Crackdown on child support dodgers may send scores of fathers to jail

Tough measures needed to catch the 135,000 men who owe over $35 million

By Elizabeth M. Oliver

There are untold numbers of unwed mothers in Maryland who are living near the poverty line or on public assistance because the fathers of the children are behind in support money.

The number of single mothers has become so alarmingly high in 1984 that (1) the suffering of the children is critical (2) the fatherless home affects the emotional being and health of the children and (3) the financial burden on the Welfare Department is termed critical.

Baltimore Circuit Court Judge Robert B. Watts told the AFRO Tuesday a crackdown on absent fathers is necessary.

He states, "it's alarming. It's terrible. There are men riding around out here in fine cars. Others are spending money on everything but their children, their obligation. Some are living well. We are going to have to do something. In fact, we ARE doing something about it."

Actual figures as revealed by Mrs. Anne Helton of the Maryland Commission for Women are: 235,000 persons, 90 percent males, who owe a total of over $350,000,000 in child support today in Maryland. The men, 135,000 in the Baltimore area, are on the average male, black and age 19 and under court order to pay child support.

Neglect to pay support for children is a criminal offense with jail penalty. Judge Watts says his basic thrust is to try to collect the money from the fathers who can be made to support the child after age 18 if the child is retarded or handicapped.

18 MONTHS IN JAIL

The jail term is 18 months in the House of Correction.

Judge Watts explains that he usually gives the father "30 days to come up with the past due money you owe or you go to jail."

The court procedure is (1) a supoena is issued (2) if the father does not show up a warrant is issued (3) the sheriff serves the warrant and arrests the person and (4) he is taken to the Sheriff's Child Support Lockup and held for court.

Judge Watts reveals that delinquent fathers are of all races and stations in life, some celebrities, sports figures like baseball and football big names, physicians, businessmen as well as "the ordinary man in the street, unemployed and employed, middle income and those who are caught in the poverty net.

Some, according to court records, owe as much as $7,000, or $8,000. The normal arrears is between $1,500 and $1,800. The amount of the weekly payment is determined by the needs of the child, the income of the father and the income of the mother.

Judge Watts notes that if the mother is working, there is the extra cost of child care, day nursery, to be considered. The average payment is $30 a week. However, child support can go as high as $75 to $100 a week.

"It takes at least $75 a week to take care of a child these days," Judge Watts adds. If the payment from the father cannot make up the needed amount, the mother may go to the Department of Social Services for supplemental grant."

APPREHENDING THE FATHER

Mrs. Helton reveals how the father is "caught up with" because they have not paid what is due his child or children.

She prefaces the process with this remark: "The family he leaves behind has to go on public assistance, a heavy burden on the taxpayer which the man responsible for the child should be made to pay.

"In addition, neglect to pay support for a child leaves the mother and child living near the poverty line."

First, the matter of paternity raust be established and this can be done through blood testing if the father does not admit he is the father. The parentage is then established in court, "before the judge."

Special Parent - Locating Services are employed to catch a missing father who is dodging the law: (1) Federal records (2) Motor Vehicle records (3) wage screening or where the man last worked.

The process of locating the delinquent father seems to work fairly well in that, Mrs. Helton states," We were able to collect over $78 million in delinquent payments so far in 1984."

Much of the time, locating the father's address is established by the mother of the child.

JUDGE ROBERT B. WATTS

The mother may go to the Baltimore Child Support Office, "just walk in the door," at 11 South St. or call ahead, phone 659-8500; fill out the application for child support services. This applies to divorced mothers or mothers of illegitimate children who want the parentage established.

Some cases come to the attention of the law through Aid to Dependent Children Department or other social agencies.

JAILS CROWDED

The crackdown on fathers who do not support their children is necessary and critical since the court method is very expensive.

Some fathers have to be brought in again and again and it is considered an abuse of the court's ruling.

It is true the men can be picked up and placed in the lockup, but this jail is only for temporary holding. Most often, the man's family will show up with the money due his children and he will be released, but if this does not happen, there is another complication.

