

# VISTA challenges fortitude

by DIANE WANER  
Nebraskan Staff Writer

"This is no place for people trying to work out hang-ups of their own . . . They live 24 hours a day grappling with outrageous difficulties. The poor have no need for emissaries from the middle class, full of vague good will."

—Office of Economic Opportunity Pamphlet August, 1969

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) is looking for 20-year-olds who wish to participate in a frustrating, but enlightening experience.

Working with VISTA takes a very mature, dedicated, capable person, said Jim Rayburn, who is working this week at the University to recruit volunteers. It can be frustrating and a person's fortitude is challenged, he added.

"It is difficult to see any perceptible progress when you are dealing with a poverty-stricken area 24 hours a day," he continued, "and this can be very discouraging."

"However," Rayburn said, "the VISTA program is definitely successful. Any program like this is a long-term thing and is somewhat slow to change things, but VISTA has been successful so far, and probably will continue to be in the long run."

So far the interest here at the

University is running fairly high, according to Rayburn.

Last year the VISTA recruiters who were here received about 20 applications, and about nine of those were accepted. So far this year, according to Rayburn, they have handed out about 22 applications. It will take about 90 days for those applying to find out whether they have been accepted.

"VISTA has its amount of red tape and bureaucracy, because it is a federal agency, and all federal agencies have some," he said. "But because it is a volunteer organization and because many of the individuals who make up VISTA retain their idealism, it has not yet become an established bureaucratic organization."

"VISTA has given me a much greater understanding of social problems," he continued. "The one thing VISTA teaches you is that you don't have to be in VISTA to help; people can give any free time they have to help make society a better place to live."

"I got involved in VISTA when I finished college," said Rayburn. "I had taken sociology and felt I had learned nothing valid. I wanted to experience as much as I could."

Rayburn worked for two years in Houston in a black community involved in community development.

"We began working with the community to get a park in there," he said. "We know it has been successful because it is being used. It is the only place in the area where kids can play, other than the streets."

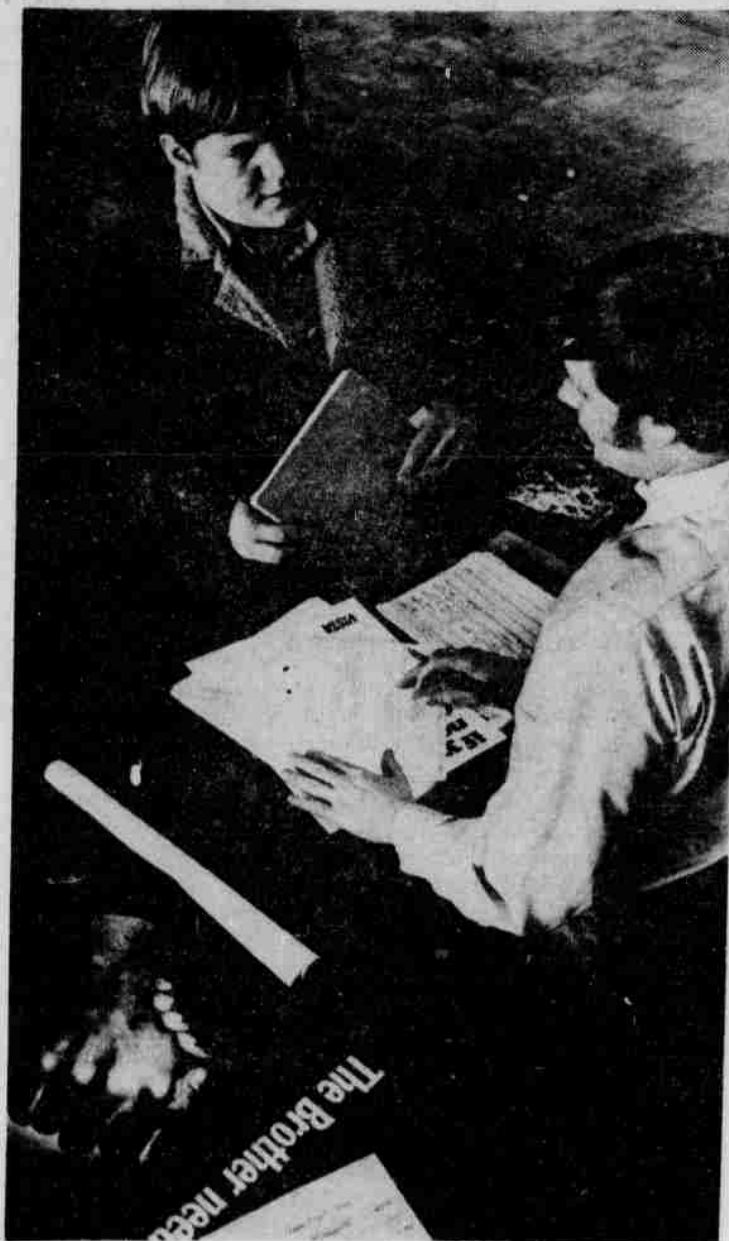
Developing a park area led to the institution of a civic club in the community, which then led to the developing of a tutoring program.

The VISTA booth, which is located in the north lobby of the Union, is trying to reach as many students who will graduate this spring as possible, although the program is open to people who are 18 or older.

"However," said Rayburn, "we really don't take any 18 or 19 year olds unless they have a unique skill. We want to recruit those who are 20 and over and who have two years of college."

The reason they especially wish to recruit graduates, said Rayburn, is that specialists, such as lawyers, architects and business majors, are more able to concentrate on a specific aspect of a poverty-stricken area.

"These volunteers act as catalysts," said Rayburn, "They help to bring the community together to identify its own problems and then solve them."



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