understanding, more interested in them as individuals, more willing to give them responsibility--and to help them carry it.

No teen age boy or girl in America should grow up afraid of the future. We must help them to meet it, and to know how to face it as it comes--realistically and intelligently.

The "terrible teens of today will weave the pattern of the world tomorrow. We want the warp and woof of that pattern to be strong and beautiful."⁷

Method of Procedure

The present study will be based along the lines followed by these foregoing studies. In the succeeding chapter an analysis is made of the factors contributing to the successful operation of a youth center. The Denton Youth Center is then evaluated in the light of these factors considered to be essential to the continued maintenance and growth of such an organization. The evaluation is made in two different ways: (1) data are presented on the various phases of the Youth Center activities and these are measured against the criteria deemed necessary by leaders in the field of youth recreation:

⁷National Recreation Association, Teen Trouble, p. 24.

(2) evaluation of the contribution that the Youth Center has made to Denton is made by a number of citizens who have had opportunities to observe the work and measure the results: the mayor of the city, policeofficials, county officials, ministers, clubwomen, and service organizations.

CHAPTER II

FACTORS ESSENTIAL TO THE ESTABLISHMENT AND SUCCESSFUL MAINTENANCE OF A YOUTH CENTER

(A youth center, like any other organization, does not exist and grow by itself, but must be sponsored and guided by responsible parties and based on sound principles. The purpose of this chapter is to make a survey of factors considered essential for the successful establishment and maintenance of a youth center by experienced workers in the field. These factors will be considered separately, and conclusions drawn from the composite picture presented.

Survey of the Need for a Youth Center in a Community

Leaders in the field of youth recreation agree that the establishment of a youth center should be based on a felt need of the community for such an organization. The Recreation Division of the Office of Community War Services, in surveying the causes of failure of many youth centers, found that two primary factors believed to be associated with the failure were lack of adequate planning in the beginning

and lack of community support.¹ The first step in the establishment of a youth center, it asserted, is a cooperative study of community needs and a survey of existing facilities. In order to facilitate such a study, the committee making the report formulated a guide sheet for ascertaining the necessary information on which to base plans for youth recreation. The requested information pertained to:

1. Population
 - Type
 - Number
2. Educational data
 - Pre-school population
 - Elementary
 - High School
3. Occupations
 - Number employed
 - Types of employment
4. Delinquency rate
5. Accident rate
6. Government
 - Form
 - Provisions for recreation
7. Facilities for recreation
 - Public
 - Schools
 - Commercial
 - Private
 - Availability for youth participation
8. Recreation programs
 - Private agencies
 - Public agencies
 - Commercial agencies
9. Method of financing recreation
 - Private agencies
 - Tax funds
 - Others
10. Supervision of recreation
 - Qualifications of leaders
 - Planning²

¹Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Service, Some Suggestions for Establishing a Community Recreation Program, p. 1.

²Ibid.

A city, in planning a youth program, will have a clear picture of the needs of the youth if a detailed study along the lines of this guide sheet is made. The National Recreation Association says it does not matter so much who the leaders in this planning are:

They may be individuals concerned with the welfare of school children; they may be leaders in the recreation department. They may be the board of education, church workers, or representatives of social and welfare agencies. They may be the cops, the merchants, or the chamber of commerce. The main thing is that whoever starts the movement must see that it becomes community wide-- that it include such groups as those mentioned above and any other youth-serving organizations that exist in the community.³

In the survey conducted by the Division of Recreation, it was found that the most important requisite for success of a youth center was "public acceptance by a majority of the groups interested in youth recreation."⁴ All the successful centers have had this support. Without it, a number of centers were closed. The following statement emphasizes the need for this support:

. . . to operate on a firm base of public esteem, a youth center must have the sanction of those agencies which parents consider authorities on what is good for their children. Newspaper and radio publicity, however valuable and effective, cannot substitute for this sanction. Popularity with the teen-agers cannot

³National Recreation Association, Teen Trouble, p. 14.

⁴Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Services, Some Suggestions for Establishing a Community Recreation Program, p. 3.

make up for it. Before a center can really feel secure, schools and youth agencies and established recreation departments must give the nod of approval.⁵

The survey further stated that the most effective method of winning this essential acceptance is to have representatives of each community group interested in youth recreation on the center's advisory committee. The most common agencies mentioned are the social agencies, churches, service clubs, business institutions, schools, and law enforcement agencies.

Sponsors of Youth Centers

In some instances the initiative in starting a youth center is taken by a number of cooperating agencies, but the successful centers have had one central sponsor who, in turn, had been aided by others. Fifty-five of the 303 centers studied by the National Recreation Division were initiated by young people themselves.⁶ Forty-eight were initiated by various clubs, including Civitan, Kiwanis, Rotary, Elks, women's clubs, by Chambers of Commerce, Odd Fellows, Lions, Boards of Trade, Leagues of Women Voters, PTA's, Junior Leagues, and American Legion Posts. Others sponsoring youth centers were recreation departments, welfare agencies, Y's, church groups, school authorities, USO,

⁵Ibid.

⁶Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Services, Youth Centers, p. 7.

municipal governments, and philanthropic foundations. In many instances, several of these groups working together initiated centers. The point to be stressed is that a youth center needs a regular sponsor who can be depended upon to further the interests of it in a responsible manner. This sponsor, needless to say, must be one in which all community agencies have the utmost confidence and respect.

Financing a Youth Center.

The financing of youth centers has been worked out in various ways in different cities and towns, and budgets range from a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars a year.⁷ In a few cases the young people have undertaken full responsibility for all expenses. In the majority of cases, however, adult groups and agencies have assumed a large part of the cost.

Another source makes the assertion that "money is a must."⁸ The amount is not important, but there must be some funds to cover costs: rents, repairs, equipment, operating costs. One of the reasons assigned for the failure of some youth centers was lack of adequate financing. "Finances should be carefully worked out, budgets planned, and the entire enterprise put on a stable, business basis."⁹ The

⁷National Recreation Association, Teen-Age Centers, p. 6.

⁸Royal Crown Cola, How to Organize a Teen-Age Club, p. 11.

⁹Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Services, Youth Centers, p. 19.

Division of Recreation's survey, in looking into how centers were paid for found that the most frequent sources of finance to cover costs of operation are: (1) dues; (2) proceeds from juke boxes, canteens and other concessions; and (3) private donations.¹⁰ Of the centers reporting, 150 received money from dues or regular admission charges; seventy-one from concessions; and eighty-seven from individual donations. Financial help also came from the following sources:

Social agencies	69
Recreation Departments	50
Civic and service clubs	48
Municipal governments	21
Schools (supplied buildings).	11
Churches	4
Private industry	2
Unions	2
County Governments	2
Philanthropic foundations	3
Housing authorities	1

All of the authorities consulted in the research stressed the need of a sound financial backing. They stated that it was best to encourage the youth to help themselves in maintaining the youth center, but that there was need for adult backing and support as a stable basis of operation.

Organization of a Youth Center

The most common form of organization in a youth center consists of a youth council, committee, or board, under the supervision of a full-time director, with an adult advisory

¹⁰Ibid., p. 5-6.

committee, sponsoring organization, or some similar group lending moral and financial support in addition to advice when requested. Of the 303 centers surveyed by the National Division of Recreation, 123 operated under such a system.¹¹ In Florida a well-balanced organization has been formulated for the operation of youth centers.¹² The diagram of this organization is shown in Figure 1. The main divisions of the organization, it is shown, are the Recreation Board, the Director, Parents Council, Youth Council, Membership Committee, Facilities Committee and Program Committee.

The National Recreation Association states that there is no one form of organization for youth centers, as center sponsorship and the character of the center are controlling influences in the type of organization developed.¹³ The prevailing trend, however, is to include adults in the organization. "Adults are urgently needed, but needed in the background."¹⁴

The actual operation of the youth center, most authorities agree, should be under the leadership of a paid director. There is evidence that centers established without adult

¹¹Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Services, Youth Centers, p. 9.

¹²Florida Association of Recreation Workers, Survey Report, p. 11.

¹³National Recreation Association, Teen-Age Centers, p. 12.

¹⁴Ibid.

