ACTIVITIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN ST. LOUIS

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Approximately four years of study and experience have convinced the Missouri Association for Occupational Therapy that the cause for which it stands has not only proved its value but is still in its pioneer stage of development with a broad future ahead.

Our chairman has called for a report of the activities for the promotion of occupational therapy in St. Louis.

As these all radiate from the central office known as the Missouri Association for Occupational Therapy, a history of their activities will necessarily include the details of their plan of organization.

The Missouri Association for Occupational Therapy grew out of the St. Louis School for Occupational Therapy conceived September, 1918, before the armistice and opened immediately thereafter with misgivings as to the opportunities for employment that would be open to the fifteen students enrolled in our first class. We know now how unfounded were these misgivings. Four classes have graduated since then, and still the demand for trained workers far exceeds the supply.

Due to the farsightedness of the first president of the Missouri Association for Occupational Therapy, Dr. G. Canby Robinson, now vice-president of the American Occupational Therapy Association, this board decided to incorporate under the laws of Missouri.

The constitution accepted made this board self-perpetuating.

The twelve trustees who constituted the first board were men and women who had already proved themselves leaders, and

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

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this selected body as a whole has continued in office and has accomplished a fine piece of coöperative, coördinated community service.

Probably the outstanding feature of their contribution has been in the community interest awakened in occupational therapy; each member possessing and utilizing his special facilities for its promotion.

The president represented the Washington University School of Medicine, while the St. Louis Medical School and the municipal hospitals were each represented by a member of their faculties.

This at once secured the interest and coöperation of the medical schools with their affiliated hospitals both public and private.

The instruction committee was placed in the hands of the director of the St. Louis School of Fine Arts, the director of the David Rankin School of Mechanical Trades in which federal vocational rehabilitation courses had been successfully carried on since the government first called for them, and the director of the physio-hydro-therapy department of the Washington University School of Medicine.

The administration is cared for by a trustee of finance, one of legislation and publicity, one of business and factory methods. Three women were selected to give time and thought to the inauguration and supervision of policies recommended by the association.

One of the three had been president of the Junior League of St. Louis which had not only established and maintained the first curative workshop in St. Louis since 1916 in connection with the Outpatient Department of the Washington University School of Medicine, but also provided the first contribution to the school, $7000.

Another had been chairman of the Red Cross Placement Bureau for the Handicapped and the third, the writer, had represented the Missouri Womens Committee, Council of National Defense.

With the exception of the first president who was called away from St. Louis and was succeeded by Dr. Malvern B. Clopton,
an eminent surgeon on the staffs of Washington University and St. Lukes Hospitals, the original board continues intact.

That their interest has never waned has been shown by the astonishing regularity with which the meetings have been attended.

In addition to this board of trustees there are standing committees elected by the trustees upon recommendation of the several chairmen, who also prescribe their duties.

The most active of these is that on workshops. Fifteen members serve. These are divided into small groups, some detailed to visit the hospitals which are supervised by the director of the association and others to take charge of sales and public meetings held two or three times annually.

Knowing what a problem is the disposition of production, a brief mention of the work of the sales committee will be in order.

Two sales of articles accumulating in any of the workshops have been held at association headquarters, beside another each year at one of the large department stores.

Through the Retail Dry Goods Association, each of these in turn has offered the association the use of space and facilities for a sale. The articles are called for and returned by them.

Their saleswomen conduct the sale, even giving credit to regular accounts. Purchases are wrapped and delivered. At these sales, one trained worker in uniform is always present to explain the work correctly and to endeavor to interest new students, also two committee members to interest the general public and to prove their live interest in the cause.

That the satisfaction for this arrangement is mutual and that the sales do attract, has been shown when the week following one of these sales articles similar to those made in their shops were put on sale at the same stand.

The placement committee has ceased to function since the closing of the Red Cross Placement Bureau. Cases now requiring positions are referred to the Junior League Workshop or to the Missouri Bureau for Industrial Vocational Rehabilitation.

Our primary object is the promotion of occupational therapy, therefore the funds raised must be devoted thereto first and the
remainder if any, applied wherever the needs seem most closely allied to this aim, and so such plans as we have for placement work must perforce be secondary.

