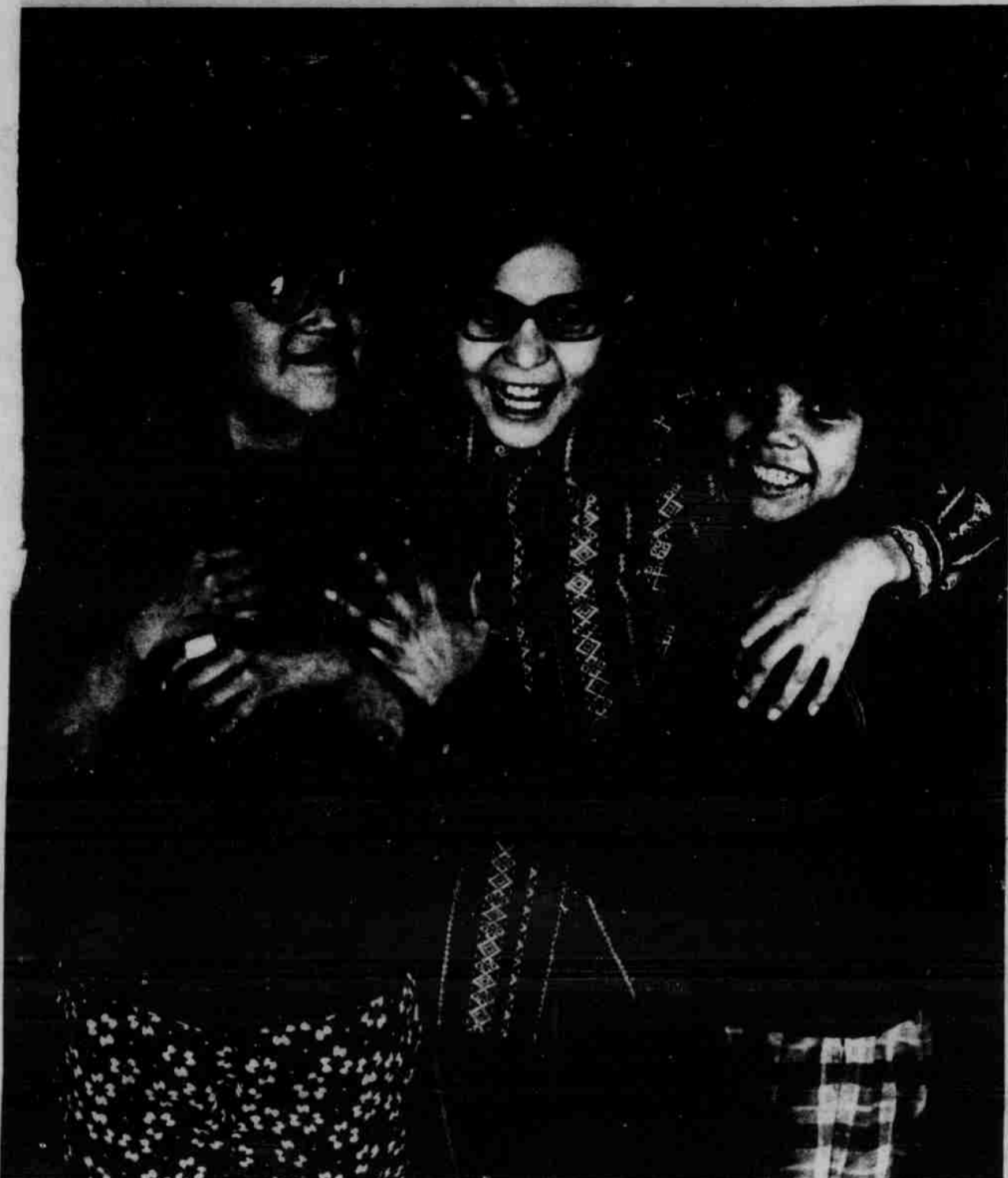


# NOVA—action in Alliance



by H. J. Cummins

"Z Bus"—pronounced with stress on the last syllable in Oglala Sioux as in French—begins its day at 7:25 a.m.

It heads west on 3rd Street, turns left at Decker's Food Center, left again at the end of the block, and stops in front of a white wooden house.

The house's paint is scraped slightly, plastic covers some broken windows and the front porch sags.

Crystal, Rita, Ed and Abel Ironropes board the bus, then it heads back toward town on 3rd Street, passing Dan's Dining Room, the Alliance National Bank, a Sears store, American Legion Post No. 1, a self-described "Dependable Used Cars" lot and an H & R Block income tax office.

Turning right at the Arctic Circle Drive-in Cafe, Z Bus heads south toward, literally, "the other side of the tracks."

