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# TEEN TROUBLE

What Recreation Can Do About It



**T**HE factual material contained in this booklet brings together the experience and thinking of many individuals and organizations. Special appreciation is due those recreation departments who sent such frank reports on the subject and offered so generously their suggestions for the solution of the problem.

*Prepared for the*  
**NATIONAL RECREATION ASSOCIATION**  
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*"Every community in the country has an obligation to scrutinize its services, its facilities for meeting the spiritual, recreational, and welfare needs of its own people."*

—FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

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# TEEN TROUBLE

## What Recreation Can Do About It

### GLOSSARY

Cider stuke	— <i>the old candy store that becomes a meeting place where the youngsters sit around and drink soft cider</i>
Horse opera	— <i>a western movie</i>
Honky-tonk	— <i>a dive; a low class, cheap drinking place</i>
Juke joint	— <i>a cheap eating place containing a jukebox; may or may not allow dancing; no supervision</i>
Khaki-wacky	— <i>soldier-crazy; uniform-struck</i>
Pantie-waist	— <i>a sissy</i>
Pantry party	— <i>unsupervised party held in the home while parents are away</i>
Piccolo joint	— <i>small room with a nickelodeon and a concession stand</i>
Swish	— <i>swell-elegant; glamorous</i>
Taxi-dance hall	— <i>a dance hall where girls are supplied as partners, and each dance number costs so much for so long. Patrons purchase rolls of tickets at the door.</i>

THE TEEN age boys and girls are having a tough time—at a tough time! Just when they need their families most, fathers go to war, or to a defense factory in another city, or work on a night shift in the home town. Mothers are apprehensive over the rising cost of living, and get jobs. Big brothers will be inducted, or have been inducted into the army. Little brother and baby sister have to be looked after. Lessons have to be learned, school attended—and why, when their whole world is crumbling around them? England has found that children can stand bombings and hardships, but break up under the strain of a disjointed or broken home life. Our boys and girls are no different.

All their lives they have been told, "Wait till you're older." "Wait till you're older before you can drive the car." "Wait till you're older before you wear nylon stockings." "Wait till you're older before you can go to dances." "Wait till you're older before you start having dates." Now, right at the time when these things are within reach, and mean so much, the war has taken them away. Rationing has stopped the family car; the army has taken the boy friend; the factory has taken the mother and father; the basketball coach has gone; the corner drugstore and the two town movies are packed with soldiers. Everybody—all the adults—is doing something exciting, but there's not much left over for the teen age either in work that really counts, or in attention. History is being made—and they are being left out.

Teen trouble is nothing new. Any father or mother, any teacher, any leader of youth groups can vouch for that. Youth has always had to run through a perplexing and troublesome period, in which its actions are often unpredictable and baffling to adults around them. If we are honest about it, we all, with very few exceptions, went through it—a period of restlessness; of revolt against, yet dependence upon, authority; of being girl-crazy or boy-crazy; indolent or violently active in turn; of "crushes"; of vague





daydreams about the future; of being very grown up one day and very childish the next. If we are frank about it, most of us would admit that it was not a very pleasant period, even in normal times.

A survey conducted by Teachers College, Columbia University, among 500 adolescents told of their insecurity in the family group, of their economic lack as compared with their friends, of distrust of their own ability to learn and recite in schools, of indifference in their relations with others, discouragement in their physical appearance, emotional instability and unhappiness, and bewildering undue pre-occupation with moral self-questioning.

War has not changed this. It has merely intensified and aggravated the problems that youth faces, and has made the solution of these problems more difficult. It has touched many teen age youngsters, particularly the lower age group who ordinarily might be very little affected. It has also, we must remember, magnified and publicized many conditions that might have gone unnoticed—and uncared for.

### WHO ARE THESE BOYS AND GIRLS?

These boys and girls are your youngsters, and those of your neighbors. They are the boys and girls in small towns little touched by the war. They are the "trailer trash" that moved in when that new factory opened. They live in the town that is three miles from a big army camp. They live in embarkation centers, in boom towns, in large cities, in rural communities. They live in trailers, in new housing developments, in boarding houses, apartments, homes. They are all around us. They are the boys and girls of the United States from twelve to twenty years old. From east and west, north and south, comes report after report that these youngsters have become a Problem. Alert communities and organizations have already felt this—seen evidences of it, and are working and planning for its solution. Communities not so alert—perhaps not so close to the changes that war has made—may be unaware of it or may close their eyes to it, but it is there, and is one of the biggest problems facing America today.

### WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THEM?

If you're an average man or woman, very much engrossed in your work, doing all you can to help the war effort, but with not too much contact with young people, you'll find it hard to believe, and even harder to face. These youngsters are either in trouble or are heading for trouble.

The number of teen age girls on the streets and in the taverns is alarming. These girls are from twelve to seventeen years old—not the older girl, or the prostitute, but the high school and junior high school girl—and not necessarily in camp areas. They travel in crowds



and bandy wisecracks with civilians and soldiers alike on street corners.