The jails are already full and overcrowded and essentially, "there is nowhere to put delinquent fathers."

What the Maryland Commission for Women wants is the coming 1985 General Assembly to enact a law that has "more teeth in it."

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

With the passage of Public Law 93-674 in 1975, all states were required to have effective child support enforcement programs. As the states hired personnel and increased enforcement activity, there was a deluge of child support cases in the courts. Backlogs were created and delays in getting cases heard.

All state legislatures have the authority to set up an executive agency or board to administer or resolve problems or claims.

What the State of Maryland needs, according to the Commission for Women, is "support/earings withholding legislation." In essence, this means when the court order is handed down, the father's wages can be attached for child support without delay.

Strong support is needed from individuals and organizations who will contact Maryland senators and delegates.

"Children must not be denied the support legally owed them."

the Commission states. "Sometimes the man is unemployed, the organization claims, but most often his own needs come first. He pays his bills first despite the fact he was a part of the birth of the child."

The Child Support Enforcement Coalition, a division of the Maryland Commission for Women, 1123 N. Eutaw St., Baltimore, Md. 21201, asks that interested persons call for information and suggests child support legislation be made a part of their organization's agenda. "We will gladly send materials and speakers."

For further information contact Paula J. Peters, Maryland Commission for Women, 1123 Eutaw St., Room 603, Baltimore, Md. 21201, 301-383-6608. (A commission of the Department of Human Resources.)

Call for the date of the Seminar to be held in Annapolis in October.

Winter 84-85 will need a greater Fuel Fund

The great possibility that Winter 1984-85 will be prolonged and abnormally severe and will cause more than usual comsumption of energy for many homes, demands that the Fuel Fund Inc. get in contributions early.

Fuel Fund Inc., founded by former City Councilwoman Victorine Adams, has been concerned with assisting the city's poor with their fuel needs since the organization's founding in 1978.

The Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. has matched the fund's dollars which have also come from private money from city residents and that of local businesses. In addition, BG and E has assisted by helping the needy with their energy related problems.

An immediate project to round up funds is the Paddle for People event sent by sponsor TV 2 for Oct. 13. The occasion to be held in the Inner Harbor from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (rain date Oct. 20 involves civic, philanthropic, service and community organizations, corporations and local businesses, high schools and universities, government agencies, institutions from Baltimore and surrounding counties.

Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard Counties also share in Fuel Fund Inc. help for the needy and emergency money for energy costs to the ill, the destitute, elderly and unemployed who have nowhere else to turn.

Paddle for People funds are raised by individual volunteers, the media and other groups with two people paddling in a team. On race day hundreds of balloons are released in the Inner Harbor. Each team tries to pick up as many balloons as possible in a given time. At the end of each race the balloons are counted and recorded, winners announced and ribbons awarded.

Individuals support the Fuel Fund by pledging money for each balloon captured by their team. Groups must register by Friday, Oct. 5. Call 825-FUEL, (3835) Fuel Fund Inc., 7800 York Rd., Baltimore 21204. Teams are urged to note, "It takes only one hour to keep someone warm this winter."

Statistics released by Mrs. Adams reveal that the 1983-84 Paddle for People project raised a total of $27,088.65. Coupled with contributions, the total was $34,068.20. As of March 31, 1984, BG and E had assisted 9,533 customers and the company had issued credits in the amount of $720,418.

MRS. VICTORINE Q. ADAMS — Founder of the Fuel Fund movement.

Under the Fuel Fund Inc. agreement with BG and E, Mrs. Adams and her committee each year meet objectives to provide assistance to fixed and low income persons who because of circumstances beyond their control have difficulty in meeting home heating needs.

Also provided is a vehicle through which persons applying for heating bill payment assistance can be educated on the importance and benefits of energy conservation and reduction of the number of persons cut off from fuel services.

Fuel Fund has entered into an agreement with the Department of Social Services which screens and processes persons in need of financial assistance to pay winter heating bills and to certify these persons for assistance to the Baltimore Gas and Electric Co.

