

Youth Commission



Standing . . . Robert Austin, Mrs. Dorothy Davis, Commission Secretary, Debbie Joyce, Kenneth Doran, Wendell Moore. Seated . . . Mrs. Elizabeth Burns, Secretary, J. Robert Griffith, Youth Coordinator, Joseph Savignano, Chairman, Halbert Pierce. (Not present — David Eldridge).

| Year | Employees | | Budget | Expenditures | State Reimbursement |
|------|---------------|-------|-----------|--------------|---------------------|
| | Perm. | Temp. | | | |
| 1967 | 1 (Dec. only) | | \$12,000. | \$ 3,028. | |
| 1968 | 1 | 1 | 17,182. | 16,961. | \$4,233. |

By action of the Town Meeting of March 1967, the Needham Youth Commission became an official agency of the town and thus one of the few towns in the Commonwealth, and a growing number in the country, to offer as a municipal service to its citizens, professional guidance to the overall problems of youth.

On December 1, 1967, Mr. J. Robert Griffith was hired as Youth Coordinator and the Youth Commission established an office at 945 Great Plain Avenue, Room #9. Tel: 444-1795. A part-time secretary was employed and Mr. Griffith is available at his office for any service involving youth and their problems.

December 1, 1968 completed one year of service to the community. In this first year of existence, the Youth Commission, its members and Youth Coordinator, have devoted much of their time and energy to the establishment and development of the department. The complete story of this first year of operation is in the step-by-step task of transforming the Youth Commission from a conceptual role to the implementation of a variety of specified youth services and multiple functions focused toward delinquency prevention, control, and treatment.

In December of 1967, a sixty member senior high Needham Youth Council was created through a town-wide election. This group was expanded in September of 1968 to include representation from the two junior high schools and it now totals seventy members. In April of 1968 a twenty-five member Youth-Adult Communications Committee known as "YACC", was formed. Representing a cross-section of the junior high, high school youth and adult community, YACC has been effective in narrowing the "communication gap", and in initiating and implementing several new programs for youth such as a summer coed softball league in conjunction with the Park and Recreation Commission and in a series of town-wide coffee house programs. A new special interest group involving approximately one hundred youngsters of junior high, high school and college age, interested in creative arts and drama was organized during the summer of 1968. Known as the "Needham Youth Summer Theater Group", this program is an excellent example of single youth accomplishment. Aided financially by the Needham Youth Council, and under the official sponsorship and guidance of the Youth Commission, this program was successful in performing a highly acclaimed production of "Kiss Me Kate". Encouraged by the unqualified success of its first year of operation, plans are currently underway for membership expansion, the production of "Music Man" in the summer of 1969, and transfer of sponsorship to the Needham Youth Council.

To be as fully aware as possible of all youth activities and problem areas in the town is a primary function of the Commission. In order to be able to offer consultation and cooperate with other youth-serving agencies, it is necessary for this department to be alert to the activities of the youth of the town,



Youth Council members plan for urban-suburban "Teen Mix" conference.

whether it be in the nature of formal and informal program activity, teenage drinking, or young people's "hangouts", drugs or vandalism. This knowledge comes from youngsters themselves and many other people, both professional and others, and necessitates a free flow of communication between this department and its sources. Success in this area is steadily growing through personal contact, consultation and conferences with individuals, agencies and other town departments, and has resulted in the implementation of several town-wide program efforts toward the resolution of high priority youth problems. Two town-wide information programs on drug abuse entitled, "The Family and the Drug Problem" were sponsored and implemented by the Needham Youth Commission in cooperation with other civic, religious, and educational organizations. Over 1000 youths and adults participated. The effectiveness and impact of the programs can be measured in terms of the discussion motivated between child and parent and the many follow-up program efforts by organizations and groups seeking further information on this subject.

