

VISTA recruiters note poor turnout

by CAROL GOETSCHUS
Nebraskan Staff Writer
"I'm shocked at the lack of student interest in terms of their commitment to the poor," said Bert Cohen, VISTA recruitment manager.
This is the fifth year VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) recruiters have been on campus, he said, and it's by far the worst in turnout. After two days, only 17 people had talked to the recruiters in the Placement Office, he added.
Amid the stacks of pamphlets in the Placement Office, VISTA veteran Marty Stouffer drew on

personal experience to describe a volunteer's role in the community.
"In Baltimore we organized the welfare recipients in a low-income neighborhood, informing them of their legal rights and working with the welfare department to increase the quality of service. We became the voice of the welfare recipients," he said.
A new VISTA recruit attends a six-week training period in a particular region and becomes aware of its problems and resources. He will serve in this area for one year.

Recruits can serve a maximum of three years, and about half of the volunteers extend for at least a second year, Stouffer said.
VISTA operates a "rent-a-volunteer" service for communities and agencies around the country, Stouffer said.
Agencies request volunteers and, if VISTA decides the job description is legitimate, a volunteer is assigned, she continued.
Although the volunteer is attached to an agency his salary is paid by VISTA, and he can

remain somewhat independent.
VISTA pamphlets describe the volunteer as "a skilled analyst, a go-between, the catalyst." Stouffer said being a volunteer allows a person "to give something and be creative on a person-to-person level."
VISTA wants skilled people, she said, and 90% of college applicants are accepted. Recruiters are looking for liberal arts majors, education majors, business grads, lawyers, architects-planners and health specialists.
"No matter where you go,

the poor have problems with health, education, housing, recreation and high prices which are out of line with their wage scale," Stouffer said.
Recruiter-lawyer Chuck Johnson said, "To the poor, the law always meant prohibitions, not rights. We have to show them that the law can mean rights."
Poor people have no means of developing their abilities. VISTA organizes a community so it can be more self-sufficient," said recruiter Carol Pierce.
Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age and a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S. or its territories.
VISTA was organized in 1963 under the Office of Economic Opportunity. This year there are about 5,000 volunteers working on 500 projects in 49 states and U.S. territories.
Recruiters will be on campus until Friday in the Placement Office. A film about VISTA projects will be shown Wednesday, 7 p.m. in room 243, Nebraska Union.



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