The other committees respond whenever called upon.

The budget required is $1700 a month and is raised by direct personal appeals.

The objects of the association are:

1. To train and qualify persons to provide therapeutic occupations in hospital wards and workshops, and private homes.

2. To stimulate an interest and extend the use of occupation as a curative measure for physical and mental ills.

3. To carry on activities for the betterment of the industrial and economic conditions of the physically and mentally handicapped.

Accordingly in December, 1918, the first training school was opened at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts with the splendid help of Eleanor Clarke Slagle. Alice H. Dean was made director of the school and the teachers of the art school contributed their services.

Fifty lectures on related subjects were given by faculty members of St. Louis universities and schools.

From three months the course has since been extended to one year; eight months for craft training and four months for hospital practice.

The school, originally located at the art school was moved to its own headquarters, especially leased and equipped for the purpose, and later to the St. Louis City Hospital.

Here the occupational therapy department has the use of one very large ward, with the school on one side and the hospital workshop on the other.

This is especially helpful to the students in that they grow accustomed to view their craft-training from its therapeutic angle as well as that of art.

The lectures continue as in the beginning with occasional lectures added to stress special requirements.

Tuition has been raised to $125 and supplies $75 per course. A vital feature in the course is the hospital practice afforded to students.
For these arrangements, Dr. G. Canby Robinson made the initial contacts, which Miss Idelle Kidder, director of the association from September, 1919, to September, 1922, installed and developed. Her services are evidenced in the results she has achieved.

The association recognizes that to her efforts are due the growth of the activities in St. Louis.

Hospital practice for students has been provided since January, 1919, in the workshops the association has established by permission of the city in the St. Louis City Hospital and the City Sanitarium. The former is for general hospital service, the latter for psychopathic.

Following twenty months trial, the city relieved the association of financial responsibility for the salaries and supplies of the workshops and, at its suggestion, opened another workshop at Koch Hospital for Tuberculosis.

To quote from the second annual report of Dr. Clopton, "As long as the present pleasant cooperation exists, we have the supervision of all of these stations, suggest the therapists, and arrange for the sale of the articles made, the proceeds going to a special fund to supply the unusual demands of the shop in the hospital from which the article came."

Training experience has been provided in the wards at Barnes Hospital, a private general hospital affiliated with the Washington University School of Medicine.

This workshop is still supported by the association. More recently the St. Louis Children's Hospital has expressed the desire to accept the students during their training period, the director here being a graduate of the school.

These laboratories give experience to the students in various types of hospitals, thereby enabling them to make a choice of field in which they may wish to specialize.

Familiarity with hospital technique and understanding of the sick are made possible in this way before the full responsibility of a trained worker is shouldered.

In framing the city ordinance by which curative workshops were established the legislative committee of the association was consulted. This trust was indeed prized.
The third purpose of the association, the workshop for the handicapped, has been tried out with a part-time, and last year a full time director, Miss Martha Gilbert, a zealous intelligent worker. The association realizes the value of such a workshop, when in connection with the dispensary of a hospital, as a tide-over station between hospital and factory, or full time employment.

However, as the workshop for the handicapped had no direct hospital affiliation, the majority of the cases that applied were sent by the organized charity associations of St. Louis and presented economic rather than medical problems.

So when owing to ill health, the director resigned, the Junior League Workshop most generously provided for the hospital cases. The other cases so far as possible were referred for training to the Missouri Office of Industrial Vocational Rehabilitation.

At this critical period in the development of occupational therapy about the most important problem before the Missouri Association seems to be that of training the women upon whose skill and ability the success of our work will depend.

The directors in the field will be responsible for the introduction, and even more for the promotion, of occupational therapy as a profession. As the social service worker has proved herself indispensable to scientific medical treatment in many cases today, so must the occupational therapist prove her value by the remedial importance of her contribution. She must prove this to staffs and boards of hospitals by accurately and scientifically measured records, as well as general results, such as improved hospital morale.

With this serious definite purpose in mind the Missouri Association will start the next training class in September, 1922.

Miss Geraldine Lermit will become director of the association. In her hands has been placed authority for all of the appointments for the ensuing year.