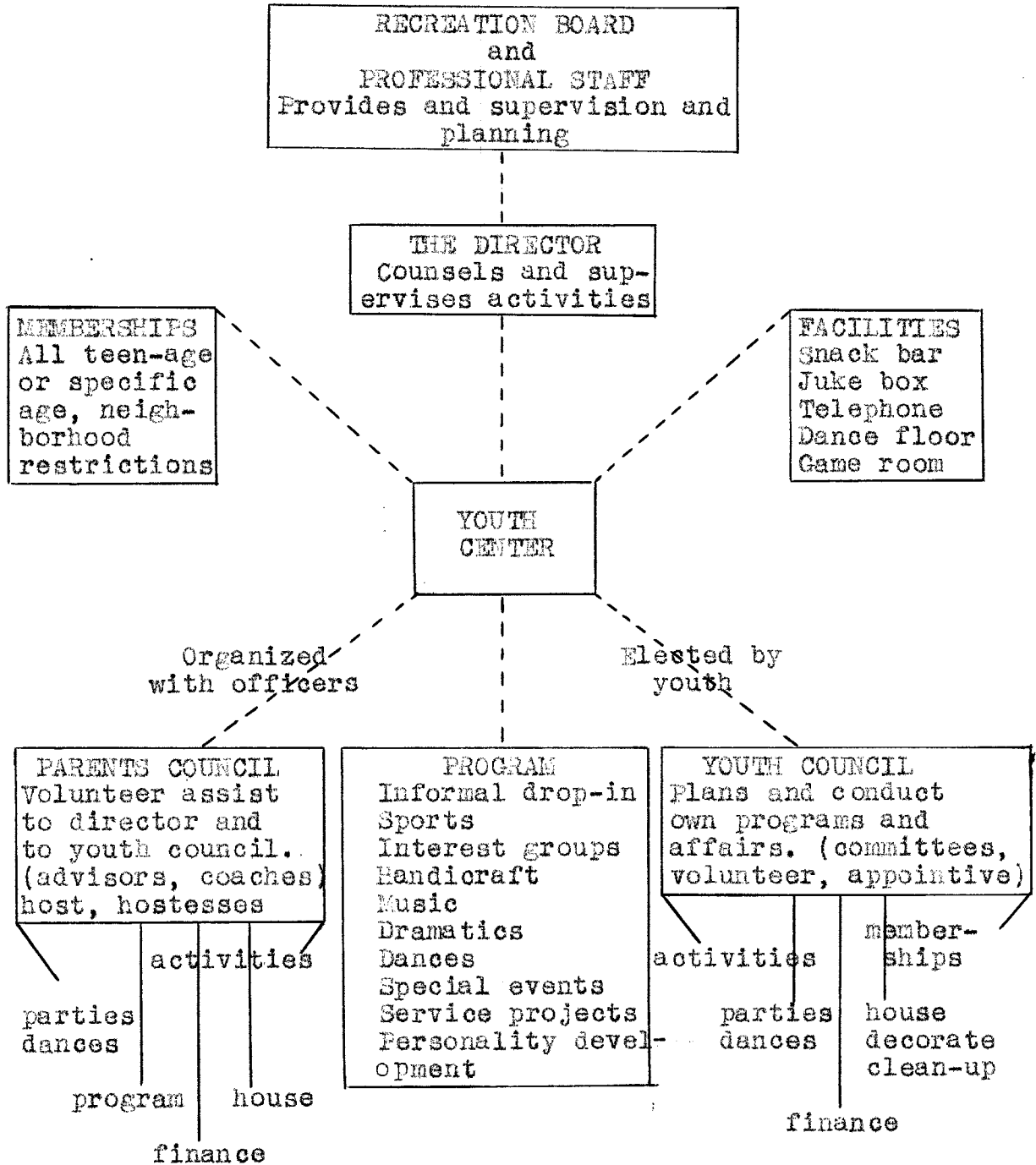


Fig. 1--A suggested youth center organization¹⁵

¹⁵Florida Association of Recreation Workers, op. cit.,
p. 11

leadership to support and guide youth have failed. The leadership, it is stressed should be wise, unobtrusive, and of the highest type.

Adult leadership which attempts to dictate and to prevent the fullest possible expression of youth initiative will surely defeat the purpose of the center and insure its early demise.¹⁶

In the Florida Survey good leadership was rated by the majority of cities as the most important factor contributing to the success of their youth center. The following statement is made:

A person who understands and takes a vital interest in the problems and desires of young people can be the motivating force behind all activities. A good director trains the youth themselves to take responsibility and helps them think through their own problems. She will also have an organization of parents or volunteers to assist her in supervising special activities. . . .

Youth center directors with experience and understanding are essential to the continued success of a youth center. Poorly qualified leaders who act mainly as disciplinarians cause much harm and often cause many teen-agers to drop out.¹⁷

Participation of the youth in the organization, however, is stressed. Participation in planning their own activities through youth councils has been given a high rating among factors working for success of youth centers. "When they plan the program activities that they want, with the nature

¹⁶Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Services, Youth Services, p. 19.

¹⁷Florida Association of Recreation Workers, Survey Report, p. 9.

guidance of the director, their plans have a much better chance of success. They do not respond to super-imposed programs."¹⁸

The part that leadership plays in the success of a youth center is stressed in still another source:

Success of a recreation program can be best assured by employing qualified leadership on a full-time, paid basis. A superintendent of recreation should be your first investment in personnel. His services can make the program effective and economical.¹⁹

One of the main factors operating for success of a youth center, then, is an organization allowing for youth participation but directed by responsible trained leadership. Without it little can be accomplished and the desired activities fail.

Location of a Center

The location of a youth center is an important factor in the success of the institution. The Florida Survey states that the successful youth centers must be located near the school or down where teen-agers gather.²⁰ In larger cities, strategically located centers in different sections of the city were found to be more popular than one large center.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁹ Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Services, Some Suggestions for Establishing a Community Recreation Program, p. 4.

²⁰ Florida Association of Recreation Workers, op. cit., p. 5.

In neighborhoods near schools or where a large number of teen-agers live nearby, centers are more likely to succeed. This makes for a smaller center where more children feel free to come, and often eliminates the friction between youth from different parts of the city. Youth centers, the survey maintains, should help teach democracy, but children from different parts of large cities often have nothing in common and have such different backgrounds that they are happier gathering in the familiar surroundings of their neighborhood.²¹

The survey conducted by the Research Division of the Office of Community War Services mentioned "convenient location" as one of the factors contributing to the success of many of the youth centers.²² On the other hand, the survey also revealed that the location was reported as a factor in the closing of one or two centers. Where they were located in downtown sections, parents objected to the children lingering after the center had closed. In other centers the location was too far away from some of the children.

Facilities and Equipment

The purposes for which the youth center will be used

²¹Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Services, Youth Centers, p. 18.

²²Ibid., pp. 12-13.

will determine the kind and amount of equipment necessary for operation. The following statement illustrates the type of activities most favored:

Since the main dish for a majority of the members is dancing, the chief requisites for a youth center are music for dancing (three fourths of the centers have a juke box); space for dancing; and refreshments for in-between. Facilities for refreshments vary from a soft-drink machine to fully equipped kitchens, snack bars, and refreshment booths.²³

The Florida survey found that a snack bar headed the lists of the "musts" in facilities for a successful youth center. Second in importance was a large room suitable for dancing, but not necessarily restricted to this activity. Many youth centers reported that they used one large room, with areas designated for dancing, games and comfortable chairs for lounging. Some kind of music was also considered essential. A number of centers reported using a public address system for music-allowing the teen-agers to buy their own records, provide a microphone for announcements or calling for a dance.²⁴ A game room, complete with the ever-popular ping-pong tables, pool tables, table games, shuffleboard, and badminton courts was also found to be popular.

²³Ibid., p. 6.

²⁴Ibid.

A number of youth centers listed their facilities as one factor contributing to their success. "Facilities must be adequate for the number of people who use them, and the variety and extent of a youth center program depends upon them."²⁵

Programs of Youth Centers

The program carried on in a youth center will depend upon the type of leadership, the facilities, and the desires and interests of its members. Some type of program is a necessity for continued growth.

