

Family Service Bureau | Nutley Yesterday · Today - 1961

NUTLEY FAMILY SERVICE BUREAU

(Condensed History 1913-1959)

MRS. PARKE RICHARDS, JR.

MISS SUSAN LOCKHART, Principal of Washington School in 1913, was troubled about conditions of the children in the neighborhood of the school. She held a meeting in her office to see what could be done about these conditions.

Among those present were Mrs. Allan P. Ames, Miss Sally Hay, Miss Elizabeth Hay, Mrs. Carol Diamond, Mrs. M. T. Morse, Mrs. Emil Diebitsch and Mrs. Douglas Falconer. Police Chief Sutcliffe was also present and at subsequent meetings he brought with him Douglas Falconer, General Secretary of the Children's Aid Society of Essex County. Mr. Falconer suggested that the Newark Social Service Bureau would help with the organization of the Nutley group if they wished to function on a permanent basis. The Nutley group attended many meetings in Newark - discussing their problems with them - and getting advice on methods of procedure.

In order to interest the general public in the work they were doing, the group published the following statement in *The Nutley Sun* on January 9, 1915:

"The object of the Bureau is to act as a clearing house for local work, to furnish a meeting place where those willing to give would give with the knowledge that what they gave would be wisely placed and where the needy can tell their stories privately and with the confidence that if the stories are true, the applicants will be sympathetically cared for and helped back to self-respecting independence."

The Nutley people were well impressed and a public meeting was called and was well attended. Mrs. M. T. Morse was elected the first president and Mrs. Lewellyn Pratt, the first secretary of the Nutley Social Service Bureau.

In February of 1915, the Bureau announced the opening of an office on Chestnut Street.

Year after year the Bureau received its funds by appealing to the general public in mass meetings and in house-to-house solicitations; Mrs. Aaron Matheis, with her committee members, was an untiring captain and solicitor of funds all during this period.

The Bureau in 1940, conceived the idea of the United Drive joined by the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and United Service Organizations "U.S.O." This method of fund raising continued until 1959. The recently formed Committee of 100 is seriously considering the revival of the old United Drive.

In early days much work of the Bureau was done by the Case Committee composed of Mrs. Emil Diebitsch, Mrs. Allan P. Ames, Mrs. Francis Palmer and Mrs. Edwin C. Sharp. Their activities were directed by the professional workers who were in 1919 Miss Marguerite Willits, followed by Mrs. Eloise Griffith. In 1928 Mrs. Griffith was succeeded by Mrs. Hugh D. Wilson, by a later marriage Mrs. Cecil V. Romney. Mrs. Romney served until her retirement in December 1958.

Among the highlights of the Bureau's accomplishments have been the administration of the Nutley Sun Camp Fund, the operation of the Thrift and the Consignment Shop, the formation of the Golden Age Club open to all women over 60 years of age. The Chairman, Mrs. Howard P. Penny is assisted by four regular volunteers, Mrs. Lyle Peaver, co-chairman, Miss Louise Philhower, Mrs. Carl Parry and Mrs. William Nelson. The late Miss Flora Loudon took an active interest in the group representing the Nutley Recreation Department. The American Legion donates the use of their headquarters at 507 Franklin Avenue.

In 1955 the Service Bureau organized the Women's Auxiliary now numbering 162. Mrs. Isador Josephson was named first president of the Auxiliary and served for two years. She was followed by Mrs. S. R. Mountsier, Jr., 1957-1959. Mrs. Charles G. Sherwood is president for 1959-1961.

The Auxiliary sponsors the above mentioned activities, together with two educational meetings a year; the Spring Dance; the Charity Ball and the Annual Luncheon Bridge and Fashion Show.

In the year 1950, the Bureau changed its name from Nutley Social Service Bureau to the Nutley Family Service Bureau. In this year the call for material assistance was down to 10% of the 238 families who came for assistance.

In 1951 casework was now the established function of the Bureau and Mrs. Romney defined it thus:

"The object of all casework is to strengthen the person who has come for help so that he can make his own life's decisions comfortably and fit into the family and community appropriately."

The next milestone in the Bureau's history was met with the construction and opening of the new building at 155 Chestnut Street. The building was opened with appropriate ceremony on January 20, 1957.

Finally in the Spring of 1958 Mrs. Romney worked tirelessly for the formation of the North Essex Guidance Clinic located in the Clara Maass Hospital in Belleville. This Clinic, for both diagnosis and treatment of the emotionally disturbed child, serves four towns - Nutley, Belleville, Glen Ridge and Bloomfield. Mrs. Romney and the Case Supervisor of the Bureau, Mrs. Kathryn McKenna, both served on the Personnel Committee and on the interim Board of Directors.

In December of 1958 the Board of Directors accepted the resignation of Mrs. Cecil V. Romney who had served the Board and the Bureau so steadfastly for 28 years-twenty years as Executive Secretary.

During her 28 years with the Bureau, Mrs. Romney was backed by able Boards of Directors. The Presidents of the Boards during these years numbered such men as Emil Diebitsch from 1920 to 1940; Ernest Pulsford from 1940 to 1942; Floyd Harshman from 1942 to 1944; Howard P. Penny from 1944 to 1946; Sanford L. Smith from 1946 to 1947; Cornelius F. Schenck from 1947 to 1949; James B. Bell from 1949 to 1950; David H. Jackman from 1950 to 1957 and H. Morton Smith, Jr. from 1957 to 1959. In 1959, David H. Jackman returned to the Presidency of the Bureau.

On January 1, 1959, the administration of the Bureau was vested in the capable hands of the former Case Supervisor of the Bureau, Mrs. Kathryn McKenna. Another case-worker was hired - Mrs. Doris Gorman. She, with Mrs. Sylvia Gail and Mrs. Rose Glickman, all of whom work on a part-time basis, comprise the present staff of the Bureau. Miss Regina M. Clune is the present Secretary.

Today the Nutley Family Service Bureau occupies an honorable place in the Town of Nutley as well as in the County and State. Most of all the Agency holds a grateful place in the hearts of thousands of people who have been helped to a happier, healthier, more rewarding life for themselves and their loved ones.