Other programs in which the Youth Commission was directly involved serving as coordinator, sponsor, or catalyst, were a Human Rights Forum, designed to expand communication and understanding in the area of race relations. A town delegation participated in a conference on Community School Program held at Northeastern University in May. During the summer of 1968, the Youth Commission developed a working relationship with ABCD Headstart Program of Boston which resulted in the participation of twenty Needham youths and fifteen Needham adults, serving in significant volunteer roles with the Headstart Program. Twelve teenage boys and girls contributed to an urban-suburban Teen Age Mix Conference held at the Huntington Avenue YMCA, Boston in December of 1968. This three day program brought fifty youths from suburban communities together with fifty youths from the core city for the purpose of sharing ideas, values, attitudes and goals. The Commission initiated and sponsored an Institute In Group Dynamics held at Craigville, Mass., on the Cape, involving twenty-five adult community leaders and eight youths. The Conference was designed to provide group work training and to develop competency and skills of individual participants toward more effective work with Needham youth.

DIRECT SERVICES:

A center for logging and clearing special town-wide youth activities and events was established at the Commission office and made available to all Needham youth groups and organizations whose services focus on youth. This information is published weekly in the *Needham Times* and is available to individuals and organizations on request. The results have been more constructive program planning and the avoidance of program conflict.

In April of 1968, the Youth Commission established an Employment Referral Service available to all Needham youths and youth employers in the Needham area. To date, over 600 young people of junior high, high school, and college age have registered with this program and jobs have been secured for

approximately 75% of those interested in full time, part time and summer employment.

An Information Booklet providing pertinent data on all youth program activities in the town has been compiled, printed, and will be distributed throughout the town. The booklet contains pertinent information on the year-round program activities provided by both private and public agencies and organizations.

Files containing a list of publications, speakers, resource people, group leaders and program guides have been compiled and are available to youth and adult organizations seeking information in the area of sex education and family life programs, drug and alcohol abuse, legal and medical services, vocational opportunities, career information, and volunteer job opportunities.

Another important function of the Youth Commission and one which has achieved the most tangible results in preventing and controlling pre-delinquent and delinquent behavior is direct counseling and referral work with families and youths experiencing problems and difficulties. During the year, the Youth Coordinator worked directly and intensely with thirty-two different youngsters. These young people came from a variety of sources and presented a variety of problems. Many of them fell into more than one problem area, but the major categories were: runaway, drinking, drug abuse, jobless, vandalism, breaking and entering, stealing and shoplifting, parental, personality and medical difficulties. This area of function is extremely time consuming and will become increasingly demanding as the requests for direct services of the Youth Coordinator continue to grow. One of the primary difficulties people have in times of crisis is knowing where to turn for help. It is the hope of this department that as the community becomes more aware of our function, we will be able to be of greater assistance to people with problems. We don't pretend to have solved all of the problems of youth but we are trying in many different avenues of direction to help those who ask for it.

In the area of direct referral sources, arrangements have been established with over twenty local and regional agencies all serving youth in some capacity.

The Youth Commission also maintains up-to-date directories on social, health and welfare rehabilitation services concerning youth in Massachusetts and national and state summer employment directories.

In order to impart information and new techniques on servicing youth problems and delinquency, the Commission and the Youth Coordinator must keep abreast of the latest thinking in these areas. In order to do this, the Youth Coordinator has attended two major conferences, two training seminars, and participated in a number of consultations with various agencies, social workers, educators and research people in the field where new methods and approaches are presented.

To focus town attention on major youth problems and to impart information on Youth Commission programs and services, the Youth Coordinator

made twenty-two public speaking appearances during 1968 and worked closely with the Drop-In Club Program sponsored by the Needham YMCA and the Needham Council of Churches.

As stated by Dr. Alfred J. Kahn, "the entire premise is, that the community has assumed basic obligations for the welfare of its children and that these obligations extend even to those who are aggressive, anti-social and destructive". The Youth Commission is more convinced than ever of the continuing need for the services which it can provide and that the problems related to many of our children and youth cannot continue unabated and unresolved without having detrimental results to the community. There is no one answer to the crucial question of what specifically can be done about a delinquent or pre-delinquent youngster. A varied approach is needed, requiring the coordinated commitment on the part of the entire community. The efforts of the Youth Commission alone will not suffice and we honestly urge continued and increased citizen and agency support and interest in this worthwhile endeavor.