REPORT OF ACTIVITIES OF MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY JANUARY 1921 TO SEPTEMBER, 1922

HARRIET A. ROBESON

Director

The Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy was organized in January, 1921 for the purpose of organizing and promoting occupational therapy in Massachusetts. The officers elected were Dr. E. G. Brackett, President; Miss Harriet A. Robeson, Vice-President; Miss Marjorie Greene, Secretary and Treasurer. The Board of Managers were Dr. John D. Adams, Mrs. S. Parker Bremer, Dr. Walter E. Fernald, Dr. Herbert J. Hall, Dr. John B. Hawes, 2nd, Miss Ruth Wigglesworth, and Mr. Arthur Williston.

For the first year we were proud and satisfied for the time being in just existing, and there were only two activities during this time that are worthy of record. The first was an open meeting on occupational therapy, at which over 700 people were present. This, so far as we know, is the largest meeting ever held in the sole interest of occupational therapy. The second act of importance was the acceptance by the association of definite standards for the training of occupational therapy aides. A course was drawn up which the board of managers considered to be the minimum training necessary to graduate a well-equipped therapist. This course was presented to you by Dr. John D. Adams of Boston at the Baltimore conference last year.

In January, 1922 we began our second year with the same officers save that on the resignation of Miss Robeson, Dr. Adams was elected vice-president. The Board of Managers realized

1 Read at sixth annual meeting of the American Occupational Therapy Association, held at Atlantic City, September 25 to 29, 1922.

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that so rapidly was the occupational therapy field growing, we could no longer rely on the good will of volunteers alone, and that the work must be organized on a firm basis to secure progress. The association was incorporated, an office was taken, and a director was appointed. This was done on faith, and not on a bank balance! With a center from which to grow, an active program was worked upon. This program may be roughly divided into four heads: registration and standardization; publicity; the bureau; and a survey of occupational therapy in Massachusetts.

I. REGISTRATION AND STANDARDIZATION

This part of the program can be dismissed with a few words. It seemed the least important for the time being, and little has been accomplished. Its purpose is to register under the Massachusetts association all aides who meet the standards of training and experience recognized as adequate by the association; to see that such information is forwarded to the American Occupational Therapy Association office and to assist registered aides in finding positions so far as it is possible. This is closely allied to standardization of training, salaries, records, etc., for which the association is working.

II. PUBLICITY

We have endeavored to carry on an active publicity campaign in order to spread knowledge of the meaning and purpose of occupational therapy throughout the state, and to secure memberships by which we will be enabled to carry on a developmental program. We have been responsible since February to date for fifteen meetings; some of these were in private homes, for which invitations were sent out; some at hospitals, and others in clubs and social service centers. Our president made the encouraging remark in February that we ought easily to secure 3,000 members in Massachusetts during the coming year, which would cover our budget, but hard and persistent work for six months, has secured about 300! We are forced to admit that we cannot sweep the state with a tide of occupational therapy enthusiasm,
but we will continue these meetings, culling a few members at each one. We have reached the definite conclusion that small selected groups of about 50 people bring in the best results. At least, over 1400 people to whom we have talked and shown our lantern slides have learned the meaning of occupational therapy, and through quite a little newspaper publicity in connection with these meetings and the distribution of over 8000 leaflets of the association, many hundreds more have become familiar with the name.

III. THE BUREAU OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

This is without doubt our greatest means of publicity. It was organized three years ago and has always held a unique place in the occupational therapy field. In January, 1922, it was taken over as one of the activities of the Massachusetts association, and is now situated on one of the best shopping corners in Boston, having outgrown two previous locations. The bureau has a four-fold purpose: (a) to buy craft materials and equipment for departments and individuals at less than retail prices; (b) to sell the finished product submitted by hospitals, institutions, and individuals; (c) to promote service and understanding between the worker and the purchasing public; (d) to act as a clearing-house for the exchange of ideas and designs throughout the country. We are concentrating a good deal of time on the bureau, trying to enlarge its usefulness to the craft worker, and making a special effort to secure new and interesting materials and suggestions for craft product. To further this, we are planning a travelling exhibit of some fifteen or twenty finished articles which will be loaned on request for a period of two weeks or more to any hospital or individual desiring it. An important function of the bureau is the disposal of the finished occupational product of various hospitals and individuals, and to keep the consignors in close touch with the demands of the public. Through persistent effort the product is slowly but surely being improved; many consignors who at first brought in unsalable articles are now producing salable ones. This is
particularly true of the home worker, who has little or no supervision. Summer is a dull selling season in town, and to offset this there have been 8 sales of patients' products at various summer resorts. These have been most successful and have the added value of having brought occupational therapy before a large public, representing many states. Many people drop into our shop in passing, and few leave it without learning something of our work. An exhibit was sent from the bureau to Chautauqua and to the Eastern States Exposition at Springfield. The bureau has at present 88 consignors; 18 of these are hospitals, representing many patients. The balance are home workers. In the last six months, due to our present location and reorganization, we have increased our sales over 50 per cent. Today the bureau has a bank balance and its aim of being a self-supporting enterprise seems near realization.

IV. SURVEY

This part of the program has also given way to the more pressing need of publicity and the bureau. At the risk of thoroughly exasperating hospital superintendents with another questionnaire, it was felt to be our only means of securing the foundation of information from which to work; 335 questionnaires were sent out to all registered hospitals in Massachusetts. Replies have been received from 33½ per cent. Of these, 49 hospitals have occupational therapy in operation. Divided under broad headings; these are 12 general hospitals using occupational therapy, 11 tuberculosis sanatoriums, 29 hospitals for mental and nervous diseases, 6 hospitals and homes for children (where emphasis is on the diversional and educational value rather than therapeutic). About 37 hospitals asked for literature, further information, a visit from a representative of the association, and showed a decided interest in occupational therapy. We believe this to be fertile ground on which to sow our seed. Reprints on occupational therapy were sent to these hospitals, and they know we stand ready to help them at any time.

A Massachusetts report would not be complete without mention of the Boston School of Occupational Therapy, though its
existence and excellence are widely known and recognized. It has, however, stamped a red letter day on the occupational therapy calendar of last May by purchasing and becoming the owners of their building at 7 Harcourt Street. It gives us an assured feeling that occupational therapy has come to stay.

It does not seem necessary to go into detail here of all the inquiries and many interesting developments therefrom that come into the office from many states in the country. Our organization is rapidly becoming known, as is shown by our increasing correspondence and visitors. We are confident of the growing interest and support of our public, and that success awaits us, because we have a board of managers in complete accord, all working in perfect harmony of ideals and ideas for the same big end—the best good and growth of occupational therapy.
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN SOUTH DAKOTA

BELLE STEWART

South Dakota is shamefully lacking in regard to occupational therapy. No state society has been organized, and there is but a handful of occupational therapists in the state. However, these few are most enthusiastic, and every effort will be put forth to show people the necessity of the work. None of our state institutions have an occupational therapy department, although the Board of Corrections and Charities is becoming interested. Also an effort is being made to introduce the work into the training schools for nurses. During the next session of the legislature, we hope to accomplish something as the governor, and many of the representatives have had the benefits of occupational therapy thoroughly explained to them, and they have promised their assistance and support.

The only place in the state where the work is known as yet, is at Battle Mountain Sanitarium at Hot Springs. This is under the National Homes Service and is being organized at present. Two aides are stationed there who, in a short time hope to have a splendid occupational therapy department.

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