While the youth want to feel free to drop-in at their center, and choose what they want to do according to the mood they are in, a planned program is essential. They need some help in finding what they want to do.²⁶

Programs are usually planned to follow the seasonal trends, the interests of the group, and the community emphasis. Dancing has been found to be a most popular activity in youth centers. Ballroom dancing lessons, tap dancing, folk dancing and square dancing as well as social dances are popular.

The National Recreation Division found that dancing, games, parties, lounging and refreshments were the usual opportunities provided at programs. These, the Division

²⁵ National Recreation Division, Teen-Age Centers, p. 19.

²⁶ Appendix of the Study, p. 66.

asserted, have a decided value in supplementing other activities offered in connection with established programs of the schools, public recreation departments, private agencies and churches. These programs, in the opinion of the Recreation Division, are very limited; other activities should be provided as well:

. . . youth itself is interested in a broad range of activities. It wants to dance, to lounge around, to play ping-pong and table games, but it also wants to swim and hike, skate, play softball, tennis, badminton and other games. It wants to sing and play musical instruments, to join dramatic groups, to make things with its hands, and enjoy the fellowship of clubs and service groups.²⁷

The Division further recommended a wide list of activities in which youth are interested and in which they would have a chance to participate.²⁸ Stress was placed on the importance of "enthusiastic, imaginative, resourceful, and energetic leadership" if such a program was to be attempted.

Operation of Centers

The actual operation of the youth center calls for many activities and decisions. The questions of who are to be members, and regulations to be observed are usually worked out in the by-laws and constitutions of centers. The National Recreation Division has the following recommendations:

²⁷ National Recreation Division, Teen-Age Centers, p. 19.

²⁸ Appendix of the Study, pp. 59-61.

A committee of youth should have responsibility for the center. Where the youth council previously mentioned is concerned with a single center, it would naturally be the committee for the operation of it. Constitutions and by-laws of youth councils usually establish the procedure for this. Questions to be covered include: relation to adult advisory council, ages and groups eligible to use the center, basis of membership or use, (including membership dues and charges), rules of conduct, financial procedures, registration of members, recording of attendance, methods of electing officers and directors, terms of office, and days and hours when the center is to be opened.²⁹

In analyzing the policies of the different centers on these questions of youth center operation it is found that there is no uniform practice. Regulations vary from center to center and according to the size and activities of the organization. However, a consensus of opinion agrees on fundamental principles governing such regulations. They may be summarized as follows:

1. There should be an adult advisory council and a youth council who work together in setting up the organization, maintaining it, and in making its regulations.
2. The membership should represent a true cross-section of community or neighborhood.
3. Opportunities should be provided for the participation of all members in the activities; good youth centers are democratic.
4. The membership dues should not be excessive to the extent that worthy applicants would be excluded.

²⁹National Recreation Division, Teen-Age Centers, p. 16.

5. Definite rules of conduct should be worked out by the youth council and the adult advisory council.

6. Centers should be open as much as possible and especially at the time when youth are free to seek recreation; some are open each evening, and others only on certain nights or over the week-end.

7. The most common closing hours on weekdays are 9:00 and 10:00 p.m., on Saturdays and Sundays 11:00 p.m. and 12:00 p.m.

8. The financial procedures of the club should be the same as for any business institution: funds should be accounted for, records kept, and economical practices followed.

The rules of conduct are very important factors in the operation of the club. The Florida Survey found that one of the greatest problems confronting youth centers was the destruction of property by the teen-agers. In many instances youth had failed to appreciate the facilities provided, and had marked on walls, cut up chairs, tables, and misused the equipment in other ways. Making the youth themselves directly responsible for the decorating, care and operation of the buildings had remedied the situation in most instances. All of the authorities consulted agreed that the youth should participate in making the rules and by-laws and illustrations of some rules of conduct made by youth centers are included in the appendix of the study.³⁰

³⁰Appendix of the Study, pp. 62-64.

Summary

Attention has been given in this chapter to factors essential to the establishment and successful maintenance of a youth center. These essentials as recommended in literature have been found to be as follows:

1. The establishment of a youth center should be carefully planned on the basis of the needs of the youth of the community.

2. The youth center should be sponsored by some responsible organization who can be depended upon to further the interests of it in a responsible manner.

3. There should be sound financial backing of the organization.

4. The organization of the youth center should be responsible and efficient, yet democratic in nature.

5. Well-trained responsible leadership is a prime necessity in the organization; the actual operation should be under the leadership of a trained, paid director.

6. There should be opportunities provided for youth participation in the organization.

7. The location of a youth center should be in the area where youths congregate and not too far removed from their homes.

8. The facilities of the youth center should provide opportunities for many differing types of activities.

9. A well-planned program is essential in carrying on the different activities.

10. The operation of centers should be governed by by-laws made by the members of the center in collaboration with the adult advisory council.

11. Once these regulations are made they should be enforced and observed.

CHAPTER III

DATA CONCERNING THE ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES OF THE DENTON, TEXAS YOUTH CENTER

El Centro, a Youth Center for the boys and girls of Denton, County Texas, was established in 1944. The center has the reputation of being one of the most successful of this type of organization in the United States and has continued to grow and develop after the war hysteria, the immediate cause of the youth recreation movement, was over. The purpose of this chapter is to present the data regarding the various phases of the establishment and organization of the center. The plan of presentation will follow the list of essential factors for the success of a youth center as set up in the preceding chapter.

Survey of the Needs for a Youth Center in Denton, Texas

Denton, Texas, by the 1940 census had a permanent population of more than 10,000 people, and a college population of approximately 5,000 students for the greater portion of the time. The city was and is primarily a school town. The industries in the town prior to this time had been mainly those of service to the population, and few manufacturing

industries had established themselves there. Besides the public school system, consisting of a senior high school, junior high school, and three elementary schools, there are two large state colleges.

On account of the programs of the two colleges and the many outside attractions that they brought in, the town had unusual entertainment opportunities. There were many noted lecturers, drama productions, and various kinds of recreational activities. A modern golf course at each college and two swimming pools offered outdoor recreation. The high degree of talent brought to the town by the faculty of the two colleges made the clubs of the town unusual in many respects. There were six large downtown churches and a number of others in the residence sections. The city owned a park in the heart of the town and it had space for several kinds of recreation. Softball teams used it for their games all through the summer.

On the surface, the city of Denton appeared to have a well-balanced recreation program. A closer survey, however, revealed that there was no program planned especially for the adolescent or teen-age group of young people. There were a number of Boy Scout troops in the city and one Girl Scout troop, but otherwise there were no organized teen-age clubs or groups outside the schools. The city had no recreational program, and no public funds were available for such a program.

The Kiwanis Club was the first organization to sponsor a survey for a youth center. This service organization had consistently given its time and funds in helping the underprivileged children of the town obtain medical treatment. One of the projects of the Club was an annual minstrel. The amount and kinds of talent in the two colleges and the facilities available in them for staging a minstrel show made it possible to offer a program that was widely supported. The funds realized from this minstrel were used in the social-service program of the Club. At the time there were no provisions made by either the County or City of Denton for medical treatment for those unable to pay the regular fees. The Kiwanis Club for a long while specialized in providing tonsil operations and glasses for underprivileged children. Interest in this phase of the work led to an interest in all the needs of youth. The result was an investigation of the need for a youth center.

Sponsor of the Denton Youth Center

Early in 1944 the Kiwanis Club invited two physicians, Sutherland and Moore from the Hogg Foundation, Austin, Texas, to come to Denton and discuss youth centers with the people of the town and county. All of the organizations in the area were invited to send representatives and to acquaint themselves with the needs of the area for such an organization. The response was good, and much enthusiasm was stirred as the result of the discussions. As

a result, the Kiwanis Club undertook to sponsor the youth center and to organize and maintain it. The long service record of the club and its established social-service program fitted it for assuming leadership of such an undertaking.

Financing the Youth Center

With the backlog of funds already established by the minstrel projects, the Kiwanis Club began a campaign of solicitation for additional funds. The town and country people were made acquainted with youth needs. Contributions ranging from one dollar to one-hundred dollars came in from many sources and financial support of the undertaking was assured. The response and cooperation from other organizations in the town were especially good and encouraging for the future support of the enterprise by the public.