They walk down city streets, six or seven abreast, breaking as they pass civilians, but holding on to each other's arms as they approach a soldier or a sailor, forming a very flattering net around him. As the walk progresses, the line gets shorter and shorter, as girl and boy pair off and leave the group. It's a childish, very effective get-your-man plan used by girls around fourteen and fifteen years old!

They go stag to taverns and night clubs. They are discovered in hotels and picked up by the police. They hang out in juke joints. They run away from home. They are heading for trouble.

Many boys and girls are dropping out of school—the boys, because they are restless in knowing that they will soon be called by the army, and both boys and girls because of the lure of jobs, and general restlessness.

Juvenile delinquency is on the upswing. There is no use shutting our eyes to it.

Mrs. Roosevelt, in a press conference on October 14, urged that war industry communities provide more wholesome recreational facilities for younger workers, in order to *reduce the rate of illegitimate births among thirteen to fifteen-year old girls*. The problem was not that these girls went around with soldiers, but that they hung around the factory gates, waiting for the boys from seventeen to twenty years old who had more money to spend than the soldiers.

In November, 1942 the National Recreation Association sent letters to representative cities in the U.S.A. asking about the teen age situation. Out of the twenty-one cities reporting, two reported no juvenile delinquency problem. One added that it felt that the situation was not the result of the war, but of administration and other changes. But nineteen reported that juvenile delinquency was a real problem.

City A reported a 30% rise in juvenile delinquency among boys of the twelve to fourteen age group. This city also reported that there was a great lack of men in the junior high schools, especially in the physical education department. In some of the junior high schools there wasn't a man on the faculty!

Loss of personnel, both male and female, is an important factor because these are the people upon whom the teen age group depends the most, after their fathers and mothers. An unstable, ever-changing adult world—at a time when they need the security of adults who



have known them and understood them—is probably one of the reasons behind the current restlessness.

The Probation Officer of the Juvenile Court of City B stated that there had been no appreciable upswing in cases of juvenile delinquency during the first year of the war effort, 1941, but that there was a noticeable increase of domestic problems—failure to support families, families stranded in other cities and cases of alcoholism. *These first stages of family upheavals, effected by attention to and pressure of the war effort, are now producing a bumper crop of juvenile delinquency.*

Perhaps here is one gauge for future trouble—if domestic problems are on the upswing, juvenile delinquency will not be far behind. In the interval before the effects are felt, a community can foresee and partially forestall the crisis, if it is alert to the problem, and figures out the best ways of attacking it at its roots. Just law-passing won't do. Curfews, for example, are almost impossible to enforce, and if enforced, merely drive youngsters indoors—whether indoors is wholesome or unwholesome. Drastic regulations, unless combined with an adequate substitute program, will have little effect. Surely we haven't forgotten the era of prohibition!

The runaway girls in City B in 1941 were eleven. In 1942, up until October, there had been forty-two. Many teen age girls who come to this city to see boy friends, expecting to stay over for a week end, get jobs as waitresses and remain. The Executive Director of the Travelers Aid Society reports that whereas it used to be unusual for a girl under sixteen to come to the city alone, now girls come in from eleven years on up, and there has been one case of a girl of eleven years coming all the way across the continent from San Francisco.

The statistician of the Travelers Aid reports two trends—an increase in alcoholism and an increase in sexual delinquency among fourteen-year olds and up. Many of the teen age boys working in factories with men much older have taken to drinking.

The director of one of the largest recreation centers for colored children reports that practically every day she has eighteen to twenty-five new teen age boys and girls, mostly from rural areas in an adjoining state. These children are having some difficulty in getting used to the city and some are falling into delinquent ways. Many of them are getting jobs and are busy during the day, but in the evenings they frequent the movies which are crowded, or attend the various piccolo joints which not only are crowded but also have little or no restraint on conduct. Many of the boys hang around on the street corners, make ribald remarks to women who pass by and shoot craps brazenly in the open.

City C reported that boys are going to work at an earlier age, often at high salaries.

These boys of upper high school age, or just beyond, might ordinarily go with girls of their own age, but these girls are interested in service men. These young working boys not yet old enough to get into the service look to the younger group of girls from thirteen up for their dates. With more money than they have been trained to use properly, and the freedom from close parental supervision which earning their own money gives them, such youngsters find themselves involved in situations which they are not prepared to meet. One high school in this city reports that forty of its girls have married since the beginning of school in September.

In October there were 113 runaway cases handled by or reported to the Crime Prevention Bureau. Of these, fifty-nine were girls and fifty-four were boys.

In this locality, the figures for the whole of the Service Command Area on venereal disease indicate that infection came, in 35% of the cases reported, from girls under eighteen; 70% from girls under twenty-one.