Fuel Fund provides its own staff to administer the program and to solicit contributions to the Fuel Fund from providers, local businesses, religious and charitable organizations and from the general community.

—MORE PARTYLINE

Continued from page 8

closing, plans were made for the next family reunion. The Rev. Marcel Miles of Houston, TX volunteered to act as chairperson of the reunion for next year.

Members of this year's committee were Mae Willis Solomon, coordinator; Ruth Griffith, Glen Burnie, MD; Altermise Solomon, Cureton Solomon and Welles Solomon, all of Baltimore.

There was plenty fun had by all and lots of love to go around.

Family members attending included: from Baltimore: Zaddock Solomon, Sr., Mae Solomon, Perisell Solomon, Altermise Solomon, Damelon Henry, La Keshia Lawson, Christine Muril, Clemet Trusty, Welles Solomon, Jovett Solomon, Keir Solomon, Cureton Solomon; Also Rachel Mack, La Tarsha Mack, Franklin Bethea, Velma Bethea, Basil Bethea, Carrie Nichols, Dinna Nichols, Mary Britton, Louis Britton, Thelma McLeod, Joseph Bacoat, Louise Stencil;

And James Scarrbough, Jannie Jarrot, Frank Scarrbough, Mae Scarrbough, Viola Miller, Marion Pinkey, Delorise Morgan, Justine Brown, Lila Pinkney, Freda Nichols, Clif McIntosh, Michael Morgan and Woody Morgan.

From Upper Marlboro, MD there were Charles Parker, Curtis Parker, Clyde Parker and Peggy Parker;

From Lanaham, MD came Floyd Gilmore, Katernia Gilmore, Virginia Gilmore, Kamilah Gilmore and Kimberly Gilmore;

From Glen Burnie, MD were Ruth Griffith, Jo Anna Griffith and Benjamin McLarkin;

From Washington, DC: Isaiah Solomon, Dee Solomon, Genobia Solomon, Cureton Solomon, Jr., Georgia Hall and Derrick Solomon;

From Linden, NJ: Matthew Solomon, Aderine Solomon, Leroy Edwards, Hattie Solomon, Matthew Solomon, Jr., Geneva Edwards, Frances Solomon and Arlene Summers;

From Morristown, NJ: Charles Parker, Jr., Ansel Parker, Dorothy Parker and Ian Parker;

From Rahway, NJ: Bryant Edwards, Lula Edwards, Jessie Edwards, Elouise Andrews and Ruth Edwards;

From New York, NY: Vinnie Burrows, Alease Morgan, Mark Siley, Sarah Andrews, Willie Morgan, Herminia Andrews and Mary Alice Morgan;

From Lynchburg, SC: Eleaser Solomon, Charles Samuel, Annie B. Solomon and Thomas Solomon;

From Memphis, TN: Lavonia Powell, Preston Jackson, Jessie Powell and Alvonia Powell;

From Chicago, IL: Geneva Gillard and Carolyn Stanley;

From Coropolis, PA Wilbur Edwards, (Maj. Rtd. U.S. Army) and Mary S. Edwards: From Boston, MA: Wayne Parker;

From Los Angeles, CA: Julia S. Wright and Peggy Diakite;

From The Barbados Islands Phyllis E. Smith;

From Houston, TX Rev. Marcell Miles and from Mt. Prospect, IL Paul Edwards.

30TH ANNIVERSARY

Clifton and Dorothy Johns recently celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. They are the proud parents of one daughter, Crystal Johns, and son-in-law, Emerson Coleman.

Clifton is employed by the U.S. Postal Service and Dorothy works for the City's Municipal Court System.

RETIREMENT FETE

Mrs. Mary Lou Wise of Baltimore recently retired after more than 33 years of Government Service.

Those at the Central

Mary Lou Wise, Retiree

Security Facility are very proud of Mrs. Wise, who started her career with the Veterans Administration in Washington, DC in 1951. She transferred to Fort Holabird in 1953, starting as a GS-2 Index Clerk.