This plan of financing has been followed in the operation of the center. In February of each year the Kiwanis Club presents its annual minstrel show. Prior to the presentation the townspeople and country people are offered the opportunity to participate with the Club as sponsors of the social-service program. The people of the area support the minstrel by attending and buying tickets and in addition donate funds individually and, in some instances, by firms and organizations. The support of the area is a testimonial of the soundness of the financial backing

and the efficiency with which the funds are handled.

Organization of the Youth Center

An adult board of directors, composed of Kiwanis Club members, and an advisory board of almost fifty adults representing every club and organization in the city served as advisers to the initial organization. A youth council made up of teen-agers from the city was formed and entrusted with the task of formulating by-laws and rules of conduct as well as helping in select and equip a building suitable for the activities of a youth center.

Figure 2 shows the organization that was set up for the youth center. In most respects this is the organization that is effective at the present time. As indicated in the illustration, the Kiwanis Club furnishes the financial backing. The Kiwanis Board of Directors serves in an advisory capacity to the Executive Committee and to the Youth Center Committee. These bodies advise and set the policies for the organization. A paid director supervises and initiates various activities sponsored by the center. An adult council composed of the principals of the city schools is available for consultation with the director. Youth participation is utilized through their planning of programs and activities.

The one important change made is in the work of the Youth Council. For the first two years this group had important work. After the center was firmly established,

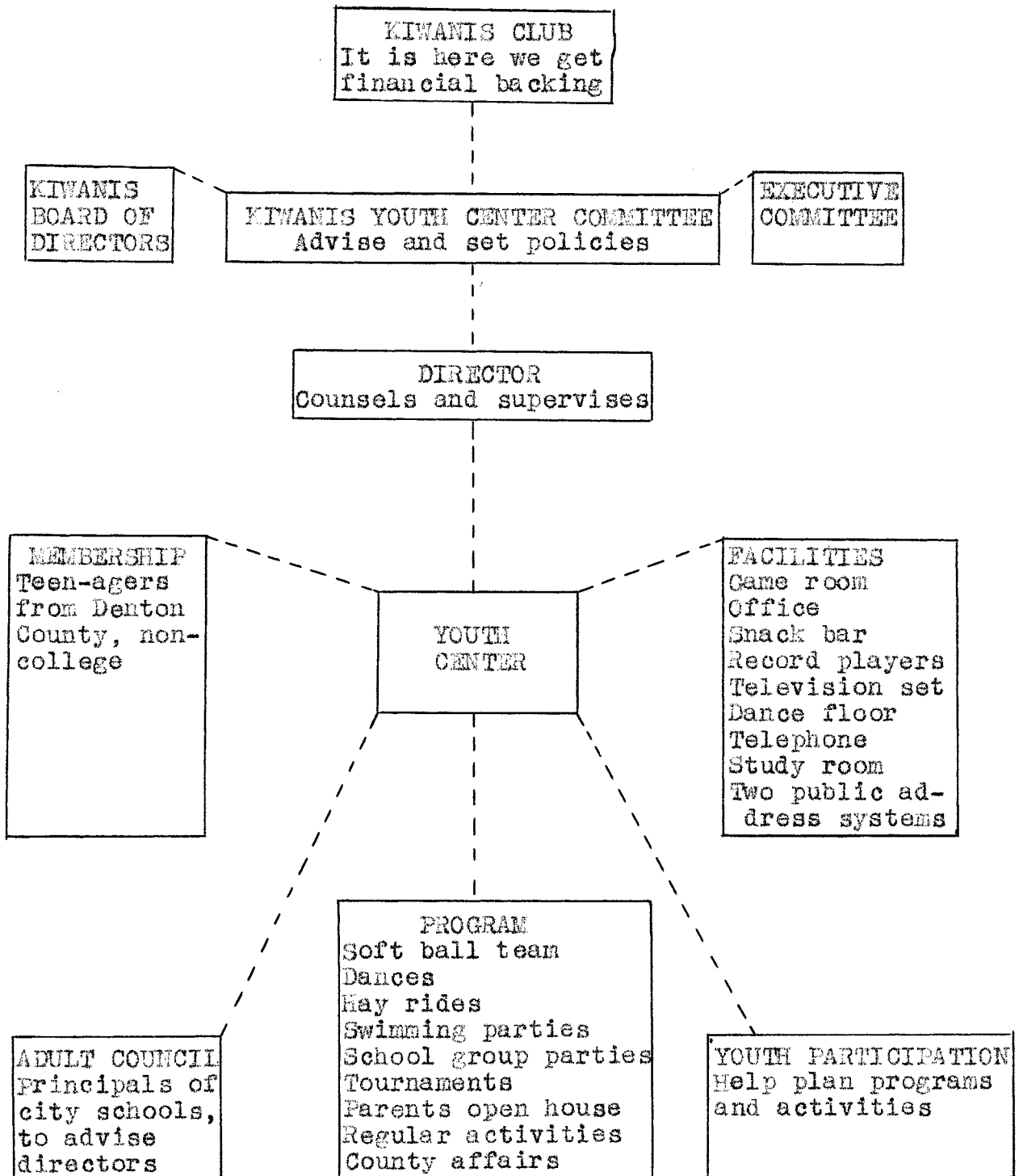


Fig. 2--El Centro Organization²⁷

²⁷From the files of the Kiwanis Office.

attendance had increased, and the policies established, there was little work for the Council and the group was discontinued. At the present time instead of a Youth Council there is youth participation on a general scale and suggestions. Anytime there is occasion for members to give advice, a group is called from those in attendance that night. This gives all the youth a feeling that they are important to the welfare of the organization. Cliques or controlling groups are discouraged in this way, and each member is made to feel that the club is his responsibility as well as the others who attend.

Location of the Denton Youth Center

Since only one youth center was planned for the town, a central location was sought. A tabernacle previously used as a church was located almost in the heart of the city and just north of the city hall. Although the building was badly in need of repairs, its size and location recommended it for the purposes of the youth organization. The owners of the building agreed to put on a new roof for a four-year lease and the Kiwanis Club to take care of other needed repairs. Rent for the building was established on a sliding scale, decreasing each month in proportion to the cost of repairs and remodeling on the building. The floor plan of the building was divided to make a large recreation room, dance room, parlor, library, office, powder room, rest rooms, storage and classroom.

There are a number of factors operating to make the location a desirable one. In the first place, the location is directly across the street from the municipal police and fire station. Parents have no fear that undesirable characters will frequent this vicinity or loaf around the entrance. The location is central also and is served by bus lines extending to all parts of the city. It is easily accessible, yet sufficiently set apart from a residence district to obviate any difficulties that might arise from the public address system, the music, and the noise of youth at play.

One very serious lack of the location, however, might be mentioned. This lack is the limited space for outside activities. There is no park area around the building; all the activities must be concentrated inside. There is no room for a swimming pool, one of the most-needed facilities for summer-time recreation.

Facilities and Equipment

The youth center, when first leased, was badly in need of repair, and consisted of only one large room. A technical advisory committee was appointed by the Kiwanis Club to help plan and alter the building to fit the purposes of the center. The carpenters, laborers, electricians and plumbers donated their time, and interested youth gave their services. A Spanish theme was used in the decorations.

This was due to the shape of the building; a keen observer made the statement one day that it resembled the Alamo in shape. After the building was given a stucco finish resemblance was more pronounced and the committee decided to carry out the Spanish design throughout the structure.

"El Centro", Spanish for "center" was chosen as the name of the club, and it was placed in the center of the front of the building. In the dance room the young people themselves designed and painted a large mural, twelve feet by ten in size. It portrays an American boy and a Mexican boy standing on a small island, arm in arm, signifying the friendship between the United States and Mexico.

The facilities were planned to meet the needs of a varied program. A large space for dancing is provided and a public address system provides music. There are eight ping-pong tables, two pool tables, a number of tables for dominoes and checkers, a radio, television set, equipment for softball and boxing, and soft chairs for lounging.

A snack bar has been in operation since the center was started. It has not been operated on a profit basis, but in an effort to provide wholesome food as cheaply as possible. For more than a year the bar was operated on a self-serve basis with the teen-agers helping themselves to cold drinks and ice cream and dropping the money in a jar provided for the purpose. In some instances an interval of

two months would elapse without any loss or failure of the members to pay for their self-served food.

