

A View From The Governor's Office

By Gov. Raymond P. Shafer

Man's efforts to shed light on the dark mystery of mental illness show heartening gains as we mark Mental Health Week this week.

Today, a person with a sick mind is no longer destined to remain isolated in an institution sinking deeper and deeper into his inner world of apathy, despair or distortion.

Through the paths of modern drug therapy, motivating techniques, rehabilitation and community mental health services, a mentally disabled person now has an excellent chance of being restored as an active, productive member of society.

Commensurate with scientific and sociological advances are the firm, practical mental health measures taken by the Commonwealth.

Since the beginning of the Republican Administration in 1963, upgraded services in the State's 18 mental institutions have raised each patient's average daily care from \$5.06 to \$12.55, or 148 percent.

The consequent increased personnel at these institutions has provided more personalized services to patients and materially reduced inpatient population by enabling more of them to return to their home communities. In January, 1963, there were 37,511 patients in State mental hospitals. By February, 1969, the number had reached a low of 29,988.

Because mental illness, like every other sickness, gets worse if it's neglected, the community mental health center plays a particularly vital role in the maintenance of mental health.

Early diagnosis and treatment available in local areas can prevent the need for hospitalization

These beforehand measures, as well as aftercare services, are modern blessings to the patient capable of living among his fellowmen.

Since the passage of the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Act of 1966, the State has moved steadily to provide local-based psychiatric care to its residents. County plans, approved by the Department of Public Welfare, have been expanding and coordinating needs. I am proud to note that Pennsylvania's Community Mental Health Program

is one of the most progressive in the Nation.

As direct and immediate treatment of the patient in the community becomes more available and the stress on prevention and rehabilitation continues, the vast numbers of cases including outpatients, by State mental institutions—nearly 62,000 a year—will gradually diminish. More and more patients will return to the community; some to placement in foster homes; some to their own homes. An increasing number of persons will never have to leave home to be treated.

The complete restoration of a mentally disabled citizen, however, rests with society.

Fortunately, through a growing awareness of the preponderance of mental illness, the public has at last swept away the cobwebs of suspicion and fear which once clouded its thinking

about the mentally disabled. People now recognize that a sickness of the mind can be treated; that it can strike down the rich and the poor, the old and the young—anyone. And they know it is urgent that they help as many as possible of the mentally ill to get well.

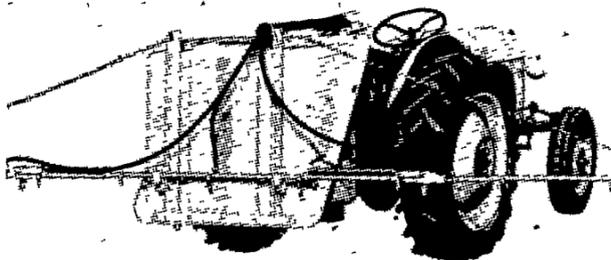
For years, dedicated volunteers have served in many capacities at institutions. The volunteer program today has realistically broadened its scope to include direct community services and persons from all walks of

life are being urged to give their time to the supportive one-to-one relationships that so effectively spark interest and encouragement where it is needed.

Hopefully, humanity and science will advance together to gain the goal of Mental Health.

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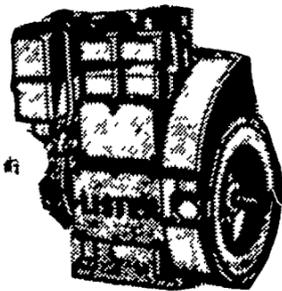
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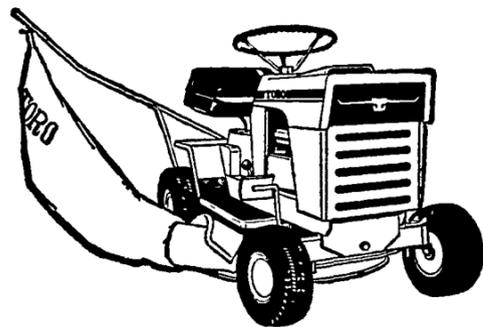
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