Mrs. Wise progressed over the years, later serving as Deputy Director of the Investigative Records Repository. At the time of her retirement, Mrs. Wise was the Investigative Records Officer for this Facility.

In recognition of her faithful and outstanding service to her country, Mrs. Wise was presented the Department of the Army Exceptional Civilian Service Award, the highest award presented by the Department of the Army, as well as several other high level awards. The award was presented at a monthly retirement ceremony conducted by Headquarters, Fort George G. Meade.

Following the ceremony, Mrs. Wise was honored by her friends and family during a luncheon held at the Fort Meade Officers' Club. Several of Mrs. Wise's former commanders returned to attend the luncheon.

Mrs. Wise and her husband, Thomas H. Wise, Sr., are native Baltimoreans. They have three children Thomas H. Jr., Daryl and Karen, and two granddaughters, Mia and Joanetta.

Charles A. Gibson

Services for Charles Ambrose Gibson were held Sept. 7 in the Chapel of Nutter and Sons Funeral Home, Inc. Burial was in Garrison Forest Veterans Cemetery. Born Oct. 19, 1964 in Baltimore, Mr. Gibson died Sept. 2. He was educated in Baltimore City Public Schools and was a member of the Job Corps Program and joined the U.S. Army in 1971. At Pentecostal Church he was a member of the Young Peoples' Choir In 1974 he was struck by a tragedy which left him crippled. Mr. Gibson is survived by his father, two grandmothers, four sisters: Melvern, Darlene, Sherry and Marlene; four brothers: Donald, Larry, Donald and Alfonso; and many relatives and friends.

Gregory C. Patrick

Gregory Carlos J. Patrick died Sept. 1 at Halifax Community Hospital in South Boston, VA. Interment was in Garrison Forest Veterans Cemetery. Born Nov. 27, 1967 in Baltimore, he was the son of John L. and Shirley M. Patrick. He began his Christian experience at Zion Faith Apostolic Church and was educated in Baltimore Public Scivcols. He is survived by his parents; one sister; his grandmother, Eva M. Kittrell; his grandfather, Lister Patrick; his stepfather, George Kittrell; and many relatives and friends.

—School board choice

Continued from page 1

and is also a graduate of the system.

Mrs. Johnson said that as a new member of the board (since Feb., 1983. she had no comments or strong feelings about the issue.

Five of her own children have gone through the public system and five of her grandchildren are currently enrolled, Mrs. Johnson said.

"My thing is to better it (the system) for my family and everybody else's. I'd like to keep a racial balance on the board. I don't know if an elected board will achieve that," she stated.

Board President Walker declined to comment on the amendment saying that as an appointed member it would appear self-serving. He did state that he is a graduate of city schools and that he has a daughter currently attending a city school.

Mrs. Silverstone, who said she has two children enrolled in public schools in Baltimore, said that she was not in favor of the amendment because it "puts too much politics into the school board."

Vice President Marshall, a ten-year board veteran, stated that he has had an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of elected and appointed boards with people nationwide.

According to Marshall, those who favor the elected board are those who are from districts (unlike Baltimore) where the boards have taxing authority and are fiscially and politically independent of the community structure.

In those districts where the elected boards lack such authority, he stated that he has heard opinions against the idea of an elected board "slightly" more often than he has heard opinions in favor of it.

Where the boards are fiscally independent the elcted structure is more compatible, he said. Looking at the city board's dependence on the political structure, Marshall said he would conclude that an appointed board would be more beneficial overall to education.

Another negative aspect of an elected board would be the time consuming campaign process, according to the vice president.

"Many say elected boards spend as much time running for election as they do attending to the business of the school system," Marshall said. Some very skilled potential commissioners would also be eliminated from the running because their jobs may not allow them the freedom to engage in a campaign, he stated.

The expense of campaigning may also be prohibitive to some candidates and may create a situation wherein those who champion certain causes might "pull together" to finance campaigns, he said.