For the past year the snack bar has been operated by a young couple who are extremely interested in the center. They are both wonderful dancers; the center pays them a salary for help and supervision and gives them the profits they make from the snack bar. This profit, if any, is so small that no one could afford to operate the snack bar alone without some other source of income. Under the skillful management of this young couple, the bar has proved to be a valuable drawing card and a source of wholesome fun for the members.

The center is also equipped with a public address system. The record player has an amplifier which enables members in all parts of the center to hear the music. One other feature which has proved very popular is the magazine table. The youth center subscribes to twenty magazines, and they are always in demand.

The youth center has no facilities or equipment for teaching vocational subjects. One very serious lack is an adequate cooling system for making the club usable during the summer months. The center has no swimming pool for its members.

Program of the Youth Center

There has been a director who is paid for services

rendered from the beginning of the operation of the youth center. A young man and his wife, both holding Master's Degrees in Education, were employed in 1944. In 1945 a new director, a school principal, began his duties as leader and supervisor of activities. In 1946-47 a lady was added to the staff. In 1946-47, a man assistant, with a college degree, also began work at the center. This man was replaced in 1948 by another school principal who now serves as assistant director. In the latter part of 1948 a college student and his wife were also added to the staff. The length of experience of these members of the staff plus their professional training and qualifications, has given qualified supervision to the center and its activities since its beginning.

Club hours at the youth center are from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and from 5:00 to 10:30 on Friday and Saturday. Monday night is reserved for any school sponsored program or group. These Monday night reservations have been extremely successful and popular. Reservations are often asked for as much as eight to ten months in advance. When the Calendar for the year is made during September, it is not unusual to fill all nights for the school year, except maybe three or four, within a week.

During the summer months, June 15th. to September 1st. El Centro is closed because the building is not air-conditioned

and gets too unpleasant. Activities then are transferred to the city park. El Centro has a softball team that plays in the city league, and also puts on exhibition games throughout North Texas. The team has some five or six hundred teenage supporters who consistently attend the games. A junior team is also a part of the activities, and it participates in the junior ball league of the city.

El Centro serves also as a community center in many ways and as a gathering place for groups. For more than two years it had its own band composed of high school students and directed by one student. A tap-dancing team, composed of members, and directed by a member, has been one of the featured entertainments offered. Vocal trios, piano specialists, and many other types of entertainers have been developed.

The center strives to cooperate and participate in all community activities and programs. The Denton County Children's Clinic for underprivileged children has met at the center several times. Doctors from near-by Fort Worth and Dallas are invited to attend the clinics where as many as fifty children have been examined and remedial or corrective treatments suggested. The Denton County Tuberculosis Association has used the center to give X-ray examinations to all the citizens for two years.

In planning and carrying out the program of activities,

the spirit of democracy is maintained. As previously mentioned, no one group of members is selected to direct the activities, but all are given a chance to participate. Likewise, the members follow their own inclinations in the matter of selecting activities for which the center has provisions. In the beginning, an organized, directed program of games was carried on. The members, in discussions, voiced disapproval of this practice. The statement was made that organized, directed activities were too much like school programs; the purpose of this club was for youth recreation. From that time on, the members have danced, played ping-pong, checkers, read, or lounged and watched the others play, whatever they have desired. Supervision has been given at all times, but the program has belonged to the youthful members.

By-Laws of El Centro

A tentative constitution and by-laws for the youth center were worked out by the Youth Council and the advisory committee. A copy of this document is reproduced in the appendix of the study.¹ Since its adoption a number of changes have been made, the most important of which have been the discontinuance of the Youth Council as a separate group and the charge for membership.

¹Reproduced in the Appendix of the Study, pp. 62-64.

Admission requirements for membership are as follows:

Any student not yet thirteen but in the ninth grade may become a member of the Youth Center. Immediately upon completion of the eighth grade course a student may become a member. After a senior graduates he may retain his membership for a period of six months. The maximum age shall be nineteen.²

Once the student is graduated from high school, he can only attend the center as a guest. No fee is charged either for membership or for the guests. In the initial administration of the youth center, a small membership fee was charged, but this policy has been discontinued.

Rules of conduct are simple and there are only two restrictions: no smoking except in a special room, and no drinking permitted either in the premises or outside.

²By-Laws of Constitution of El Centro, Appendix, pp. 62-64.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION OF EL CENTRO AS A YOUTH CENTER FOR DENTON COUNTY TEEN-AGERS

In evaluating the youth center, El Centro, attention is given to the extent to which it meets factors considered necessary for the successful operation of a youth center, to the number and types of membership, to the type of program offered, and to opinions of various citizens of the town who are in position to judge the value of the center as a recreation agent for youth.

Extent to Which El Centro Meets Factors Essential to the Successful Operation of a Youth Center

Survey of Need.--The Denton youth center, El Centro, it is shown, was established only after a comprehensive survey had shown there were few opportunities for recreation solely for the teen-age group; the culture level of the town, due to its two colleges and lack of manufacturing industries, was high otherwise. There was no one place where youth could meet and have their own establishment.

Sponsor.--El Centro is sponsored by a service organization which had built up a reputation for outstanding

service to youth. It has won the confidence of the people of the area through this work and from the beginning was able to enlist the support of all other agencies in the town: the homes, the churches, the schools, the clubs, and service organizations of all types.

Finance.--The finance program of El Centro is stable and is administered on a business basis. The center has adequate funds for its activities, but the same care is maintained in expenditures as in any other reputable business institution. Service and not profit is the aim of the organization, and for this reason all expenses are held to a minimum.

Organization of the Youth Center.--El Centro is organized along the lines recommended by the National Recreation Division. It is governed by a youth council assisted by an adult advisory committee, and is under the direction of a paid executive director. This official, with his assistants, is trained in youth leadership. There has been only one change in the leadership since the initial opening and that was in 1945, only one year after the center was organized in 1944.

Participation by the members in the organization is also provided. No one clique or group, it is indicated, has been selected for help in planning activities, but direct participation by members present is the plan followed.

Democracy in both membership and in participation in activities is stressed.

Location of the Center.--El Centro is centrally located in a semi-business area of the town. Police protection, bus transportation, and freedom from undesirable surroundings give parents a feeling of security. The building and environment seem particularly suited for the activities of a youth center. The site is inadequate from the viewpoint of adequate space for outdoor activities.

Facilities and Equipment.--El Centro has facilities and equipment for many types of activities. Music, a good dance floor, chairs for lounging, magazines, different types of table games, all provide recreation for almost any type of need. The major weaknesses in lack of equipment are no facilities for vocational training and the absence of a swimming pool. There are two swimming pools in the town located at the two colleges, and these are open to town-people at certain hours. The fees are high, and restrictions are very numerous. Few of the youths feel free to use these pools, and the majority either go to Lake Dallas or use an outdoor tank with a dirt bottom east of the city. Lack of such a facility may be credited as one of the outstanding weaknesses of the center.

Program of El Centro.--The program of El Centro, it is indicated, covers a wide range of recreational activities. An adult leader or supervisor is present at all times. The

youth are not forced or directed through certain activities, but opportunities are provided for participation in many different types of recreation. The center is not open on Sundays, but is open on week-day evenings. The Monday night reserved programs for county members widens the field of service rendered. Community service is provided through opening the building to various types of worthy neighborhood school-sponsored groups.

By-Laws of El Centro.--The by-laws of the youth center are simple and provide for changes. These are few restrictions and there is no regimentation. Only a skeleton framework was set up for government. The administration of the center, it is indicated, has been mainly in the hands of the young people for whom it was established and built.

Some idea of the growth and types of membership may be obtained by a presentation of some statistics of the club. Records have been kept of the attendance from 1944 up through the first half of the year, 1949, and these indicate the extent to which the center has been used. Table 1 gives the attendance through the period, 1944 to May, 1, 1949.

The data in Table 1 show a steady increase in the attendance at the youth center from its initial start down to the present time. The largest increase, it is apparent, has been in the years since the war ended, the period which was believed to have been the one in which youth needed recreation most.

TABLE 1

ATTENDANCE AT EL CENTRO DURING THE YEARS
1944 TO 1949*

Year	Average Attendance Per Night
1944	75
1945	75 to 85
1946	100
1947	100 to 110
1948	110 to 125
1949	175 to 200

*Records of El Centro

Table 2 gives the membership statistics of El Centro.