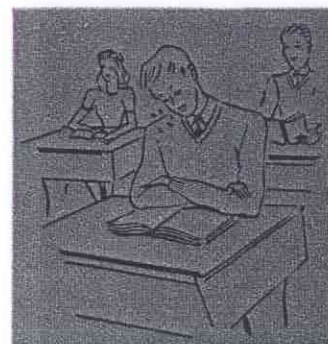
Beer parlors, honky-tonks, and cheap dance halls play their part in the problem. It is proposed to prohibit taxi-dance halls, to require closing of dance halls at 1 a.m., to exclude young people under seventeen years of age and to require that all floors have at least 400 feet of space.

The Justice of Domestic Relations Court, and Director of the Bureau of Juvenile Delinquency in one of our largest cities reports as follows:

There has been a 10% increase in juvenile delinquency within the past year. Much of the increase was among adolescent girls, and was particularly marked in sex delinquency. This was attributed in part to the fact that many girls had lost their boy friends to the army, and deprived of their normal companionship, had become uniform-struck.

An interesting by-product of the khaki-wacky girl is the effect her behavior has upon the boys of her own age. He has ceased to exist, as far as she is concerned—and he doesn't like it. The same thing is true of the older teen age group, particularly in communities that have enlisted almost all the free time of seventeen and eighteen year olds for soldier entertainment.

Many cities reported that the number of children working full or part time is steadily increasing. With this increase come reports



of truancy, falling asleep in school-rooms and failing in school work. Perhaps figures in juvenile delinquency may indicate no rise in these cities, because boys and girls so worn out are too tired to get into trouble. But isn't the possibility of physical and mental breakdowns as much a cause for alarm as a rise in traffic violations and teen age drinking? Here are two reports from cities in the middlewest:

The recreation problem faced by the Department of Parks and Recreation in regard to teen age boys and girls is that they have very little leisure time. At a recent high school mass meeting of 2400 boys and girls it was discovered that 90% were employed after school or Saturdays, or both.

A recent survey in the high schools of the second city revealed that 33½% were working after school, many of them as six hours a day—and some were working eight-hour shifts in addition to a full school day! Such a problem will result in physical breakdown or failure in school. They have to be absent to catch up on sleep or they catch up on sleep in study periods.

And so the story goes. Truancy, too much money, vandalism, sex delinquency, venereal infection, illegitimacy, leaving or failing in school, too little parental control and supervision—and understanding—and the teen age group is in trouble.



### WHY IS ALL THIS GOING ON?

These things are happening because, in the main, we have neglected these boys and girls. We have assumed either that they were more mature than they are and could take care of themselves, or that they were still children. We have been so worried about meeting the problems of the uniformed forces that we have forgotten the saddle-shoe, high-school-sweater group. We have been so eager to fill the factories and keep the assembly lines moving day and night that we haven't taken time to see, or to wonder what the teen age does in its spare time.

While we were attending the Red Cross classes, or training to be air raid wardens, what were they doing? Where were they going? What happens when both father and mother are working? Where do the youngsters go when the house has to be quiet because father is on the night shift? What do they eat, how much sleep do they get when there is little or no home life?

We haven't been much help to these youngsters, when a girl can say defiantly, "Sure, I knew it was wrong! But I never got to go to Radio City before, and he took me to a good hotel, and we had a swell dinner, and some drinks, and we danced, and I never had so much fun in my life!"

Everywhere, all along the line, a girl like that has been left out. She has probably never been an individual—one of many children in a poor and unattractive home, one in a crowded schoolroom under a harassed teacher, one among many in some playground, settlement house, or community center. She has probably received almost no attention as a person—as herself. She wants things that on the surface seem frivolous and unimportant—but are beauty, and warmth, and good food, and music, and attention so unimportant after all? And isn't it a sad commentary upon us that she has to get these things not from her parents, her teachers, her play leaders, or her church leaders, but from a street-corner pick-up?

Because we know that Mary is only fifteen years old, we assume that Private Smith knows it too—Private Smith who is away from home, lonesome, and hunting for a good time. Along comes Mary, gay, pretty, and energetic, bright with lipstick, also hoping for a good time. The only way Private Smith could tell that Mary was too young would be to see her in her own family group, and he seldom gets that opportunity.

Because seventeen-year old Bill is able to earn \$30 a week we assume that he will know what he ought to do with it—Bill, who never had more than \$2 in his pocket at one time before in all his life!



Is it any wonder that Bill begins to step out, high, wide and handsome? Or that he takes a girl friend along with him? *Where he takes her, and what they do depend entirely upon what sort of home life Bill has had, how well the schools have educated him for life, and whether or not the community has foreseen Bill's need, and provided proper recreation facilities and programs for him.* And this program will have to compete successfully in glamour, and in interest, with commercial recreation, because Bill is no pantie-waist and has money that is burning a hole in his pocket.

We have taken it for granted that the teen age understands as much about the war as we do—or that they needn't be touched by it at all. There hasn't been much explaining, or tying it up with what they have read about in their histories, or analysing just what it means—why we are fighting, or what we are fighting for. We ourselves are probably confused by the many conflicting reports, the new regulations, rationing, taxation, and all the other problems.

