

Self-Help Learning Lab Gives Inmates A Chance To Catch Up On Studies

Sixteen men with time on their hands at Sandy Ridge Advancement Center are taking advantage of an educational opportunity made possible by High Point Model Cities.

The men, all inmates at the minimum security prison near here, are enrolled in the Learning Lab — a self-help facility complete with books, materials, and teacher, funded by \$13,200 from the Model City Commission this action year.

The teacher is Glenda Foree, a former elementary school teacher who is also a counselor for the New Careers program in Greensboro. Since the Learning Lab was officially opened in November, Ms. Foree has been tutoring the 16 prisoners two nights a week at the specially-equipped school room on the correctional unit's grounds. The multi-purpose room is open at other times for independent study.

Instruction in the subjects of reading, math, algebra, North Carolina history, science and English grammar is geared to each student's own level. Before they enroll, the men are tested to determine how much they know, and where they should start in each subject.

Some of her students could not even read or write when they came to Ms. Foree's self-teaching lab. The average level of achievement at this point, she says, is at about sixth grade.

SETS OWN PACE

Every man in the class works at his own pace using the trial-and-error method of learning, she explains. "Their levels vary a lot. Their performance depends on many things — their IQ, their prior background, their motivation.

"Before, in school, they were all pushed to learn at the same rate. It's different here. Most of them are here because they really want to learn," she went on.

As the Learning Lab "catches on" among the inmates, Ms. Foree feels her enrollment will grow. "Some are hesitant about coming, because they are used to the older public school methods, and they were bored and didn't try. Some of the younger ones still don't know the value of education, either."

The purpose of Ms. Foree's class is to prepare men to take the GED (Graduate Equivalency Degree) test for a high school diploma.

The teacher says her students treat her with the "utmost respect" in the classroom. "At first they really searched my soul to see if I was really interested in them. They found out I was. They deserve a chance."

RESUMED STUDIES

Two members of the class who have been with Ms. Foree since the beginning are John Stinnett, who was convicted of manslaughter, and Albert S. Whitley, who is in prison for second degree murder.

Stinnett had been out of school 17



ALBERT WHITLEY, left, and JOHN STINNETT

years, and Whitley 31 years when they resumed their studies in prison.

In two-and-a-half months last summer, while still in Central Prison in Raleigh, Stinnett decided to start studying to make up for the four years of high school he missed. After he was transferred to Sandy Ridge this fall, and enrolled in the Learning Lab, 120 hours a week of study has almost readied him to take the GED test.

"I think I'm pacing myself too fast,"

says Stinnett, who has been in and out of prison for the last 14 years. "Before I was just stupid. I didn't go to school because I didn't want to.

CAN DO IT

"I'm learning more than I ever did in school. I'm showing myself that if I set my mind to do it, I can do it."

Stinnett says he plans to enter Guilford Technical Institute with many of his fellow inmates from Sandy Ridge after he passes the GED, which he hopes will be at the end of February. Eventually he would like to be an architect.

Albert Whitley, who has been in prison since 1961, hopes to set up a restaurant business of his own after his parole, which could come in May. He says he has a "good ways" to go before he's ready to take the GED, but with the knowledge he is acquiring in the Lab, his chances of being a successful businessman are increasing.

A cook and baker by trade, he took a course in heavy equipment at Wilson Technical Institute, but still wants a high school diploma.

He has praise for Glenda Foree as a teacher. "She never forces us or pushes us. She's a good teacher."

Stinnett agrees. "She makes it fun. Other teachers, they try to beat it in my head. But that don't work on me — my head's too hard."

Pyles Teaches Basic Education

Jackson Pyles, a recent addition to the Model Cities staff, teaches adult basic education two nights a week at Guilford Rehabilitation House.

Enrollment in the class is open to anyone who wants to come. Instruction and books are free.

Guilford Rehab House is located at 303 Oakwood Street, off English Road one block from Lindsay Street.

The class is sponsored by Guilford Technical Institute. There is no minimum level at which a student must enter the class. Pyles said he has had students who could not read or write their name when they came. Depending on a person's progress, he may work his way all the way through high school material.

Classes begin at 7 p.m. and last until 9:30 p.m. Monday and Wednesday. More information can be obtained by calling Pyles at the Model Cities office, 885-9081; at home, 454-2771; or Guilford Technical Institute, 454-1126.

Reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling are among the basics taught in the course.

Pyles, now a social planner on the Model Cities staff, assumed his duties a month ago. Previously he worked with American Friends Service Committee.

He urges Model Neighborhood residents, particularly, to send friends or members of their families who need basic education skills to his class.

Agency's Help Comes In Many Ways...

Every client of High Point Sheltered Workshop has his own little story which makes him unique from all the others.

Such a client is Dwight Locklear, 22-year-old son of Dwight and Darcie Locklear of 1104 Wise Street in the Macedonia neighborhood.

What makes Dwight special right now is his teeth.

Dwight, who has been at the Sheltered Workshop since February 1972, is an example of close coordination between his own program and that of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), an agency housed in the same building at 302 N. Hamilton Street. Both are Model Cities projects.

While the Sheltered Workshop, a division of the Henry Wiseman Kendall Center in Greensboro, trains mentally handicapped persons to take jobs in industry, the Vocational Rehabilitation agency helps people adjust to physical or emotional problems which may prevent them from working to their fullest capacity.

Because the two agencies deal with

such similar cases, they work hand-in-hand in solving problems for people like Dwight.

Dwight came to the workshop because he is mentally retarded. He was placed on jobs within the workshop to help improve his social behavior. Says counselor Rita Johnson, "He needed to learn to stick to a job. He'd work well so long as we were watching him, but the minute we'd turn our backs, he might stop working."

His work habits have improved over the year, she observes, and it might be possible as he progresses to place him one day on a permanent job.

TEETH DECAYED

Workshop personnel noticed this fall, however, that Dwight had bad teeth. So bad, in fact, that every one of his teeth was in an advanced state of decay and needed to be pulled.

That's where VR came in. Since such extensive dental work would have placed a financial hardship on Dwight's parents, VR agreed to pay

for the work — which included new dental plates.

Guilford Technical Institute's dental hygiene department is handling the treatment. Once the new false teeth are made, everyone feels that Dwight's health will improve, which in turn will increase his chances to get a job.

Ms. Johnson feels that Dwight has a lot going for him. "He has more potential than he lets people believe," she says.

Both the Sheltered Workshop and VR services are free to their trainees and clients. Families with young adults (over age 16) with handicaps should contact the agencies for more information. Each case is evaluated in an individual basis to determine what needs could be met by the particular project.

Harold Teeter directs the Sheltered Workshop, while Evelyn Morales heads the local VR office, a division of the North Carolina Department of Human Resources.



DWIGHT LOCKLEAR
Workshop Trainee