TABLE 2

MEMBERSHIP OF EL CENTRO FROM 1944 TO 1949

Year	Membership
1944	524
1945	633
1946	725
1947	806
1948	1012
1949	1226

The figures in Table 2 show that the membership has steadily increased, with the largest increase coming within recent years. The statistics indicate that the center has been successful in attracting the youth and that there is a well-defined need for youth recreation in war times and in times of peace as well.

The type of membership is indicated in a recent check made of the attendance at the center for a week. The occupation of the parents, the various levels of employment, and something of the home environment of the pupils was

determined through some small information sheets filled out by the members. From the data obtained, the socio-economic status of the pupils was indicated. Table 3 presents the data on occupations of parents.

TABLE 3
OCCUPATIONS OF PARENTS OF YOUTH WHO ARE MEMBERS
OF EL CENTRO

Occupation of Parents	Per Cent of Members
Professional	30.0
Trades	20.0
Laborers	40.0
Farmers	10.0

The data in Table 5 indicate that the membership of the youth center comes from a wide and varying range of social status, and that no one particular level is stressed. The center meets criteria in this respect. The youth center was established for all the youth of the town, not for a select few or the underprivileged group. If there is to be democracy in such a differentiated membership, the tendency for social stratification into groups must be prevented. The success of El Centro in avoiding the formation of cliques or groups is evidenced by a statement from the program director:

The boys and girls whose fathers are doctors, lawyers, and preachers play with the farmers, laborers, and tradesmen in such a manner that if you do not know them you could never guess who is who.²

²Statement made by Director of El Centro Youth Center.

The center has been particularly pleased with the number of members participating from over Denton County. In 1944 the membership was limited almost altogether to students living in the town of Denton. In 1945 a few students from over the county began to come in and participate in the youth activities at the center. During the year of 1946 the youth organization made an active bid for county memberships. Previous to this, the director of the youth program had visited different areas in the county and invited the youth to become members, but little response had been made. Again, the Director of the Youth Program is quoted:

I was in distress as to what to do so I called some of my best leaders together and we struck upon the idea of putting an assembly program in these schools and asking their superintendent's permission to bring his students in to El Centro one time on busses and let them decide whether or not they wished to come back.

This proved to be one of the most successful things that has been done for bringing county students into our center. With only one or two exceptions every community and town in the county took part. We finally were forced to work out a schedule so too many towns would not come in on the same night. Many, many nights boys have hitchhiked from county towns to El Centro.

Our county boys and girls now know and feel that El Centro is for them as much as our city members. We have wonderful cooperation from each and every community and town in the county. You can find boys and girls from as many as five or six different towns at El Centro most every night. The adults of these communities are also extremely cooperative in every way.³

Another interesting angle in studying the Denton youth center is that of discipline. One of the factors operating to cause the failure of centers, it was shown in Chapter II

³Ibid.

of the study, was poor discipline and breakage of equipment. The director of the youth program has this comment on this phase of the operation of El Centro:

It will probably be hard for you to believe but our discipline problems are very few. In fact, we have more trouble keeping out the college students, and older boys and girls who are not eligible for membership than we do with our own discipline problems.

Our boys and girls try to keep things going as they should be. There has never been a word written in the girl's basement. There has been only three words written in the boy's basement in four years. These words were: 'Kilroy has been here.'

The furniture was put into the building at the beginning and there is not one piece of it damaged beyond regular use.⁴

Keeping the boys and girls busy has been the secret of good discipline, the Director believes. At all times there has been capable supervision by adults and this no doubt has contributed to the lack of discipline problems. Part credit is due the cooperation of the North Texas State College and the Texas State College for Women Recreation Departments because of their cooperation.

A further evaluation of the youth center to Denton young people may be made by a study of the records of juvenile problems of the town.⁵ While the center in no way can be regarded as a corrective agent for juvenile problems altogether, the fact remains that many of the juvenile problems arise because youth lack proper recreation facilities.

⁴Ibid.

⁵The words "juvenile problems" are used advisedly; the Director of the Youth Center believes there is no such phrase as "juvenile delinquency." It is "Parental Delinquency" instead.

A check of the number of youths sent to the reformatory from the county of Denton will perhaps give an idea of the extent of juvenile problems prevalent for a period of eighteen years. Table 4 gives this information. The list as given does not include boys who were sentenced and given suspended sentences, but only those actually sent to the State school.

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS SENT TO THE STATE
SCHOOL FROM DENTON COUNTY FROM 1931 TO 1949⁶

Year	Number of Offenders
1931	1
1932	5
1933	3
1934	1
1935	2
1936	1
1937	3
1938	4
1939	7
1940	9
1941	2
1942	8
1943	3
1944	10
1945	7
1946	2
1947	1
1948	2
1949	0*

*Year incomplete

The rate of juvenile offenses, as shown in Table 4, took a sharp rise at the beginning of the war years and reached a high point of ten offenders in 1944, the year

⁶Records of County of Denton Juvenile Court.

that El Centro was in the process of organization. In 1945 there were only seven offenders and the number then decreased to two in 1946, one in 1947, two in 1948, and none at all for the present year of 1949. While El Centro makes no claim for this decrease in juvenile problems, it does assert that it has furnished wholesome recreation for the youth of the city and county. The belief is held that one of the most potent weapons for decreasing juvenile problems is satisfying, wholesome recreation.

As a further evaluation of the youth center, El Centro, a questionnaire was prepared and given to six citizens in the town who were in a position to know and evaluate the center activities. These were a prominent club woman, a school principal, county superintendent of education, the mayor of the city, a prominent business man, and a physician. Four levels of answers were provided: excellent, well, fair, and poor. Each of the citizens contacted was asked to express his opinion as to how well El Centro had met the different objectives. The response was immediate and one hundred per cent in representation, which is further evidence of support and cooperation.

The questions and their answers are given in Table 5.

TABLE 5
EVALUATION OF EL CENTRO ON BASIS OF OBJECTIVES

Question	Excellent	Well	Fair	Poor
To what extent do you think El Centro is doing the job it should for teen-agers?	5	1	0	0
To what degree do you think that the churches accept and approve the work that is being done by El Centro?	3	3	0	0
To what degree do you think the public as a rule accept and approve El Centro?	2	4	0	0
To what degree do you think El Centro is reaching all classes of children?	1	4	1	0
What sort of care do you think the teen-agers have taken of the furniture in El Centro?	4	2	0	0
How do you rate the way the people of Denton accept our dancing and playing pool in the Youth Center?	3	3	0	0
Rate us for the job you think we are doing in reaching the rural children?	3	3	0	0
What sort of job do you think El Centro has done as for keeping down cliques?	5	3	0	0

TABLE 5--Continued

Question	Excellent	Well	Fair	Poor
To what extent do you think El Centro has cut juvenile problems in Denton?	4	2	0	0
How do you rate our center as for cooperation toward the welfare of the center of both children and adults?	3	1	2	0
To what extent do you think the adults are interested in El Centro?	0	5	1	0
Please rate El Centro as for the discipline maintained in your opinion?	5	1	0	0
How do you rate the location of El Centro?	3	3	0	0
How do you rate the variety of our program?	4	2	0	0
What chance do you think El Centro has of becoming a permanent fixture in our city?	3	3	0	0

These ratings given the different questions concerning the center indicate that, in the opinion of these six disinterested citizens, the center has accomplished many of its aims in a satisfactory manner. Out of a possible

rating of ninety-six "excellent points", there were fifty such ratings. Forty-two "well" ratings were given, and only four "fair" ones. None of the group gave a "poor" rating on any of the questions.

As a further measure of evaluation, letters regarding the activities of El Centro and the outcomes are presented in the Appendix of the study from a group of citizens who, in their respective fields, have an opportunity to directly judge the outcomes of the youth center. These citizens are respectively: Judge of the Juvenile Court of Denton County, Chief of Police of the City of Denton, County Attorney of Denton County, Superintendent of the Public Schools of Denton, Texas, District Governor of Kiwanis Service Clubs, a minister of a large Denton church, Chairman of the Board, State Department of Public Welfare, and Chairman of the Denton Welfare Association.

These letters speak for themselves. They form a composite picture of the work of El Centro and its aims and outcomes.