In many cases we haven't even been good examples for these youngsters. They must wonder at the patriotic slogans, and the talk about sacrifice when they see hoarding going on in their own family, perhaps evasion of the gasoline regulations and general "griping" over coffee and sugar rationing. The teen age gropes toward an understanding of ethics, is idealistic, and must be confused and disillusioned by the variance between our words and our actions.

When we do anything to try to weave them into the war effort, we give them jobs to do that aren't very necessary, but when an idealistic, thoughtful youngster compares it with taking a heroic stand in Bataan it seems awfully "dumb," especially when a nine-year old may be the champion collector in the neighborhood. Too often we put routine activities on a war basis, either as a means of gaining teen age interest, of getting disagreeable jobs done, or of satisfying our own instinct for organization. Making a patriotic duty out of minding the baby, or washing the dishes, is a very good way to undermine all interest and enthusiasm about the war. If, however, minding that baby, or washing those dishes means that mother can be a nurse's aid, or in any real way increase her contribution to the war effort, then that chore becomes a real war service.

As a matter of fact, any war activity we propose for youngsters



should be very carefully scrutinized as to its purpose and results. There is a very definite possibility that many communities are organizing activities that are too stimulating, are putting too much pressure on adolescents, and are relying too heavily upon the competitive spirit of youth rather than upon building an understanding of why their help is needed.

War activities should strengthen the relationship of youth to adults by taking them into those sections of real adult war work suited to their ability. Any activity should give the youngsters a feeling of companionship—of knowing that his whole gang, not just himself, is useful, and a part of it. A good war activity should also give this teen age group a chance to blow off steam—to relieve tensions through physical action, or through such media as debates, forums, music and dramatics. Above all, any war activity should be really constructive, not just a makeshift in order to keep the boys and girls busy.

Recreation leadership offers one of the best possible fields of activity. In almost every community there is a real need for recreation leaders. Many paid leaders have gone into the army, into governmental service or into industry. With more men and women working, and working longer hours, the need for longer recreation service is paramount. Here is a "natural" for the teen age group. But here, too, there must be real planning, so that their work is really good and really useful. They must be carefully selected to do the things best suited to them; carefully trained to be really useful and efficient; and carefully supervised by understanding leaders.

#### WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

We can close our eyes and ears to what is going on, and say, "This can't happen here." Or we can say, "These boys and girls are the ones who'd be getting into trouble anyway—they're not *our* boys and girls."

We can get very indignant, and blame everything on lack of police control. We can institute curfew laws. We can demand passes signed by parents for any youngster out on the street at night. But where will they go when they're not on the street? We can make laws to keep minors out of dance halls, and honky-tonks and taverns—but how can we enforce these laws? How can we tell instantly whether a boy or girl is seventeen years old, or eighteen? What can we do about the parents who will say that fourteen-year old Mary is seventeen years old, so that she can attend the USO dances?

These are not remedies—they are merely makeshifts that do nothing about attacking the root of the problem—the lack of recre-

ation facilities and trained leadership for the younger boys and girls still in school, the group with part-time and Saturday jobs, and the sixteen to twenty age group out of school and working full-time.

*This problem is one that needs the combined efforts of the whole community.* It needs a real study of existing conditions to discover the facts and find the answers to such questions as these:

Have all the social, educational and recreational agencies met together to consider the teen age problem?

Have the youngsters been given a share in any such planning?

Has any effort been made to find out what activities the young people would like to take part in?

Have they been given any opportunity to help organize activities for themselves?

Have they been given any special training to make them a part of the war effort in your community?

Has there been any increase in juvenile delinquency? Which age group shows the greatest rise? Are there any examples of illegitimate births, and sex delinquency in the community? How many high school marriages?

How many junior high school and high school students are working part-time? Full-time? Week ends? How has it affected their school work?

How many have dropped out of school? What are the truancy figures?

Have there been instances of vandalism on school or community playgrounds and buildings? Of local disturbances during the noon hour?

Has a study been made of all the recreation facilities and programs in the community? If they are not adequate, has a list been made of possible additional play space in churches, lodges, clubhouses, schools, vacant stores and vacant lots?

Does the community know all the facilities available for recreation? Has the recreation program been publicized adequately?

Are youngsters on the streets at night? Where do they go? What commercial amusements and recreation are in the community?

Are there city ordinances governing the operation of these places? Are these laws enforced?

Which ones serve liquor? Can a teen age youngster buy liquor anywhere in the community?

#### WHAT IS BEING DONE?

Quite a lot—in some places!

Like the old advertising slogan, "Ask the man who owns one," we can find out what works and what doesn't work by asking the communities that are facing the problem, and are trying to lick it. From all the different sections of the country comes the same essential pattern. Methods may vary, emphasis may be different, but the fundamentals are the same—east, west, north and south.