Marshall said he has had five children educated in the Baltimore school system and presently has two grandchildren enrolled in city schools.

Smith said that it is a "Catch-22" situation for a person on the board to comment on the proposed amendment and that he is still thinking about the "common sense of having an opinion as an appointed board member." A native of Athens, GA, educated in the south, Smith stated that he has a son in the second grade in Baltimore City school.

Dr. Saunders said that he does not believe an elected board will be in the best interests of the children of the city.

"Elected boards just don't seem to function well in metropolitan areas once you completely politicize the system," said the South Carolina educated commissioner who has had both children and grandchildren in the city school system.

Student Commissioner Myung Oh said that she felt it was not a good idea to bring campaigns and "all the commotion" into the board selection process.

"The person running might be doing it out of popularity. The majority of people vote for the person, not for competency," she said.

Ms. Myung also expressed fear that people might vote along racial lines or for other personal reasons, and that the cost of running a campaign might prevent more competent people without funding from running.

"It's going to be too much to handle," she added.

Only Rodney Wilson, student commissioner from Walbrook favored the proposed amendment. "I think it's great. It gives the citizens a chence to put the commissioners in office. I think it will work to our advantage.

—Shake & Bake

Continued from page 1

Robert F. Dashiell, in disclosing a few of the particulars of the proposed arrangement Wednesday, said that the loan would enable the center to pay the full amount due on the late payments plus an additional financial amount against the remaining loan balance.

Dashiell also said that though the city will not be paid in full right now, once the new loan agreement has been worked out, additional payments would be made when sufficient cash flow is available.

He further reassured a reporter that the entire $4 million loan would be paid within the original alloted time period.

Mayoral press secretary Pat Bernstein, when asked to clarify some of Schaefer's Tuesday comments, answered that he was simply expressing a feeling that both the business and religious communities could do more to lend their support.

"The mayor felt that the community-at-large needed to become more involved financially with Shake and Bake and not leave it to the city," Bernstein said.

BUY UNITED STATES SAVINGS BONDS

Woodstock, a life saver for city youth

By Eddie King
AFRO Staff Writer

Away back in the woods, some 20 miles from Baltimore on Old Court Road, between Maryland Routes 26 and 99—past the corn fields, past the ponds and past the country-like dwelling, along a five mile stretch—stands the Woodstock Job Corps Center.

It is one of the nation's 64 residential centers in the country that make a serious attempt at revamping the direction of underprivileged youth between the ages of 16 and 21 who have dropped out of school and whose families have an annual income less than $6,200.

Often threatened with long-term unemployment and possible criminal encounters, these youths are offered the chance to receive some of the best in basic educational and vocational training as well as training in the necessary life skills appropriate for enhancing job preparation and responsible citizenship.

Enrollees in Woodstock receive room and board, clothing for work and dress, books, supplies and a cash allowance, part of which is paid upon leaving the program after satisfactory participation.

"Our goal is to have these kids be able to obtain meaningful jobs and hold them," insisted center director Jack Terry. "If that means giving some special attention to some, we will if we can."

While many of the programs are self-paced, the students are guided by some of the best instructors in specific vocations, often skilled union workers.

That becomes evident immediately when one notices massive building renovations and rehabilitations on the site done by actual students, some in training and others actually advanced enough to go out and make a living at the skill.

A youth at Woodstock can expect to have a choice between one of many vocational offerings that are divided into two categories, those offered by the National Association of Home Builders (N.A.H.B.) and those offered by A.L. Nellum and Associates (A.L.N.A.).

Some of the courses offered by N.A.H.B. include carpentry, painting, electrical, brick masonry, floor covering and building apartment maintenance.

Some of the courses offered by A.L.N.A. are accounting, cooking, nurse assisting, typing and bookkeeping.

Besides these courses are those reinforcing or developing basic academic skills.

It is hard to doubt the professionalism of the students when work rendered to businesses and agencies done by them is rated just as equal in quality as work performed by established firm workers.