This chapter has presented an evaluation of the Denton Youth Center, El Centro. The factors present in the organization and administration of the center were compared with the factors considered essential for the successful operation and continuance of such an institution. Additional data were submitted on attendance figures, areas of attendance, and outcomes of the youth activities. The

following conclusions were reached in the evaluation:

1. The factors considered essential for the successful operation of a youth center by authorities in the field have been present to a satisfactory degree in the set-up of the Denton youth center. The center was established after a survey showed the needs of the project; it was established according to a well-defined plan; it has a responsible, reputable sponsor; the finance basis is stable and adequate; the organization is democratic and responsible; the location of the center is satisfactory; the facilities and equipment are adequate; the program is planned by the youth under the supervision of trained, experienced personnel and covers a wide range of activities; and the by-laws are simple, easily amended, and not dictatorial or restrictive.

2. The attendance at the Youth Center has steadily increased each year of its operation.

3. The membership of the organization has doubled.

4. The membership is composed of youth from all levels; they play together on an equal footing.

5. The youth from over Denton County attend the center and one night each week is set apart for different towns or groups.

6. There have been no discipline problems in the operation of the center.

7. Juvenile offenders have decreased in the town and county during the operation of the youth center.

8. The outcomes of the youth center, in the opinion of various city and county officials, ministers, school officials, and members of service organizations and welfare boards, have been desirable and satisfactory.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The present study has been a survey of the Denton youth center, El Centro, and the factors contributing to its successful operation for a period of five years. Attention was given to other studies made in the field of youth recreation, to factors considered essential to the successful operation of a youth center, to facts and figures relative to the operation of El Centro, and to an evaluation of its services in terms of the factors considered essential for successful operation.

Conclusions

The following conclusions have been made from the results of the study:

1. Youth centers are a comparatively new phase of organized recreation for teen-age youth; they were the outgrowth of war conditions which resulted in many youth-disturbing influences.
2. Many of the youth centers set up during the war have closed; others have expanded their activities and become integral parts of youth-recreation activities.

3. The essential factors in the successful operation of a youth center may be summarized as follows:

- a. Planned to meet community needs
- b. Responsible sponsor
- c. Community support and cooperation
- d. Adequate finances
- e. Central location
- f. Responsible organization with trained leadership
- g. Adequate facilities and equipment for a variety of recreation activities for youth
- h. Program comprising a wide range of activities
- i. Flexible by-laws and democratic practices

4. El Centro, when its activities were measured against these essential factors, was found to be adequate in the majority of instances. The greatest weaknesses were found in lack of play space at the site, and lack of swimming pool facilities for the members.

5. The following facts were developed through a study of the center's history and administration:

- a. Membership in the center has steadily increased
- b. The attendance has doubled in number
- c. The membership of the center comes from different levels of economic status; all are accorded equal treatment and consideration.

d. Membership of youth from over the county has been accomplished.

e. There have been no discipline problems at the center.

f. Capable adult supervision has been present at all times.

g. Juvenile problems in the town have decreased.

h. A committee of responsible citizens rate the center as accomplishing its major aims in a satisfactory manner.

i. Letters from city, county, and state officials gave the center a high rating in furnishing wholesome recreation for the youth of the city and county.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered in the light of the data revealed in this study:

1. Continued practice of the policies which have resulted in the successful operation of the club.

2. An alert interest in developments in youth recreation, and continued research for opportunities to expand and improve the program.

3. A study toward ways and means of obtaining a swimming pool for the youth membership and other youths of the town.

4. Keeping the activities and needs of the youth center

and of all Denton youth before the public and enlisting further public support and cooperation toward an expansion of youth recreation facilities.

It is hoped that this factual survey of the organization and administration of the youth center has emphasized both the strong points and the weak points of the organization. Continued research is necessary in order to evaluate the activities and determine the extent to which they meet the youth needs of the city of Denton.

APPENDIX

Sample of Rules of Conduct Set Up By A Youth Center*

1. No drinking of liquor.
2. No gambling.
3. No one allowed in under the influence of liquor.
4. No smoking.
5. Club closes at 10:30 Friday and Saturday and at 9:00 week nights.
6. The club shall be responsible for any damages to the building during club sessions.
7. Penalty for breaking rules can be temporarily expulsion, or permanent suspension of membership.

Typical List of Rules of Conduct Found in National Survey of Youth Centers**

1. Members shall at all times conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen.
2. There shall be no drinking of alcoholic beverages at the club and no member shall be admitted to the club who has recently been drinking elsewhere.
3. There shall be no gambling of any description.
4. There shall be no loitering on the outside or near the clubroom.
5. Club members who destroy, break, or mutilate any furniture or equipment shall immediately replace same or pay for it.
6. Members shall not permit non-members to use their cards.
7. Each member is responsible for keeping any part of the club or equipment he uses clean.
8. There shall be no profanity or vulgar language.
9. There shall be no disorderly conduct.
10. Each club member shall immediately and without protest respect the wishes and instructions of the adult person or member officer in charge of the club.
11. If any facilities of the club should be limited, members shall take turns in the use of the same.

*Royal Crown Cola, How to Organize a Teen-age Club, p. 20.

**Division of Recreation, Office of Community War Services, Youth Centers, p. 16.

12. There shall be no smoking in the building.
13. The violation of any rule shall be punishable by the forfeiture of membership card and rights of membership in the club.

Activities Suggested for Youth Centers

Physical Recreation

Sports and athletics
 Water sports
 Winter sports
 Hiking
 Bicycling
 Bowling
 Roller skating
 Tennis
 Golf
 Badminton
 Volley ball
 Basketball
 Fishing
 Riflery
 Physical fitness activities

Mental and Linguistic Activities

Discussion groups
 Forums
 Debates
 Reading groups
 Writing groups
 Lectures
 Quizzes

Hobbies and Special Interests

Collecting
 Photography
 Radio
 Amateur movies

Music Activities

Community singing
 Informal group singing
 Glee clubs
 Choruses
 Bands
 Orchestra
 Harmonica playing
 Concerts

Social Activities

Dancing
Parties
Entertainments
Picnics
Outings
Beach parties
Treasure hunts
Scavenger hunts

Arts

Painting
Sketching
Modeling
Art exhibits

Crafts

Woodwork
Metalwork
Sewing
Knitting
Model Aircraft
Model boats
Leatherwork
Jewelry

TENTATIVE CONSTITUTION OF THE DENTON
COUNTY YOUTH CENTER

Preamble

We, the youth of Denton County, in order to establish a closer relationship between the schools of Denton County, to further educational possibilities, to develop talents, and to promote social instincts, to ourselves and to the future members of the Youth Center, formulate this constitution for the Youth Center of Denton County.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this organization shall be

ARTICLE II

Youth Council

Section I - Powers of the Youth Council:

The council shall have the power to pass any laws that are necessary and proper for the betterment of the Youth Center.

The council may either disband old committees or formulate new committees.

It shall be the province of the council to set the date and hours which the Youth Center will be open.

The council has the right to suspend or take away the membership of any member without the general consent of the Youth Center members by a two-thirds vote.

The membership fee of the Youth Center shall be set by the council.

Section II - Membership of the Council:

There shall be one person on the permanent council for each eighty students in a school, elected by the eligible students.

Permanent council members shall be elected in March and September, to take office April 1st. and October 1st. respectively. To rotate the membership, fifty per cent of the council shall be replaced every six months. To make this plan operate, the first directors shall draw straws for six and twelve months terms.

ARTICLE III

Executive Council

Section I - Powers of the Executive Council:

The Youth Council shall nominate several persons for the office of chairman of the committees, then the Executive Council shall elect the chairmen.

Section II - Membership of the Executive Council:

Membership of the Executive Council shall be composed of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Committee Chairmen of the Youth Council.

The first President of the Council shall be from Denton Senior High School and the first Vice-President shall be from Teachers College High School. These officers shall rotate yearly from Denton High to T. C. High.

The Secretary shall be selected by the Executive Council.

There shall be committees of Maintenance and Repair, Finance, Public Relations, Youth Study, Entertainment, and Building.

