

FOCUS: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Initiative Begins



How can one change a community for the better? It doesn't happen overnight. Nor does it happen by accident. Nor does it happen through the leadership of one person.

Effective community development happens through a series of deliberate steps. First, people have to be willing to come together and agree upon what their community's challenges are. Then they must collaboratively decide how to solve the problems. Lastly, community members must have the optimism, determination and ability to get the job done.

The Rapides Foundation wants to help jumpstart this community development process throughout Central Louisiana by helping people gain leadership and management

skills. The long-term goal is to create and support a community development infrastructure as the primary vehicle for citizen involvement to improve the health and well-being of area residents. To begin this ambitious effort, two years ago the Foundation commissioned a comprehensive study of existing community development and training activity.

Conducted by Dianne Williams, a community development consultant from Little Rock, Arkansas, the study included interviews and focus groups that grew to include more than 165 people from Central Louisiana. "When I did the initial research, I was struck by the enthusiasm and commitment of the people to their communities," said Williams. "Cenla residents have a tradition of using their skills and gifts in support of community activities."

Williams also found that people wanted and needed training and assistance to make their

(continued)

"Strong organizations make strong communities."

Dianne Williams,
community consultant
Little Rock, AR

Community building is not



Community Development (continued)

communities better. In response, the Foundation has developed a multi-pronged strategy to help communities with development programs. Key components include a yearlong leadership development program, on-site community builders training sessions, the first of which was grant-writing workshops, as well as nonprofit management seminars and skill building seminars for teams of people from local community development corporations. Already underway is the leadership training program, called "Leadership for a Healthy Cenla." Representatives from each of the 11 parishes in the Foundation's service area are participating in this 12-month program, which began in December.

Participants meet every other month to learn leadership skills, gain knowledge about issues of health and well-being, and develop relationships with other participants. Training topics include community development strategies, leadership styles, communication, presentation skills, community resource development, team building and conflict resolution.

Another facet of the Community Development Initiative is a Nonprofit

Management Program. This comprehensive six-month program features monthly one-day workshops for nonprofit managers, supervisors and board members in Rapides Parish. "The ultimate goal of this particular program is to build the capacity of our existing nonprofit organizations in Rapides Parish," explained Rapides Foundation President and CEO Joe Rosier, "so they are better able to address the challenges of improving the quality of life in our community."

Joining the Foundation as co-sponsors of this program are Louisiana State University at Alexandria and Louisiana State University in Shreveport, which offers a nonprofit studies curriculum. Topics being covered in the workshops are financial management, board recruitment and development, advanced resource development, collaboration, strategic planning and program development.

Regionally and nationally recognized instructors are leading the sessions. The Foundation is underwriting the cost of the Nonprofit Management Program, with a minimal fee charged to the participants. Grantseeking seminars, another program of the Foundation's Community Development Initiative, were conducted from August through November in eleven Central Louisiana communities, with enthusiastic response from participants. "I have really been pleased with how the initiative is developing," said Williams. "The response to everything has been wonderful. People are coming to these workshops with open minds and hearts."

a job, it's a calling

By: Julie Owens

As part of the Foundation's Community Development Initiative, during the past eight months we've held grantseeking workshops throughout our service area. More than 150 people participated in these sessions, learning some valuable lessons about community development. The Foundation recruited Julie Owens, with Nonprofit Resources in Little Rock, to teach these seminars. Ms. Owens found people eager for information about how to make their communities the best that they can be. Julie shares her experiences in Cenla.

Receiving the final approval from The Rapides Foundation to begin our work in Central Louisiana brought mixed emotions to our staff at Nonprofit Resources. We were excited at the opportunity to expand our community building work beyond Arkansas' borders but knew we would surely face challenges.

Needless to say both our staff and board are pleased that we were selected to do this work, which has been so rewarding for Nonprofit Resources and our trainers. As trainers we are constantly learning from others and as human beings we certainly receive more than we give.

The Arkansas Champion Network, our community building project in Arkansas, is made up of community-based organizations. Many have been operating for 15 or more years.



Julie Owens, Nonprofit Resources in Little Rock

The folks in many of the small, rural communities in Central Louisiana are just beginning to get organized. But, you know I learned that the people are the same. People in Central Louisiana are proud of their communities and are committed to making them stronger. These people are willing to work hard to build stronger communities and are hungry for knowledge to help them accomplish the task.