Recent evidence can be found in the 1300 block Argyle Ave. where three newly renovated townhouses show off the capabilities of the students. They did it all. Or, one just might travel to the Gallery Restaurant and notice its differences. The students did it all.

But the pride doesn't stop there. It stretches way inside the walls of some area Super Pride markets, Provident Hospital rooms, Coppin State College buildings, Urban League facilities, dental clinics and even some private homes.

Some 530 youths are a part of the Woodstock Job Corps program. 98 percent of whom are black and a little more than 65 percent of whom are Baltimoreans.

For those who successfully complete the program and receive a specific trade degree or a high school diploma or both, assistance is offered to help find employment or to help obtain other interests such as the military, college or other advanced training.

"I like Woodstock and what it's doing for me," said 19-year-old culinary arts student Dorothy Matthews. "I am learning a lot of skills that will be necessary later."

"I happen to think it's good too," said Chris Campbell, a 20-year-old cooking student at Woodstock, "You see, the program gives you confidence in yourself. It makes you feel you can be successful in something. Honestly, I feel I'm on the right track now."

Woodstock has 175 persons on staff, 33 of whom are professionally accredited teachers. It is spread across 50 acres of Patapsco State Park in a secluded area. It is one of three Job Corps sites in Maryland. The other two are in Laurel and around the Chesapeake Bay.

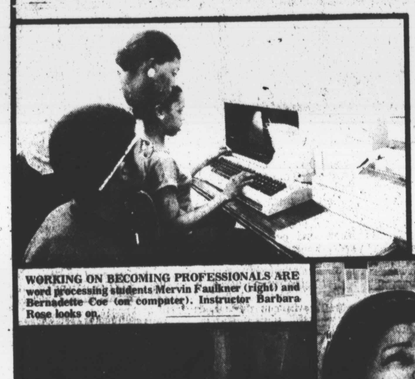
Within the two-year maximum, a student can stay at Woodstock, there is exposure to more than just academics. There is provided some of the finest cultural enrichment endeavors, including horseback riding, bowling, trips, etc.

Becoming a member of a Job Corps Program is as simple as contacting a local office of any state employment service, and in some cases by getting in contact with social service agencies, schools and churches

"We're convinced that the program is working," said Andrea Nelson, placement coordinator for Woodstock. "Ninety percent of the students leave and obtain employment within six months or either join some other training programs."

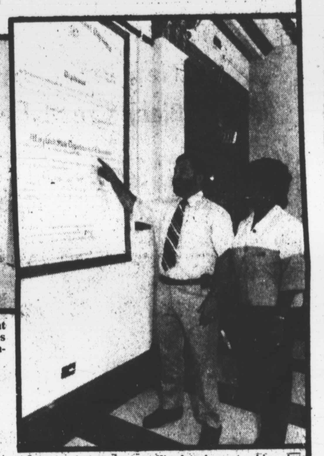
More and more, the Woodstock Job Corps Center is becoming advantageous in the Baltimore area. With some 30 percent of students reported dropping out of high school, Woodstock does become an alternative for many of them.

There is hardly any doubt that the program's theme is appropriate, "WOODSTOCK WORKS!"



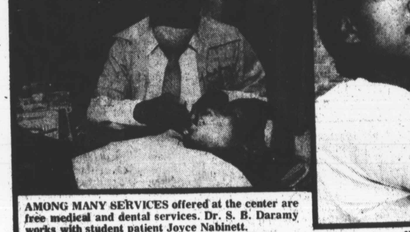
WORKING ON BECOMING PROFESSIONALS ARE word processing students Mervin Faulkner (right) and Bernadette Coe (on computer). Instructor Barbara Rose looks on.

WELCOME — New students arrive at center. They are familiarized with the rules and agreements required of them which include no sex, no drinking and no drugs.

