

Plans to request OEO assistance for the Center were drawn up by Sister Baptista, Sister Theresa, and the Board of Directors of the Boorady Memorial Reading Center, which is chartered as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of New York. The first draft of the project proposal was begun in September 1965. Five months later the application for funds went forward to Chautauqua Opportunities Agency, the OEO agency responsible for Community Action Programs in Chautauqua County, New York.

Endorsements for the project came from several responsible persons in the Chautauqua County area. The Department of Public Welfare commented that "the Center is providing a most helpful service, one which is not available through public and private schools." A public school official testified to the "invaluable educational service which the Center has afforded to many of our children who experience reading difficulty." A local school administrator reported that he did not have within his system "reading specialists who can provide the program in reading to correct reading deficiencies."

In the face of such documented evidence of need, the application of the Boorady Memorial Reading Center was approved as part of the Chautauqua County Community Action Program. The Office of Economic Opportunity share, under Grant No. CG-1088, is \$54,548. The money is authorized to staff, equip, and operate a Tutorial Reading Center in Dunkirk, New York, between June 1, 1966 and April 30, 1967.

Staff, equip, and operate—truly formidable sounding words. First—staffing. Sister Baptista's competence as a child psychologist was well recognized. Superior teachers of the public schools in the Dunkirk-Fredonia area were most anxious to make their services available for the 1966 Summer Sessions. Mrs. Kathryn Bullock, who had recently resigned as bookkeeper at the Brooks County Hospital, agreed to maintain the financial records. A member of the Fredonia Presbyterian Church, a certified speech therapist, welcomed the opportunity to lend her talents. Two VISTA volunteers, mature, dedicated, and competent, were added. One of these, Mrs. Muriel McCutchen, brings to the Puerto Rican children of Dunkirk her years of experience with Mexican-American children on the West Coast, plus her fascinating competence in designing life-like puppets and marionettes. English or Spanish, it makes little difference when a child pours his heart out to a rag doll that bobs, nods, and dances at the end of a set of strings.

Today, the Boorady Reading Center faces no staffing problem. In addition to Mrs. McCutchen and the second VISTA volunteer, Mrs. Elsie Keller, who maintains all student records, there are seven specially trained reading teachers, two speech therapists, a secretary, a bookkeeper, two volunteer librarians, and four Youth Corps teacher aides. All are of different denominations, and all work together, as a large and happy family, helping the two nuns to provide the reading training, speech therapy, and tender, loving care which these children so desperately require when they come to the door of the Reading Center. Eleven other teachers, each with an advanced degree, stand in line waiting for a vacancy on the teaching staff.

"Equip." This was a real challenge. The Center could not be like a school. It must be like a fine home. Many of the children who might come wouldn't know about fine homes with book shelves, books they could take away and read, and quiet carpets. It must be an exciting place with machines that would let the children hear how their voices sound, and instruments that would flash words on the wall. The Center staff knew about these things, but they knew that wonderful as OEO help was, it wouldn't stretch quite far enough.

So Sister Baptista decided she had to get a job. She made commitments for what she needed. She stretched each OEO dime until it looked like a pre-war dollar. She persuaded carpenters, carpeters, and educational suppliers to give her credit. Then she delegated administration of the Reading Center to Sister Theresa, and with the permission of her superiors, she taught, for a salary, at the State University College at Fredonia. She took the salary with one hand. With the other, she turned it over to the carpenters, the carpeters, and the educational suppliers.

When July 1966 rolled around, the Reading Center was ready and the staff was ready. As to the children, some were recommended by the Welfare Agency; others were sent in by their public school teachers. Still others were solicited by such volunteers as Mrs. Adelfa Perez, who knocked on sagging doors and persuaded reluctant parents to enroll their children. By opening day 197 were registered. Of these, 102 were sustained under OEO funding. Others, whose parents could pay the \$1.00 per hour fee, were tuition students. The rest were "on the house."