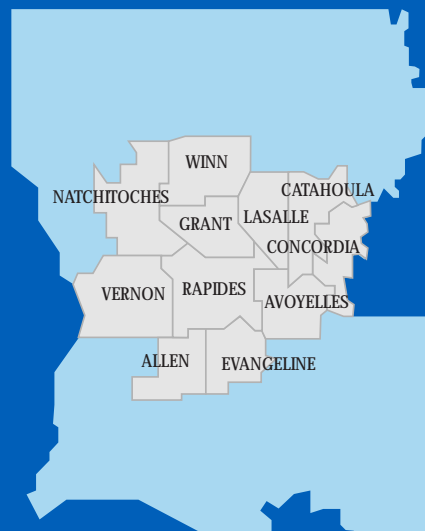
The Rapides Foundation has a long term commitment to helping the people of Central Louisiana make a difference in their rural communities. You might say that the Foundation is committed

(continued on page 7)

The Rapides Foundation is a philanthropic organization that provides grants to organizations throughout an 11 parish service area that share the foundation's mission to improve the health and well-being of Central Louisiana.



The Rapides Foundation
www.rapidesfoundation.org



Community Development



Gerald Roberts, county agent for The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service in Evangeline Parish

Good Leaders Build Good Communities

"I see this as an opportunity to learn how to motivate people to come together as a unit to address problems," explained Gerald Roberts of Ville Platte, a participant in the Rapides Foundation's "Leadership for a Healthy Cenla," program. Roberts is a county agent with the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service in Evangeline Parish. Through his job and his volunteer work, he has steadily been drawn

"I realize that the more I know and understand about leadership and organizational skills, the more effective I will be in addressing problems in our community."

Gerald Roberts of Ville Platte

into community development activities and is enthusiastic about the good that can come out of such work. Roberts is president of the Boys and Girls Club of Ville Platte and has been active with the United Way and programs affiliated with Southern University focusing on teen issues and faith-based community development.

The Foundation's leadership training program, Roberts believes, can strengthen his abilities to address problems he cares deeply about, ranging from social services for youth and the elderly to economic development. "I realize that the more I know and understand about leadership and organizational skills, the

more effective I will be in addressing problems in our community," he said.

Community improvement is also on the mind of B.R. Audirsch, a Winnfield small business owner who serves as president of the Winn Parish School Board. He too is participating in the Foundation's leadership training program. "These sessions will allow us to share ideas with one another, and learn from the experts being brought in," he said. The motivation for attending the classes, added Audirsch, should be to answer the question, "What can we do for our towns and parishes?" not "what can they do for me?" Audirsch, who owns Sportsman's Trading Company in Winnfield, believes Winn Parish needs to become more self-sufficient, offering a varied job market. "Our community is not really diversified in ways to make a living; our jobs are very much forest industry-related. I'd like to see us be able to offer more employment opportunities for our young people to keep them here."



B.R. Audirsch, president of the Winn Parish School Board



Nonprofit Management Program Aims to Enhance Skills

Stacey Debevec, executive director of the Pediatric Therapy Center in Alexandria

Hope Development Center in Alexandria is still a fairly young nonprofit organization, and its director, the Rev. Freddie Banks, wants to do all he can to ensure its long-term viability.

