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All in a Day's Work

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Nursery School Supervisor
Interior Decorator
Furniture Maker
Remodeler
Speaker

All in a Day's Work
by Mary Jean Stoddard
Applied Art Freshman

A DRAB GREEN and filthy barrack building confronted Rosemary Iverson, 1952 graduate in Child Development, when she took over her job as Child Development Specialist with the Easter Seal Center for Cerebral Palsy Children in Boise, Idaho.

Much work needed to be done on the old building donated to the Crippled Children's Society for a day center.

Rosie became chief interior decorator and remodeler as she went to work with the volunteer workers, ripping out old walls and plastering new ones. This center will offer certain rehabilitative services to children crippled by cerebral palsy, a disease caused by damage to nerve switchboards in the brain.

Another of Rosie's new responsibilities was that of buying nursery school equipment for her own department. There is no equipment for crippled children on the market. Rosie designed the pieces she needed - the four-place standing table, the large sandbox on legs, the slide with steps to provide incentive for children learning to climb and a low table with cut-outs to help support the children who cannot sit alone. She mail-ordered art supplies, rhythm band, manipulative toys, tricycles and a wagon. She sent out a plea for used dolls and sand toys to which the community responded eagerly.

Rosie is mural painter

Several weeks were spent painting circus murals on the nursery school walls. Now gaily painted "Percy the Clown," "Susie Seal" and "Homer," a tiger with his tongue hanging out, parade around the room. A circus train, complete with clowns, a giraffe's protruding head and a purple engine, puffs along one wall.

Rosie used gay, interesting colors in her murals and from these she chose the colors for the red piano, the orange stepslide, the red and blue tables, and the red sand table. She painted the little chairs red, yellow, blue and green. The children's eyes light up when they enter the room for the first time and see the gay murals. The other day one little boy walked over to "Percy the Clown" and planted a big kiss on his big red nose.

Besides redecorating the barracks, Rosie took over much of the public relations work for the Easter Seal Center. She speaks on an average of twice a week to Kiwanis and Women's Clubs and other organizations around the state. Her record to date is three speeches in one day. At first Rosie went to the club meetings; but now that the center is farther along, the groups meet there. They hear Rosie's brief history of the center's undertakings and her explanation of the equipment and see a demonstration of physical therapy with two of the children. This plan works very well, for the groups can actually see the center at work instead of merely hearing about it. Since the center is a new project, public education and interest are important, especially as the center is financed by donations to the annual Easter Seal Campaign.

Staff works together

Rosie is only one of the staff of four that makes up the Easter Seal Center. Besides the nursery school teacher, there is a physical therapist, a speech therapist, and an occupational therapist who work closely together to help the children. The physical therapist works with the children in an effort to help other nerve circuits and muscles to take over the job of those that have been damaged. Children whose speech is affected are under the care of the speech therapist who teaches them to talk just as the physical therapist teaches them to walk. The occupational therapist's job is to catch the children's interest with various activities which are planned to help them overcome their handicaps. When the children are not with one of these therapists, they are playing in the nursery school under Rosie's supervision.

The Boise Easter Seal Center opened in November with three children entered. Since then enrollment has expanded to 18 pupils and is still growing. Each child is taken for a 6-week trial period and is kept longer only if he can benefit by the training.

Rosie writes that children seem to be showing wonderful improvement: one little boy has actually learned to stand alone and to walk since he started 5 months ago.