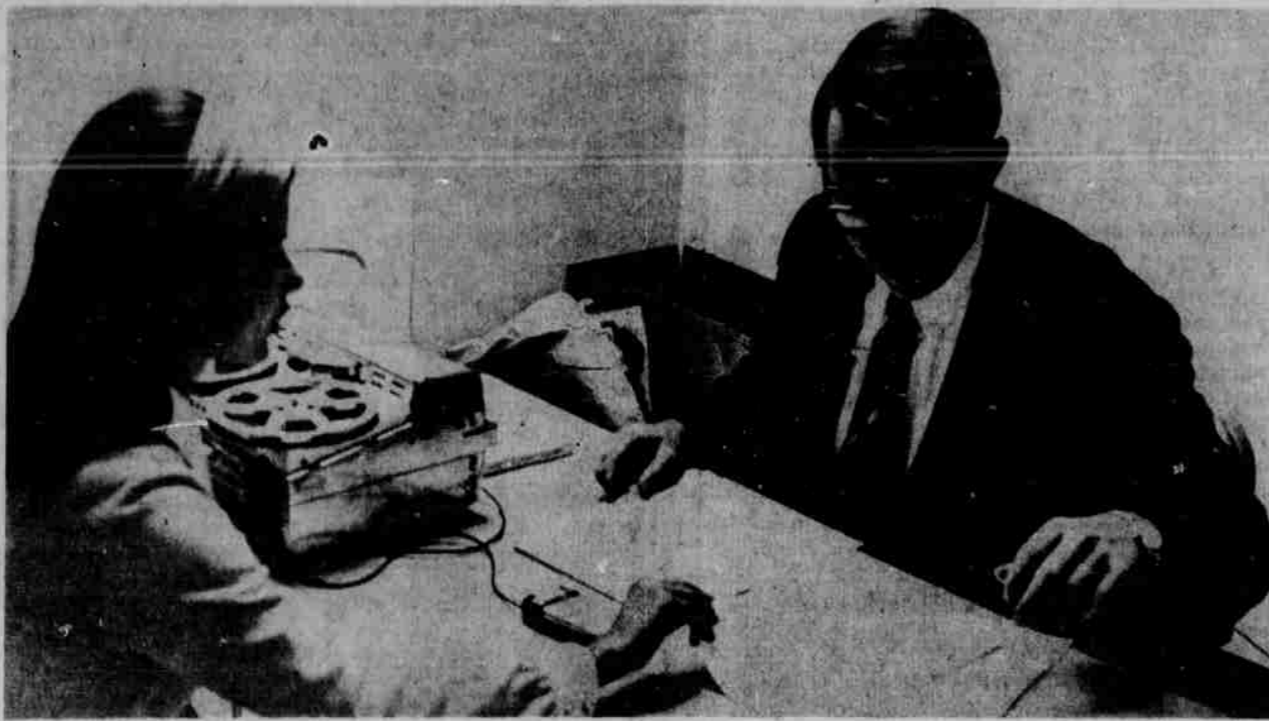


HEP--developing an 'esprit de corps'

Student counselors aid program staff

Photos by J. E. Shaw



The High School Equivalency program at the University of Nebraska involves all aspects of the students life from educational to personal and the program draws its staff from many segments of the University community. Above Jane Gourley, a senior, is interviewing for a counseling position. Gale D. Muller has been doing extensive visiting with interested students. Above left guidance and placement counselor Betty Everett admires a chalk drawing by HEP student Arturo Villegas. Elsa Garcia, left below, like all students treasures the mail call hour for news from home.

HEP program—educational chance for migrant youth

by John Dvorak
Senior Staff Writer

Fifty Mexican-Americans, all school drop outs, are getting another chance to receive high school diplomas through a federally sponsored program at the University.

The HEP, High School Equivalency Program, is a unique educational opportunity for migrant and farm labor youth, according to Gale Muller, head of the NU training center. Some of the students, all 17 to 22 years of age, come from western Nebraska, but many make their homes in North Carolina, Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma and other states.

THE STUDENTS in general have made amazing progress in their two months here, Muller said. They have developed an esprit de corps. "I feel very proud to be a part of this program."

The main goal of the HEP is to help each student obtain progressive, continuous, full-time employment, Muller said.

But first, all students must work toward passing a high school equivalency examination, which equals a high school diploma. At the same time, these students are given an opportunity to see and sample several job opportunities, he explained.

The Nebraska branch of the HEP, which began operations August 1, is one of 13 centers in the country. The local center operates through the Nebraska Human Resource Research Foundation in Love Library's basement.

Muller explained the problems of migrant workers and why they are the special concern of this Office of Economic Opportunity funded project.

Poor housing characterizes the migrant worker and his family. Workers harvest products only part of the year. Money made during that period must last the rest of the year. Frequently, families are large. Automation is taking away work, compounding their problems Muller said.