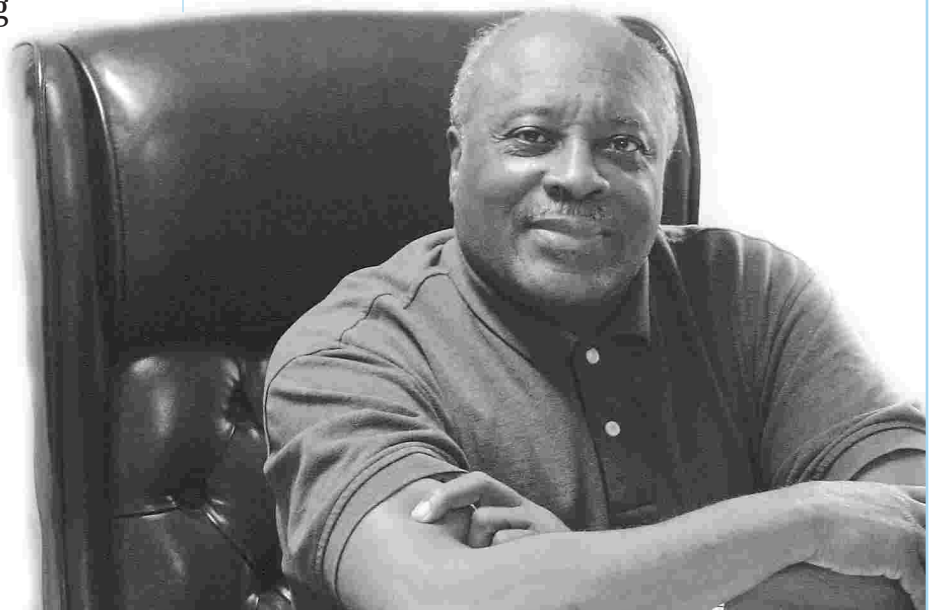
By participating in the Rapides Foundation's Nonprofit Management Program, he believes he can gain needed training and "broaden the spectrum" of resources available to help his innovative neighborhood resource center. The program, which began in January, consists of six monthly training sessions for nonprofit staffers and board members in Rapides Parish.

"It's going to help us greatly to be a part of this program," said Rev. Banks. "There have been some outstanding ideas presented. The Foundation ought to be congratulated for helping prepare people in this community for nonprofit work." He added that he is particularly interested in workshop sessions dealing with long-term strategic planning, fund-raising and publicity. Moreover, the Foundation program is helping bring local people together to share ideas among themselves, said Rev. Banks.

Fostering friendships with other nonprofits is also important to Stacey Debevec, executive director of the Pediatric Therapy Center in Alexandria. Like Rev. Banks, she runs a new agency and shares his interest

in learning all she can from both peers and experts. "Educational opportunities are invaluable to those of us who are relatively new to the nonprofit arena, such as myself," said Debevec. "I feel this program will provide an excellent means of gaining the latest information from top experts on key management issues, as well as an opportunity to build relationships with other nonprofits in the community.

"I believe this latter is crucial. Not only does it allow for us to support each other in our efforts, but it provides for an integrated community system that is better able to meet the needs of the whole community," she added. "I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to partake in these workshops and gain much-needed information that will hopefully serve to improve our organization's overall success."



Rev. Freddie Banks, director of the Hope Development Center in Alexandria

Community Development

Seminars Teach Basics of Grantseeking



Renee Moses, administrative secretary
Natchitoches Council on Aging

A series of seminars sponsored by the Rapides Foundation last fall gave more than 150 residents from several Cenla parishes a clearer understanding of what it takes to write a quality, fundable grant proposal.

The basics of grant proposal development and writing were presented by consultants from Nonprofit Resources of Little Rock, Ark., to groups in Oberlin/Kinder, Oakdale, Alexandria, Bunkie, Marksville, Leesville, Natchitoches, Winnfield, Jena, Jonesville and Ferriday.

The objectives of the seminars were to build participants' skills, increase understanding of the Foundation's priorities, guidelines and programs, and encourage interest in future seminars on nonprofit governance, management and resource development, explained Julie Owens, assistant director of Nonprofit Resources.

"We found the people who attended these seminars to be so committed to the work they are doing," she said. "By learning more about what a strong

nonprofit organization looks like and how grants can fit into their plans, they can ultimately increase their effectiveness in their communities."

The Foundation hosted the seminars within the participants' communities, to make it more convenient to attend. "These seminars have been an effective way to deliver information about grant development and preparation directly to the communities in our service area," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of the Rapides Foundation.

The Foundation will likely conduct more intensive, two-day grantseeking seminars this spring and in the fall, said Ms. Owens. Regional, capacity-building seminars for nonprofit agencies, concentrating upon participants who previously attended grantseeking seminars, are also being considered.

People who have participated in the seminars say they gained valuable training, and are hungry for more. That's the gist of Renee Moses' enthusiastic message; she not only attended, but also effectively coordinated the Foundation's October seminar in Natchitoches. In her role as administrative secretary with the Natchitoches Council on Aging, Moses recognizes how important grant-writing is to

nonprofits. So she was eager to learn all she could when the Rapides Foundation contacted her about helping with the local grantseeking training session.