**Planning:** Outstanding in all the reports is the emphasis on planning. One city expresses its belief very concisely.

*"We believe that unified action upon the problems of the teen age boy and girl in this period, with all the agencies within the community that are interested in or touched by the problem working together in coordination, will have greater and more far reaching effect than each of us going down our own little groove in our own way."*



It doesn't matter so much who the leaders in this planning are. They may be individuals concerned with the welfare of school children;



they may be leaders in the recreation department. They may be the board of education, church workers, or representatives of social and welfare agencies. They may be the cops, the merchants, or the chamber of commerce. The main thing is that whoever starts the movement must see that it becomes community-wide—that

it includes such groups as those mentioned above and any other youth-serving organizations that exist in the community.

This planning may, particularly in rural areas, take in more than one community. But however wide its territory, members should be representative of all social forces *including youth itself*.

Out of this planning will undoubtedly come the realization that present facilities and leadership are inadequate, that commercial recreation is flourishing, and that the committee really does not know what activity would be most attractive to the teen age group. Also it will find that there are no funds with which to enlarge the present program or to plan a new program. In this case the community must so study the facts and publicize them so adequately that there is no question as to whether or not funds must be raised. *Investment in youth should certainly be as secure as investment in war bonds and should pay an even greater rate of interest.* This means that a good publicity campaign may be imperative, and here, too, every agency including the merchants, newspapers, radio, bus and street car companies, public and parochial schools, and recreation departments should be enlisted.

The results will be surprising. In a small town in which the population has been tripled by a large camp just outside the city limits a planning group discovered that there had never been enough recreation leadership, and that delinquency and truancy rates were shockingly high. A youth committee was appointed to get all possible volunteer talent and to find recreation quarters. Groups of boys and girls of high school and junior high school age met to plan and promote the activities they knew young people wanted. An old garage was renovated by two high school boys for a community craft studio. Two churches offered their basements for game rooms. A vacant grocery store made a spacious first aid center.

Out of these efforts came tea dances for the junior high school crowd—soft lights, carefully prepared decorations and the newest recordings. For the high school girls employed after school hours, activities were arranged for early evening hours. Supervised evening parties were held for high school girls with their own high school boy friends or groups of carefully selected younger service men.

And while the young people were enjoying their new found space and programs the local youth committee conducted discussion groups for parents on the problems of parenthood, using a local minister and his wife as discussion leaders.

**Leadership Training:** With the ever-increasing need for better leadership—at home, at school and in the recreation programs—and with ever-decreasing trained personnel available, the necessity for leadership training is apparent in every report. This training embraces not only in-service training for already trained leaders whose work has to be expanded and the training of leaders employed in other fields of work such as teachers, but also the training of volunteers, both adolescents and adults.

This leadership training can be most profitable if given in cooperation with as many as possible existing agencies such as the Parent-Teacher Association, Civilian Defense Volunteer Organization, Federation of Churches, Council of Social Agencies and the like.

Over and over come the reports that the teen age boys and girls can be trained not only to conduct recreation programs for younger children in their own homes, on the playgrounds, and in the community centers, but also can be trained to conduct programs for their own age group successfully and proudly. One city has trained a group of high school girls so well that they are now doing valuable volunteer service in settlement houses. Another group, after some basic training, did volunteer work on the playgrounds last summer.



The recreation department of another city found that few, if any, activities had been planned for the high school girl who was willing and anxious to participate in the war effort. As a result a course was started so that the girls could be trained as volunteer playground directors and group leaders. This was done in cooperation with the YWCA and other organizations and group work agencies. Such



training should have the twofold effect of assisting with the supervision of the younger children and at the same time giving the girls a wholesome outlet.

Another city finds that it is most important at this time to give teen age boys and girls responsibility and the sense of being a part of the war effort. Its recreation department has set up a system of junior leadership on its playgrounds and in its recreation centers.

Any such training must be practical and realistic, simple enough for the teen age boys and girls to do efficiently, and important enough to make them feel a direct sense of responsibility and pride in accomplishment.

No matter how well trained the teen age youngsters may be it is still important that they be given adequate leadership and supervision. Trained personnel is best for this. In order that such personnel be released for youth activities, it may be necessary to train adults to replace them in other phases of the program. Sometimes this recreation training is planned and conducted by the recreation department in cooperation with the Parent-Teacher Association; sometimes it is given by the recreation department leaders from churches meeting together to work out their community recreation problems. In one city seven social agencies including the city recreation department planned and conducted a leaders' training institute at the invitation of the Office of Civilian Defense in order to recruit leaders for the youth groups.

A very interesting variation of a training program is being worked out by one recreation department. The recreation director meets the grade teachers at regular intervals and discusses and demonstrates activities which are carried back to the playground and classroom. We have been using teachers on the ration boards. Now we find how useful they can be in recreation!

Many recreation departments are giving training courses to parents, teaching the various activities that come under the heading of home play. Planning indoor and outdoor play space, learning various types of games and puzzles, and making simple homemade toys and equipment are parts of such courses. The importance of hobbies, the techniques of storytelling and reading aloud, home music, and simple dramatics in the form of charades, pantomimes, and puppet shows are also included.