"THIS IS not in any sense a remedial program," Muller stated.

Because most of these students' families were migrant workers, the

youngsters left school early due to lack of motivation or because they were needed to work in the fields.

None of the students completed high school. The average HEP participant finished only the seventh grade, Muller continued.

A prospective student is recruited by his local community action group. After recommendation by this community group, the University Training center sends an application.

Prospective HEP students must meet special OEO financial requirements and they must be genuinely interested in obtaining their high school education.

Muller emphasized that these are not problem students. They are above-average people. In maturity, most will match up to the average college freshman or sophomore. But they have not had the opportunities of the average freshman or sophomore.

The program can be divided into three areas.

—Academic. This includes classwork in all subjects and individual study needed for passing the high school equivalency test and for training for future job placement, Muller said.

Speech, drama, art, music, intramural sports, finance and money are offered as electives.

IN ADDITION to Muller, the class teaching staff includes Larry Johnson and Ken Rethmeier, of the regular NU staff and two instructors brought to Nebraska for the program by the OEO.

Betty Everett came from the College of Liberal Arts in Chichasa, Oklahoma, and Alma Vasquez graduated from Texas Woman's University in Denton.

"Instruction must begin at each student's level," according to Miss Vasquez, an English teacher. "Some students catch on more rapidly than others. These students then help each other."

The HEP has been a broadening experience for all, she continued. The students have up to this point done "remarkably well," she said.

"We are in class from 8 to 3 o'clock during the week," Valentino Vasquez, 22, one of the students said and added that the instructors are "very fair and very friendly."

—Employment. Our students have backgrounds of hard work, Muller said. While at the training center, students will probably spend part of their day on the job.

"Some of our people work in restaurants and other service jobs part time," Muller said. Careful attention is paid to each student's progress at his job.

In addition to giving the student money for expenses, part time work provides varied and important job experience, he noted.

ONE OF the students, Elsa Garcia, 19, worked in fields in Texas before coming to Lincoln. After receiving her diploma, she hopes to enter nurse's training.

Another student, Hirm a Orteg, 20, also worked in the fields in Texas. Her goal is to become a beautician.

—Housing. "I live with a roommate, also in the HEP, at Smith Hall," said Miss Orteg. "We live on the same floor with other University students."

The HEP boys live at Schramm Hall. Students from the University and the training center are growing accustomed to each other at the residence halls, Muller pointed out.

"Although there are different areas, this is one program," he continued. "Tutor counselors help serve as a unifying link."

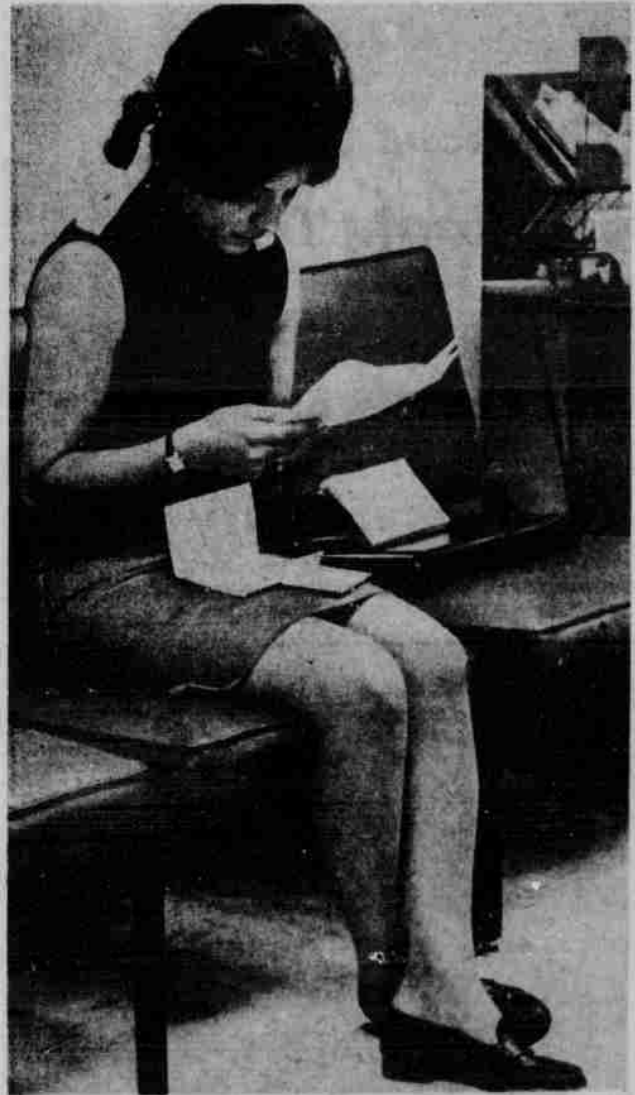
Counselors develop a close, inter-personal relationship with the HEP student and act as tutor, guide, model and special friend, he said.

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