"I had watched my boss write grants, and I really wanted to be able to help her, but it was unfamiliar waters to me," she said. "Now I feel confident I can jump in and help her."

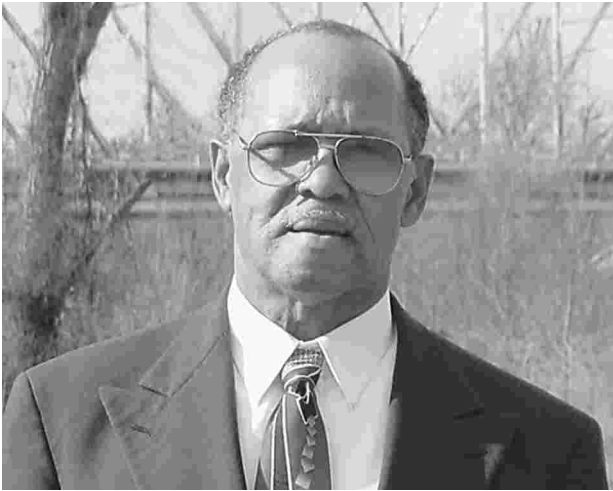
The program, she said, was "wonderful," teaching her details about grant-writing she had not

previously understood. For instance, she learned how important a good opening statement is in a grant application. Additionally, Moses said, it's essential to "go out into the community, talk to people and find out what they want. You need to be able to show how your program is going to enhance the community, or it's a lost cause.

**"It was very good.
They showed us how
to pool our resources
and work together on
our ideas."**

Rev. Wilmore J. Long
Catahoula Parish

(continued)



Wilmore J. Long, pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church in the Archie community

Basics of grantseeking (continued)

“You need to make sure your program offers something more than what already exists.” She added that it is also important that grantseekers “have a certain mindset, to really be passionate about what they are doing” to be successful in writing and obtaining grants. Moses noted that participants in the Natchitoches seminar were very pleased with the program, and expressed an eagerness for more in-depth, follow-up training in the future.

Wilmore J. Long, a minister and community activist in Catahoula Parish, shares Moses’ enthusiasm about the Foundation’s grantseeking seminar program which brought a day-long seminar to Jonesville last fall. “It was very good. They showed us how to pool our resources and work together on our ideas,” he said. Long, pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church in the Archie community, is a member of the Four Rivers Youth and Adult Corporation, a new nonprofit focusing on youth and senior citizen issues in the Jonesville area.

He said the grantseeking program helped him better understand how foundations channel their resources through other nonprofit organizations to assist communities. “I learned that most foundations don’t fund buildings, but they do fund ‘doing something.’” Rev. Long added that his group also learned they needed to demonstrate their own financial commitment to their project before obtaining a grant.

He is optimistic about the potential for community development in Catahoula Parish, but acknowledges, “We know our work is going to have to be a group effort. We’re trying to involve everybody.”

Community building (continued from pg. 3)

to helping these communities become healthy. The term healthy communities is defined broadly and includes being physically healthy, mentally healthy, economically healthy, and fiscally healthy. As I tell the people who come to the seminars, my work in community building is not a job; it’s a calling. I believe that community groups working in collaboration with each other hold the key to building healthy communities.

The subject of our seminars was grantseeking. The first step in grantseeking is to operate your organization in a manner that inspires the confidence of grantmakers. This includes sound policies for personnel and financial management; board development and training; and representation of the constituency you are serving. Have you listened to the community in making plans? Has the community responded by supporting your work with volunteer time and money? In the field of community development grantmaking, collaboration and inclusiveness are more than keywords, they are requirements. If a community is going to grow, all the people and the groups they represent must be a part of that growth. During the seminars, the spirit of collaboration was evident.

A common concern among all the parishes was programs for youth. In Leesville, three people representing three different organizations found that they had the same goals, to build a

“People in Central Louisiana are proud of their communities and are committed to making them stronger.”

Julie Owens, Nonprofit Resources in Little Rock

program to keep the youth in the community safe and happy. At the lunch break these folks made a plan to work together. In Bunkie four churches sent representatives and all four of them were primarily interested in learning about programs for youth to provide recreation and tutoring after school. They decided to work together toward this mutual goal.

