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# O'Berry Center Resident Library

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O'Berry Center is a state, residential facility for severely and profoundly mentally retarded citizens of North Carolina. The residents come from communities located in the 17 counties which make up the Division of Mental Retardation's South Central Region. Severely and profoundly mentally retarded persons have I.Q.s of 34 or below and many of the center's residents have physical handicaps. The center itself is located on a 65-acre, campus-style setting about 50 miles east of Raleigh, just outside Goldsboro.

Essentially, the function of O'Berry Center is to serve as an environment for development. The center provides 24-hour care, including extensive training, to more than 500 residents seven years of age and older. O'Berry is their temporary home until they complete their developmental programs and return to their communities.

Direct development of the mentally retarded individual may include services provided by special education teachers, psychologists, communication (speech and hearing) specialists, physical and occupational therapists, therapeutic recreators, medical and dental staff, social workers, dieticians and, of primary importance, the developmental technicians (health care workers) who, in their direct care of the residents, implement the coordinated programs developed by the others. Those coordinated programs are called Individual Active Treatment Plans and are the crux of the resident's training and development at the center. Once a client has completed his developmental program—as specified in a written contract with the community—the client returns to his home community. While the concept may sound elementary and straightforward, the reality of implementing developmental programs serving severely or profoundly mentally retarded individuals who often have physical or behavioral problems can be draining on both residents and staff. How then can the stress be reduced and enjoyable activities be increased?

The resident library is an area which is designed for leisure rather than for training. The

library is an oasis where residents, accompanied by staff, may come and enjoy movies, magazines, music, puzzles with adaptive handles, stuffed animals, toys, and the latest item, a computer with games. All these sensory stimulation items are there for the enjoyment of the residents.

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Ideally, each resident should have an opportunity to come to the library. If visits were evenly divided among the residents, a resident would average one visit every two weeks. In actuality, the average is much less. Many residents are unable to visit the library for various reasons, including physical and behavioral. However, the attendance of those who can come is good and the available time slots for groups to visit are almost always filled. The number of residents attending the library averages 120-135 weekly. Almost all the residents enjoy the trips to the library and seem eager to come back for another visit.

The resident library was merged into the Media Services Department several years ago. Media Services is a support service to the center and, through the center, to the communities in the south central region. It is a production-oriented, audiovisual department. The staff produces television and slide/tape programs, photographs, and in-house news publications for resident and staff training, documentation, and staff/parent/community information. Media Services also provides audiovisual equipment support to other departments within the center.

The library maintains its own identity within the Media Services Department while being able to draw on Media Services resources. The library does not have its own budget and must rely on

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Robert C. Kemper is Coordinator of Media Services and Nancy Hardee is Library Specialist at O'Berry Center in Goldsboro.

government grants for most of its equipment and supplies. Media Services is responsible for staffing the library, administrative duties, equipment maintenance and repair. Those items are funded from the Media Services budget or as separately budgeted line items.

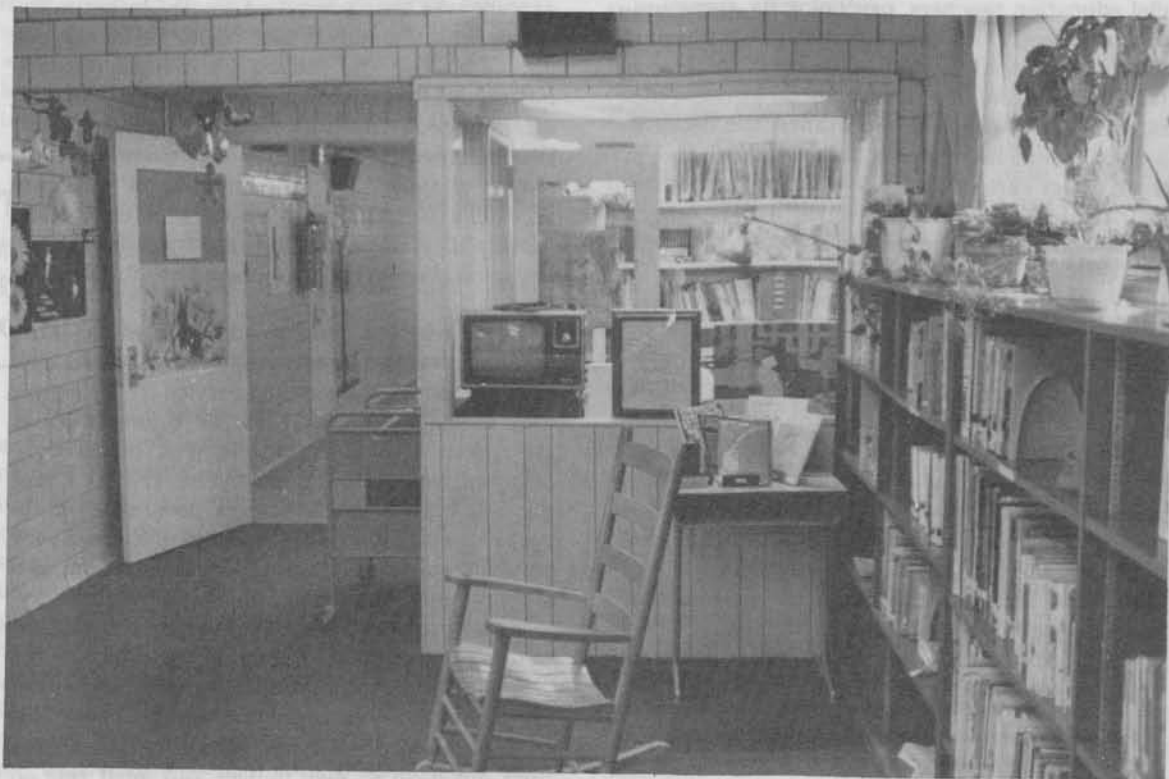
Very few library materials are ordered locally. However, we have purchased animal stick-ups, albums and picture puzzles from the Learning Center in Goldsboro. And, from the local Rose's Department Store, read-along-books and tapes, picture puzzles, listen-and-look books, and talking-story books were purchased. Viewmasters and films were bought at K-Mart, while two rocking chairs for our residents to use in the library were purchased from Kaplan Corporation. Polypockets used for equipment and books, and hang-up bags used for filmstrips and cassettes were purchased from Demco Educational Corporation. Purchases have also been made from Carolina School Supply, Stone's Southern School Supply and Special Education Materials, as well as other vendors.