Such courses might be followed very profitably by city-wide contests in which prizes are given for the best arranged and equipped play yards. The present priorities on certain types of equipment and

metals will mean that the families, led by the recreation departments, will have to exercise ingenuity and imagination in improvising equipment and toys out of nonpriority materials.

The importance of such parent education can not be estimated. Almost every report from cities in which juvenile delinquency has increased has laid the blame largely upon the lack of normal family life in which home play is an important part.

**Social Recreation Programs:** Recreation departments have found that the most popular programs for the teen age group are those offering social activities—parties, dances, socials, clubs, and boy and girl “get togethers” of all sorts. This is verified by a survey of American high school youth conducted by “Fortune,” and issued in November, 1942.

“Ahead of any specific sport came dancing and movies for both boys and girls. After these the favorite pastimes are running around with friends, gab sessions, and the like.”

Many changes and adaptations have to be made in such programs, however, to meet the present situations—the problems of dimouts, difficulty in transportation, competition of commercial amusement places, and the working boys and girls. Outstanding among these adaptations is the trend toward taking such programs into the immediate neighborhood. A city in the west has started Friday night dances for the teen age boys and girls in eight different districts in the city. If they are successful, school buildings in other districts will be used for such dances. The responsibility of the dances is being placed fairly and squarely on the boys and girls themselves and they are doing a splendid job. The object is to keep the boys and girls in *their own neighborhood with their own neighborhood group.*

The advantages of this are very clear. It will discourage the wandering around on the streets in the afternoons and evenings. It will keep the boys and girls out of places of doubtful recreation value and at the same time will satisfy their desire for gaiety and amusement.

Recreation leaders are finding also that the teen age grows up and becomes interested in adult activities as soon as it gets jobs or part-time work that provides money to spend. Over and over again the recreation departments emphasize the fact that programs must be very attractive in order to keep this group interested.





The schedule for social recreation programs, must also be planned carefully. For example, Friday night was formerly the best night for the teen age group, but in many cities most of these youngsters are working at that time. Chain groceries, dime stores and neighborhood stores that frequently close on other evenings remain open on Fridays until 9 p.m. One community center begins social dancing at 7 p.m. for the thirteen and fourteen-year olds who stay until 9:30 p.m. At 9:30 p.m. the younger group leaves, and the dance is continued for the older girls who come to it directly from work.

One city that formerly conducted activities for boys and girls under sixteen years old in the afternoons only is now providing activities on Friday nights as well. Still another recreation department has organized quite a number of mixed social clubs who select their own names and plan their own social activities.

Dancing is far and away the most popular of the co-recreation activities and for this reason offers one means of competition with commercial amusements. Roller skating is another such activity. One city, for example, allows the boys and girls to bring their roller skates and to skate free of charge during several early evening hours in the gymnasium. This has been very popular and has encouraged the planning of skating parties lasting an entire evening for this age group.

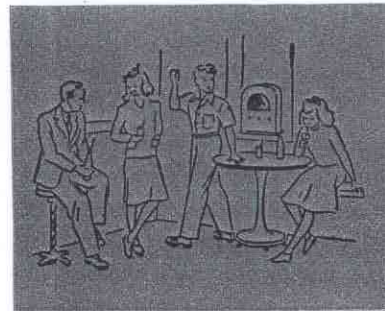
The desire to be a part of the soldier-entertainment which makes the younger teen age girl such a problem is handled wisely in several cities by organizing special entertainment units—groups that develop one act plays, skits, choruses, or puppet shows and are scheduled regularly to present such entertainment to uniformed groups.

Several cities have worked out very carefully ways of inviting the younger soldiers—the eighteen and nineteen-year olds to the community center dances. Through this means, the youngsters are under proper supervision and the problem of the girl-too-young-for-the-soldier is temporarily controlled.

Other activities offered to this teen age group include picnics, Sunday afternoon open houses, matinee dances, social clubs, dramatic programs, music programs including choruses, orchestras, and bands, motion pictures, radio plays, and cook-out suppers.

**Hang-out Rooms:** Closely tied up with social recreation is the necessity for providing specific space in which these boys and girls can meet each other in informal and attractive surroundings. The teen age is the age in which boys and girls are gradually becoming weaned away from family dependency and are growing more and

more interested in being one of a large group of their own age. The attraction of cider stukes and juke joints lies largely in the fact that



they offer an opportunity for meeting, laughing, talking, and having a good time all by themselves. Communities are realizing this more and more and are competing with the corner drug store, the piccolo joints, and the candy store by offering glorified "hang-out" rooms for these boys and girls. One city says definitely,

*"We try in each center to have one room that is attractively furnished where the boys and girls can meet and enjoy themselves."*

In these game centers which are being opened up in school and recreation buildings the boys and girls may play quiet games, badminton, table tennis, sing popular songs around the piano, dance, look at current magazines, and listen to the radio. Such centers may be improvised from empty stores or lofts if no schools or recreation buildings are available, but again, they should have efficient and unobtrusive supervision. They need not be elaborate. In fact, the boys and girls will enjoy decorating and equipping these rooms themselves and will do a surprisingly good job of it if given the opportunity.