My co-trainers and I were welcomed in every community and the people we worked with did an impressive job of coordinating the seminars. We held seminars in museums, churches, firehouses, city halls and hotel meeting rooms. Attendance ranged from few to many and totaled 153 people from 102 organizations. We had some of the best food I have eaten in years and my thanks go out to the local caterers and restaurants that took care of us. Participants indicated that their learning expectations were met and expressed an eagerness to be included in future seminars in the Community Building series.

Grant Update:

The Rapides Foundation Grants from October-December 2000*

Ballet Alexandria Development of strategic plan for organization.	\$7,500	1 yr
City Park Players Collaborative performance with the Kuumba Center on African-American history.	7,885	1 yr
Eighth District Association Development Board Pilot project to support church-based home-based student achievement support program.	10,000	1 yr
LaSalle Arts Council Parish-wide cultural assessment.	10,000	1 yr
Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana Development and training for staff on Nurturing Model of parental support.	6,583	1 yr
READ Pilot program working with adult literacy for Head Start parents in Allen Parish.	8,000	1 yr
Southern Mutual Help Association Development of strategic plan for affordable housing promotion in Avoyelles and Evangeline Parishes.	10,000	1 yr
University of Louisiana at Lafayette School of Nursing Pilot church-based health promotion program in Evangeline parish.	10,000	1 yr

*Multi-year Initiative and Responsive grants were not scheduled for consideration during the 4th quarter.



The Rapides Foundation

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Community Development Participants

Leadership for A Healthy Cenla Participants

Allen Parish

Adagria Haddock
Allen Parish Tourist Commission
Oberlin

Rev. Wiley Shaw, Jr.

Bread of Life Christian Center
Oakdale

Avoyelles Parish

Linda L. Bordelon
Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana
Marksville

Lem Thomas, III

Bunkie Community Development
Corporation
Bunkie

Catahoula Parish

Dr. Billy W. Edwards
Louisiana Baptist Convention
Jonesville

Susie Swayze

Supervisor, School Food Service
Catahoula Parish School Board
Harrisonburg

Concordia Parish

Rev. Alex Promise
Administrative Assistant to the Mayor
Ferriday

Windell Millicks

Concord Youth & Adult Community
Association
Vidalia

Evangeline Parish

Gerald Roberts
Louisiana Cooperative Extension
Service
Ville Platte

Grant Parish

Joyce Hamilton
North CentraLa Community Action
Agency
Colfax

Chawn Texada, R.N.

School Nurse
Grant Parish School Board
Pollock

LaSalle Parish

Dawn Stott
Town Clerk
Olla

Joyce Willis

CenturyTel
Jena

Natchitoches Parish

Loletta Wynder
Natchitoches Parish Council on Aging
Natchitoches

Rapides Parish

Jayne Heath
CHRISTUS St. Frances Cabrini Hospital
Alexandria

Shirley Wade

Communities Collaborating for
Economic Development
Cheneyville

Vernon Parish

Rev. Clennon Turner
Mt. Olive Baptist Church
Leesville

Betty Westerchil

Northwestern State University,
Leesville/Fort Polk
Vernon Parish School Board Member
Leesville

Winn Parish

B.R. Audirsch
The Sportsman's Trading Company
Winnfield

Ethel Howell

Principal - Winnfield Kindergarten
School
Winnfield

Nonprofit Management Program Participants

Rapides Parish

Freddie Banks, First Union Development
Corporation

Randall Bernhard, Arts Council of Central
Louisiana

Sandra Bolton, Goodwill Industries

Lauren Chatelain, Volunteers of America

Sister Mary Coleman, St. Mary's Residential
Training School

Stacey Debevec, Pediatric Therapy Center

Anne Giffin, T.R.E.E. House Museum

Rochelle Hall, Volunteers of America

Patricia Hilton, Rapides Children's
Advocacy Center and CASA Program

Connie Jones, Boys and Girls Clubs of
Central Louisiana

Jennifer McDowell, Steps to Success

Julie Morris, Friendship House Adult Day
Services, Inc.

Gloria Phillips, Walk By Faith, Inc.