Jean and Tony Garnier and their mother, Cleo Herara, board the bus. Cleo carries the breakfast she prepared for the smaller children.

The bus must wait again for Gloria, Debbie, Rocky and Cindy DuBray. "Mondays are the same all over," the bus driver says.

The high school students are taken to Alliance (North) High School; the junior high students go to Alliance Junior (South) High where classes begin at 8 a.m.

Elementary students have half an hour to eat their breakfast in the school gym before classes begin at 8:30.

The bus ride and breakfast are attempts by Nebraska Opportunity for Volunteer Action (NOVA) students John Mangemeli, Lucy Kerchberger and Sue Dahms—newly transferred from the Winnebago Indian reservation—now working at the Alliance Community Guidance Center to acquaint minority children with the Center.

The purpose of the center, funded by a Title III (Education) grant, is primarily to tutor minority students who have a poor record of high school graduations, according to the funding proposal.

In fact Alliance High School Counselor Bill Podraza said, "Some claim Alliance High has never graduated an Indian. Some say not since the '30's. I don't care which claim is right, they're both unacceptable."

The center opened Oct. 6, Podraza said, but no

one used it. He credited Mangemeli and Kerchberger with a 500 per cent increase in attendance at the center but said the center was made less of a study area and more of a recreation center to accomplish it.

Twenty to 25 students now come to the center daily, Podraza said.

"And I'm happy with what's happening with the center," he said. "But I don't want it to be a recreation center."

Mangemeli and Kerchberger, both from the UNL campus and new to NOVA this semester, said they saw their first task as getting students to come to the center. That is why they began encouraging the rock collections, sewing projects and gardening that the students seemed to want.

The two and Dahms earn University credit in NOVA for their volunteer work in Alliance.

Direct school tutoring will be emphasized more now, Dahms said, because she plans to spend every school day in Alliance's three schools—elementary, junior high and high school—tutoring students with the school work.

## Photos by Gail Folda

Dahms said she'd talked to some teachers and will talk to more, asking them to refer students who they think need help to her to work with them during their study halls. She said she hopes students will seek her out, themselves, too, when they have questions.

And indirect tutoring has been part of the center since the NOVA students arrived Feb. 7, Mangemeli said. Indians have been encouraged to write stories about anything they wish, he said, and the stories are dittoed and distributed to anyone who wants them, as part of the center's O'hun'kun'kun, or book of short stories.

But he insisted the students who come to the center right after school don't want to study after seven hours in class.

"I hope we can tutor them in school so they can come here and do what they please," he said.

The Title III grant funding the center also offers money to help low-income students on the principle, according to Mangemeli, of getting children to school by "straightening their teeth and giving them shoes as well as teaching them to read."

Center secretary Ethel Olson said 37 of the 40

Indian children tested received eye glasses; seven children have received dental care and three or four, medical care. The \$3,000 allotted in October to buy clothing was gone by January, she said, and about \$300 has been spent to provide Indian children with school supplies.

Reginald Cederface, the Indian guidance counselor at the center, is in charge of dispensing the welfare services. He also helped the NOVA students select films about Indian culture, shown at the center twice a week, and build up the cultural library which contains books ranging from Indian and Mexican-American culture, to a copy of Ripley's *Believe It or Not*.

Five Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) students work part-time at the center under the NYC project that encourages low-income students to finish school—either by going to classes or by correspondence—as they earn money in part-time jobs.

Some show the movies, some type the O'hun'kun'kun stories and some handle publicity for the center's events. He said he hopes some will help with a summer recreation program that's just beginning to take shape.

But for the rest of the school year, Mangemeli said the NOVA students see their roles as that of educators.

"I'm really hot on education, school's another thing. As kids try to adapt to school, the school should adapt to the individual student—that's why we have this center," he said.

"These kids are going to have to get through school to survive in society," he said. "so getting them through is what this center's all about."

"But I'd also like to see it as a supplement to school. The way they're teaching the Indians and Mexican-American in school isn't working so it won't work here. So I think we should offer alternatives—different approaches to the same goal."

In line with that philosophy, Kerchberger has organized volleyball teams for school girls left out of the high school's male athletic teams; the NOVA students have persuaded some teachers to let Indian students read books on Indian culture rather than those scheduled for the class; and night classes are being organized to teach blanket weaving and bead work.



The Smoke Signals

Once there was a war between the Indians and Whites.

The Indians were almost out of Indians.

So this one Indian named Sequoyah, they asked him to send some more Indians to the camp.

So Sequoyah sent the message.

And more Indians came and Sequoyah was glad.

And he became the chief. The End.

by Mildred Dawn.