ARTICLE IV

Youth Center Admission

Section I - Permanent Membership:

A fee shall be charged for membership in the Youth Center.*

Any student not yet thirteen but in the ninth grade may become a member of the Youth Center. Immediately upon completion of the eighth grade course a student may become a member of the Youth Center. Anyone thirteen may become a member. After a senior graduates he may retain his membership for a period of six months. The maximum age shall be nineteen.

Section II - Guest Admission:

After expiration of his permanent admission as a high school senior, a youth may be admitted to the Youth Center by guest ticket only.

"Teen-age" ex-students of Denton County high schools who are in the service shall be allowed to come to the Youth Center if they secure a guest ticket. All other men in service shall be barred.

No charge shall be imposed for guest tickets.

*Amended to discontinue this.

ARTICLE VI

Rules of Conduct

There shall be no smoking in the Youth Center except in a special room which may be provided for smoking.

There shall be no drinking of alcoholic beverages in the Youth Center and no youth who has been drinking may enter the Center.

Mr. Arthur J. Seely
Director
Denton County Youth Center
Denton, Texas

Dear Mr. Seely:

The fine work that you have been doing for the youngsters of Denton County through the Denton County Youth Center has prompted me to write this letter. The Youth Center has done more than anything that has ever been done in this county to offer wholesome recreation for the younger group in Denton and Denton County. The result has been a very noticeable lack of child offenders in the courts of the county. It has been particularly noticeable to me in my work as Judge of the Juvenile Court. The work of the Youth Center has certainly been a credit to Denton County and I am sure that all of the citizens of Denton County join me in commending you for this work.

Yours very truly,

Gerald E. Stockard
County Judge
Denton, County, Texas

Mr. Arthur Seely, Principal
Robert E. Lee School
Denton, Texas

Dear Arthur:

The cause of juvenile delinquency has been attributed to everything from corrupt parents to mental unrest. These causes, expounded on by socialists in every field from religion to sociology, are pertinent factors. However, a more personal aspect is to be considered, namely, "something to do." This phrase can be overheard in every group of idle boys and girls.

We, the citizens of Denton, are fortunate enough to have an established recreation center which provides that necessary "something to do." Regardless of a youth's interest, he can find it at our clubs for the youth. If he wants to read a magazine, play a game of pool, or just have a friendly chat--these can be had by him in an atmosphere which is healthy to his body and mind. The fact that he can actually see good living performed is much more helpful to his mental outlook than in an article which tells him that he will have certain psychological results if he does certain things.

The juveniles who are delinquent are those who do not have anything else to do but commit crimes. As long as our city offers to our children the recreational activities that it does today, then juvenile delinquency will remain at a minimum.

Jack Shepherd,
City Marshal
Denton, Texas

Mr. Arthur Seeley, Principal
Robert E. Lee School
Denton, Texas

Dear Arthur:

I am glad to make this response to your question calling for my opinion as to the value of "El Centro", the Kiwanis sponsored youth center in Denton.

I was president of the local Kiwanis club during the year that the local youth center was organized and established, and I am therefore, well acquainted with its original purposes and aims. After a lapse of five years, it is now possible to look back upon its existence and determine its value. The Youth Center was not designed for nor does it treat or deal with that class commonly known as juvenile delinquents. The Youth Center has served the youth of Denton County in the same manner that PREVENTIVE medicine serves humanity.

The Youth Center has in a rather indirect way brought about a great reduction in the number of juvenile offenders in this county. It has provided a place for youth to spend its spare time in supervised and directed recreation. The Youth Center has not only provided youth of Denton County with a place to properly spend spare time and deprived them of that time in which they would be loafing upon the streets and organizing for trouble and mischief, it has taught them something about fair play, democracy and self rule. It has further taught them that in the Youth Center there is no aristocracy or class but all children are mixing together upon common ground and conducting their own organization merely with the Kiwanis Club as a sponsor. As a result of the overall program of the Youth Center, those who have been members have had no time for nor desire to deviate from those things taught at the Center and engage in acts of vandalism and such things that lead to juvenile delinquency.

Although the Youth Center has not reached all children it has had its influence in the community just as the church has a strong influence in a community although all people do not attend church.

Yours very truly

W. K. Baldrige
County and District
Attorney

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The youth center, "El Centro", sponsored by the Kiwanis Club under the direction of Arthur Seely, is a real asset to the youth of Denton. I know of no substitute for such organization. It meets the need of our youth which can be met in no other way. It gives them freedom in youth activities and yet it is under adult supervision. It provides an equal opportunity to youth regardless of social or economic standing.

I feel that "El Centro" has definitely lessened the number of crimes committed by the youth of Denton.

It has served a definite purpose in meeting the needs of certain groups of the Denton Public Schools. It has made it possible for these groups to have organized entertainment which cannot be had otherwise. It would be a decisive loss to the Denton Public Schools should the activity of "El Centro" be closed. The leadership has been definitely of the type which is wholesome and worthwhile to the youth of Denton, and I feel that the citizenry of Denton is indebted to the Kiwanis Club and to their respective adult leaders for keeping this project on a very high place of leadership.

Yours truly,

Chester Strickland
Superintendent
Denton Public Schools

Mr. Arthur Seeley
111 Avenue D
Denton, Texas

Dear Mr. Seeley:

As Governor of the Texas-Oklahoma District I have been very much interested in the Denton Kiwanis Club Youth Center. I have always been interested in this project, but I have paid particular attention to it this year.

In my opinion it is one of the outstanding projects in our District. I have observed the wonderful democratic spirit displayed by the youngsters who congregate there, and I feel that they are really learning how men and women should work together.

By keeping these youngsters off the streets of Denton, there is no question that you have eliminated much of our juvenile delinquency problem. The facts which are available at the mayor's office certainly prove this. I hope that your work will continue throughout the years, and that this outstanding project will continue to contribute to the building of this better community.

Cordially yours,

F. L. McDonald, Governor
Texas-Oklahoma District
Kiwanis International

TO: Whom It May Concern
SUBJECT: Kiwanis Youth Center
FROM: Joseph J. Copeland, Pastor

As a minister in the community, I am happy to give my approval to the organization, program, and functioning of the Kiwanis Club Youth Center in Denton. We have many of our own young people participating in the activities of the Youth Center, and from them, their parents, and our church officers, I have received no negative reactions. On the other hand, there has been positive approval.

It is my opinion that the wholesome fellowship provoked by the well planned use of energies through the Youth Center has been a wholesome contributive factor to the moral and spiritual life of our entire community.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph J. Copeland
First Presbyterian Church,
U.S.A.

Mr. Arthur J. Seely, Principal
Robert E. Lee School
Denton, Texas

Dear Mr. Seely:

It has been a pleasure to talk with you over the phone regarding the work you are doing with the children and youth of our town. I assure you that it is most gratifying to find a man of your intelligence and experience giving of himself so wholeheartedly and enthusiastically to this greatly needed cause.

May your every effort be crowned of God with ever-increasing success and happiness. With sincere appreciation, I am

Cordially yours

Mrs. Richard J. Turrentine
Member State Department of
Welfare

Mr. Arthur J. Seeley
Director, El Centro
Denton, Texas

Dear Mr. Seeley:

It was with great interest that I heard of your project of writing up the history of El Centro, Denton's thriving youth center. While those interested in welfare of children, and the families of the many who patronize the center are aware of the "need" that is met in our community by this organization, there are many others who need to know more about its working and philosophy.

As Chairman of the Denton Social Welfare Association, and also County Chairman of the White House Conference of 1950 Survey of Children and Youth, I have been made keenly aware of the "gaps" in the provisions for child welfare in Denton, and one of these is adequate recreational facilities, so necessary to the building of health and morals of our future citizens. I feel that I express the sentiment of those in the groups which I represent when I say that in its field and for the age group it serves El Centro is doing an excellent job. We are proud of the work that El Centro is doing in building character and leadership by its democratic processes of self-made rules and policy-planning. I only wish that other phases of youth development and age groups were as progressively provided for in our community. The Kiwanis Club, for its sponsorship, and you, for your able direction, deserve the thanks of every citizen for a needed, well-planned, smoothly functioning organization to help our youth to help themselves to better living.

With best wishes for the expansion of your work and that it may spread contagiously to other projects for a fuller recreation program for all children, I am,

Sincerely,

Ruth L. Barton (Mrs. Sam B.)

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