Donald Powell, Southern Forest Heritage
Museum

Wendy Roy, Cenla Medication Access
Program (CMAP)

Jannease Seastrunk, The Shepherd Center

Robert Tillie, Renaissance Home for Youth

Ann Wilson, Keep Cenla Beautiful /
Cenla Pride

Sharon Womack, Central Louisiana Area
Health Education Center (AHEC)

Norman Youngblood, Victory Life
Fellowship, Inc.

Community Development Participants

Grantseeking Seminars Participants



The Rapides Foundation

Allen Parish	Evelyn Williams	Carol Jackson	Vera Williams
Betty Davis	Bertha Wilson	Laverne Paul	NaKia Noel Wilson
Cecilia Johnson		Mary D. Paul	JoAnn Woods
Ann McCleon	Catahoula Parish	Doris Price	
Carlton McKee	Bessie Barber	Angela Smith	Winn Parish
Dianne McKee	Vanessa Branch	Brenda Smith	Cleotha Amos
Carol Slaney	Josie Bullitts	Robbie Smith	Rosalind Amos
Ruth Solomon	Arthur Collins	Kelly Thompson	Jan Anyan
Myra Wright	Ralph Collins	Gayla Warren	Kiah Beville
	Dr. Billy Edwards		Wendy Carpenter
Avoyelles Parish	Hiram Evans, Jr.	Natchitoches Parish	Emily Davis
Stella Anderson	Darlene Hatten	Anicia Banks	Buddy Heard
Steward Aymond	Linda King	Ivan Bearden	Ty James
Clyde Ann Bacon	Wilmore J. Long	Jennifer Carle	Brenda Johnson
Vern E. Bacon	Sonny Manning	Marvis Chance	Rev. Jerry Johnson
Lemuel Bassett	W.W. Martin, Sr.	Juanita Flower	Russell Joker
Dorothy Bazile	Woodrow Martin, Sr.	Connie Hail	Barbara Jones
George Bazile	Sue Redmon	Sharon Harris	Carolyn Phillips
Don Clepton	Curtis Shavers	Gail Jones	Ashley Shelton
Bruce Coulon	Sharon Stevenson	Bernice Longino	Teresa Thornton
Marvin Crawford	Benny Vault	Lamar McGaskey	Angela Wells
Teresa Daigrepoint	Vinetta Vault	Melanie McGill	Lawerence White
Sherman Dixon, III	Dorothy Wilkerson	Mary Means	Peggy Wood
Stephanie Dixon	Sam Wilkerson	Renee Moses	
Cheryl Eggins		Jacqueline Page	Vernon Parish
Lucins Eggins	Concordia Parish	Pam Rambin	Joyce Augustine
Beverly Freeman	Sammy Davis, Jr.	Sadie Sawyer	Amy Blevins
John Gagnard	Willie Dunbar	Patricia Taylor	Theresa Chalette
Rosemary Gremillion	Ann Harris	Robert Terry	John Crook
Janet Gros	Bertha Matthews-Jackson	Emma Williams	Joy Cryer
Rev. Greg Jackson	Lois Matthews-Jackson	Loletta Wynder	Gene Davis
Kenesha Johnson	Brenda Moore		Neil Early
Altoinette Jones	Jonteel Morales	Rapides Parish	Lorenzo Garner
Jeff D. Keys	Alex Promise	Robert Ada	Phillip Gunn
Charles Lemoine	Susan Rabb	David Brook	Connie Hale
Eric Lemoine	Emerson Slain	Ouida Gibson	Debbie Hanchey
Connie Normund	Troy Thomas	Margie Harris	Bridget Huie
Joyce Prier	George Webb	Betty Jones	Jennie Leon
Christine Robichaux	Josephine Webster	Tammy Lloid	LaVean Marze
Isabella Scott		Winnie Marshall	Kimaron Moore
Ester Scott-Bazile	LaSalle Parish	Walter McClatchey	Frances Serna
Thomas Smith	Vickie Bass	Marilyn McCree	Deana Shaftstall
Lem Thomas, III	Andrea Book	Mary Ann Reddock	LeRoy Stokes
Linda Thomas	Hazel Corley	Shirley Wade	Rev. Clennon Turner
Mack Villemarette	Polly Duncan	Robert Williams	Betty Westerchil
Betty Washington	Kathryn Floyd	Susan Williams	Patricia Williams