This provision of a place in which boys and girls may learn to talk and to have fun together with each other without self-consciousness has an advantage not only in providing a wholesome setting for the boy-crazy girl or the girl-crazy boy, but also it provides an opportunity for the group which does not get very much publicity. This group is the group that has never had very much chance to meet youngsters of the opposite sex in an informal and pleasant way. Because this group is usually quiet and well-behaved, it is very often neglected and these boys and girls are allowed to grow up shy and ill at ease with each other, easily embarrassed and self-conscious. In this group the foundations of unhappiness and maladjustment are being laid for adult life.

Recently a study was made of thirty-three Wisconsin high schools. Forty-two, or two out of every five girls, said that they never had any dates, and of these  $\frac{1}{2}$  said that they really cared. Half of the girls confessed that they were shy with boys. Half the girls did not get much chance to meet boys. The reporter's comment on this is, "That's nice and safe, but is it normal and wise for the third and fourth year high school girls?"

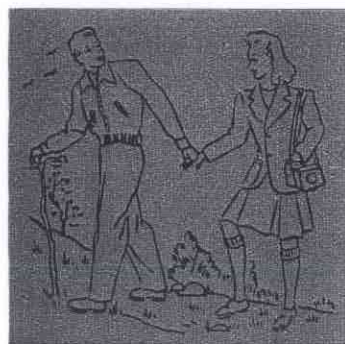
**Athletic Programs:** The teen age boy and girl are famous for their devotion to athletics and sports. Here, also, however, recreation



leaders have run into changes of attitude toward these activities. This is due, in some cases, to the fact that schools have enlarged their physical education programs to such an extent that the boys and girls want something different when they come to the playground and recreation centers.

On the whole, however, boys are more interested than ever in a very strenuous athletic program including physical fitness activities such as volleyball, basketball, and football. One city reports that whereas a few months ago the boys were somewhat lackadaisical about inter-park competition, now the boys on several parks eagerly organize their teams, and if necessary, walk to the games instead of expecting transportation. In this city the program for boys has been decentralized and the various leagues will play in each of the four parks having gymnasiums. *Several cities report this decentralization* by which city-wide activities are yielding place to programs conducted on a district or neighborhood scale. These cities assign the most experienced directors to districts of the city containing several school playgrounds and usually a municipal playground. Here they are put in charge of the entire district program and the in-service training of new playground directors, most of whom are young and without experience.

Another city reports a new emphasis on big muscle activities such as games of combat, touch football, hiking, and the like. The recreation department is encouraging the boys and girls to use the hiking trails on the nearby mountain and issues suggestions for the conduct of activities on these hikes. Special attention is given to the high school boys who are not participating in the regular high school athletics.



Physical fitness courses as such do not seem to have the same appeal for girls, who prefer their recreational activities to be co-recreational in nature. They prefer, for example, mass volleyball in which the boys also participate—tennis, swimming, badminton, fencing, and those games and sports in which their partners or opponents may be boys and which are more individualistic in nature.

There is in this group a great deal of interest in square dancing, folk dancing, rhythmic, tests of skill, bicycling, roller skating, and hiking.

So far, the effects of gasoline rationing and the fuel oil shortage in the east are just beginning to be felt. Already we hear of schools closing for periods ranging from a week to two months. This means that the community centers may be closed also. Churches may be affected—church recreation may decrease.

Your community will have this problem to face and to solve. What will happen to the boys and girls with so much free time on their hands? If they get jobs, will they be willing to go back to school when the schools re-open? Where will they find recreation? You and your community must start now, and face this realistically. Just when they need it most, are the teen age boys and girls to be deprived of recreation?

Active outdoor games and sports may be part of the answer. Let them try roller skating in the gym, or ice skating on the pond or



the flooded tennis court, ending in an outdoor meal around a bonfire. Hiking, bicycling, skiing—these outdoor, healthy activities that are attractive to the teen-agers in groups should be considered as a possible answer.

Adolescents love this kind of recreation. They love activities that demand skill and energy and can be done by boys and girls together. Perhaps outdoor programs have never been given a fair chance because so many adult leaders prefer the warmth of indoors in winter! Now, when even indoors isn't so warm, is a good time to make outdoor programs possible and popular.

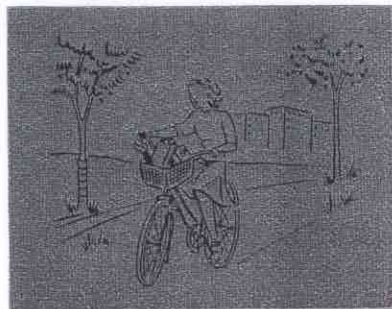
**Tying Recreation and War Service Together:** It is fortunate that recreation activities can be fitted so easily and so well into almost any type of war service for the teen age boys and girls. In a southern city the recreation department reports that the trend of the afternoon programs is toward volunteer defense and related activities. The youth groups of this department have enjoyed collecting salvage (iron, metal, paper, rags, rubber) and have collected twenty tons of scrap metals. They also promoted the sale of \$200 worth of defense stamps in one month by conducting a series of neighborhood playground fairs.