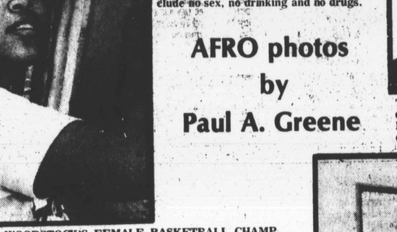


THIS is what students at Woodstock must achieve indicates center director, Jack Terry (left), and Andrea Nelson, placement coordinator, pointing to an enlarged high school diploma.

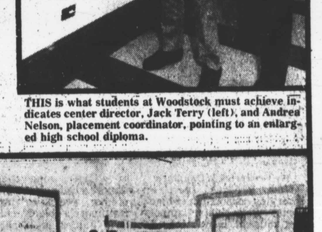
AFRO photos by Paul A. Greene



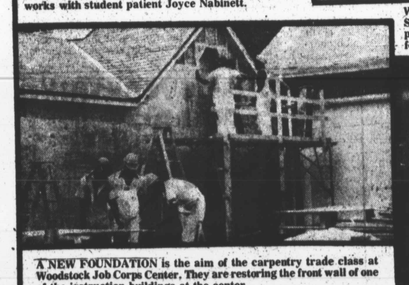
AMONG MANY SERVICES offered at the center are free medical and dental services. Dr. S. B. Daramy works with student patient Joyce Nabinett.



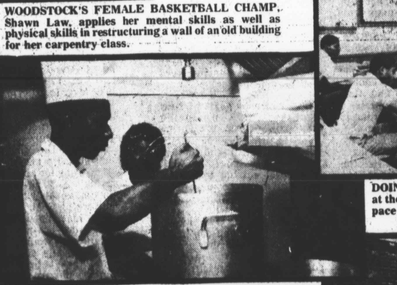
WOODSTOCK'S FEMALE BASKETBALL CHAMP, Shawn Law, applies her mental skills as well as physical skills in restructuring a wall of an old building for her carpentry class.



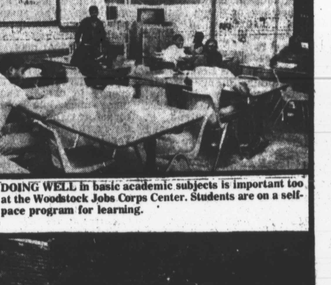
DOING WELL in basic academic subjects is important too at the Woodstock Jobs Corps Center. Students are on a self-pace program for learning.



A NEW FOUNDATION is the aim of the carpentry trade class at Woodstock Job Corps Center, They are restoring the front wall of one of the instruction buildings at the center.



STIRRING UP THINGS is cooking student Clarence Walker being guided by instructor Francina Thompson.



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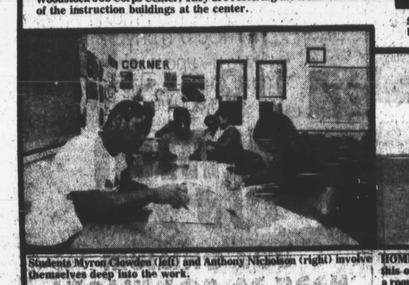
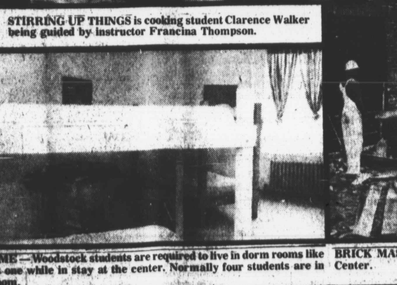
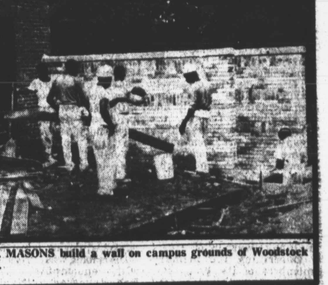


Students Myron Clowden (left) and Anthony Nicholson (right) involve themselves deep into the work.



HOME — Woodstock students are required to live in dorm rooms like this one while in stay at the center. Normally four students are in a room.



BRICK MASONS build a wall on campus grounds of Woodstock Center.