The resident library is located in the A-3 Building, which is centrally located to all buildings housing center residents. It is approximately 18' x 28' excluding the office and storage area. The library is carpeted and has coordinated draperies covering all the windows. Book stacks are brightly painted in a coordinated color

scheme. The bulletin board and the walls are decorated with Disney characters, animals, and self-help pictures. There are three tables for reading and working, and two tables of paperback publications for residents to thumb through. Magazine selections include *National Geographic*, *Wildlife*, *Southern Living*, *Wee Wisdom*, and *Sports Illustrated*. The book stacks contain toys for the residents to play with while they are in the library, and which may also be checked out by the residents. Some of the toys available are telephones, Viewmasters, artificial fruits/vegetables, blocks, airplanes, trains, cars, and animals. A window seat between two book stacks serves as the setting for stuffed animals, puppets, and dolls. These also may be checked out by the residents. Colorful stacking chairs and beanbags provide seating for residents.

The resident library also has a very good supply of materials available for staff to check out for use with residents in the living units. These include approximately 1500 hardback books, 120 albums with filmstrips, and 130 cassettes with books and/or filmstrips. Staff may also check out audiovisual equipment, cassettes, filmstrip projectors, movie projectors, an autoharp, and other materials.

Mrs. Nancy Hardee is in charge of the library. She is a very caring person and her actions with



"The library is an oasis,"

the residents show that quality. The positive perception staff and residents have about library activities reflects the working style of the librarian as much as the physical environment. While the rocking chairs, carpeting, restful colors, plants, pictures and quiet are invaluable, the hub of O'Berry Center's library is Nancy. She works well with residents and staff and works to improve library services both in the library and out in the living units.

Nancy schedules weekly activities such as a weekly movie (the effect of a movie theater) or a videotaped movie on television, storytime, and an independent time when the residents can play computer games, look at Viewmasters, magazines, and/or story books, and play with assorted objects (building blocks, airplanes, Fisher-Price games, puzzles, stuffed animals and puppets). For residents, especially those that are blind, earphones are available so that they can enjoy listening to music without disturbing the others.

The library is also fortunate to have a volunteer working part-time with the residents. She helps to keep the resident library neat and inviting. She replaces any badly torn magazines with new copies, straightens the books in the book stacks and publications on the tables. As the seasons change, she helps to change the decorations, pictures, mobiles, and bulletin boards. Our volun-

teer also assists the residents using earphones or the computer.

The library is presently experimenting with computer games as a form of entertainment/sensory stimulation. The residents do not understand how to play the games, but from observations, they do enjoy the colors, motions and sounds from the television set. Acquisition of a large screen, video projection system for the library is planned in the near future due to the trend away from 16mm film and to videocassettes. O'Berry currently has one such system, which is used to train residents in appropriate behavior for a theater setting. The State Library now has videocassettes which may be checked out. The local community college has recently acquired a VCP/LSTV system also. A system in the library would be used, for entertainment as a documented part of the Individual Active Treatment plans.

The resident library has plans for expansion in the near future. We do not plan to get stale. We are never satisfied with things just as they are. A used aquarium was recently acquired with plans to convert it to a terrarium for our clients to enjoy. Plans also include exposing more residents to video games, and continuing to grow in quality and quantity. As long as there is a need, we will be available with all that we have for our residents.



Nancy Hardee, library specialist, shares a book with residents.