Mention has already been made of the formation of entertainment units, music and dramatics, to be used in soldier entertainment. To this might be added the use of such programs in publicizing the "V" home stickers, the putting on of puppet shows in the libraries,



schools and churches, and volunteer leadership in church and club recreation programs.

A group of girls from one organization carried on a bicycle messenger service all summer in one town. They were in charge of replacing war stamps in each of the selling posts. This town sold over a quarter of a million dollars worth of stamps in six months, so these girls must have been very busy and useful. Riding a bicycle for a purpose can be just as much fun, and more, than merely riding for pleasure.



Craft programs offer endless means of combining recreation with real war service. The collecting, repairing and redistribution of toys, leading up eventually to the establishment of toy loan centers and toy banks; the making of model planes for the navy; learning how to identify planes; learning the Morse, International and Wig-Wag Codes; learning photography and the elementary principles of practical electricity and radio; making posters, making games and puzzles for home and hospital use; learning the insignia of the army, navy, and the marines—all these are not only interesting in themselves, but useful to the war effort.

In one city a group of girls have been making bags out of newspapers—10,000 a month! These bags are used to pin on hospital beds in place of the ready made ones now expensive and difficult to get.

In another city one group of eighth grade girls supplied the marine hospital with place cards and favors for holiday dinner tables; another group furnished their own material and made dresses and sweaters for refugees; others are making afghans and baby quilts to be distributed by the Red Cross. Still another group sent fifty dolls to England for war relief sales and are doing similar work for needy children here. Social clubs are writing letters to the men in the service and making scrap books containing cartoons and crossword puzzles for them.

In the coming months, gardening will be one of the finest means of real service. Not only is food really needed, but gardening itself, as a teen age activity, has everything! Strenuous exercise out of doors in the sun, tangible, quick results for proper care, and a definite gratification at harvest time gives gardening an age old fascination. It satisfies the youngster who wants to do something by himself; it is equally satisfying to those youngsters who prefer doing things in groups.

As an activity it can be sponsored by a family, the school, or the community itself through the auspices of the local garden club, or



the Victory Garden Committee of the local Civilian Defense Volunteer Organization. Preliminary, informal training through talks and discussion will go far toward eliminating disappointing failures, and an exhibition at the harvest season, followed perhaps by group canning, preserving and drying will help to maintain interest. Not that much help is needed! There is something about gardening that relieves tension, and slows down the rapid tempo of present day living. Perhaps it is the old Biblical curse, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." But whatever it is, gardening holds the interest and imagination of most age groups as few activities can do.

The coming summer will bring a rise in farm labor in the upper teen age group. This will be hard work and no matter what the sponsorship or the supervision of such groups, they should be given recreation to offset the unaccustomed tasks. Community square dances on the week ends, swimming, movies, special music groups—your community, if it is in an area using such labor, should be able to add to this list.

**Parent Education:** One recreation department in publicizing a city-wide movement for home play is using the slogan, "The family that plays together stays together." Recreation departments everywhere are realizing the fundamental importance of family life that includes the normal give and take of play activities in which adults and children can meet. There is no better way for a child to learn how to get along with adults and with other children than the practice that comes at home. With the increase in transportation difficulties, rationing problems, the closing down of community centers and recreation buildings, the loss of trained personnel and the cutting of recreation budgets, the first line of defense in recreation is being thrown back to the home. While recreation leaders may recognize this fact many parents have been too busy to be aware of it. Training courses for parents in which they are taught the essentials of home play have already been discussed and such training courses are growing in number and interest every day.

These programs of parent education are an indication that communities feel a definite responsibility for the welfare of their



youth, within as well as outside of the home. Too often in the past such courses have emphasized activities for the pre-school children and omitted the teen age group completely. But regardless of all the training that is being given to parents, as well as to such groups as teachers, church leaders, and the like, there is still a great need for closer community cooperation whereby all existing agencies, *including the family*, shall pool their resources and their programs so that no boy or girl is left out.

#### IN CONCLUSION

Above all, the teen age boys and girls must be shown for themselves that democracy really works; that it is a priceless heritage that was fought for and won by our forefathers, and must never be taken for granted; that our government can be trusted; that they are a great and indispensable part of our nation, destined to play the main role in setting up and maintaining any new world order; and that such a role calls for intelligence, hard work, and a deep loyalty from each one of them.

In our relationships with them, at home, at school, in the recreation program, in the church, and in the defense work we must be friendlier, more patient, more understanding, more interested in them as individuals, more willing to give them responsibility—and to help them carry it.

No teen age boy or girl in America should grow up afraid of the future. We must help them to meet it, and to know how to face it as it comes—realistically and intelligently.

The “terrible teens” of today will weave the pattern of the world tomorrow. We want the warp and woof of that pattern to be strong and beautiful.

