

*'I like to be busy — I'm busy all the time.'*

# Citizens unwilling to be relegated to stereotypes

By LINDA HOELZE  
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

There are nearly 43 million disabled Americans. These people are not disabled in the conventional sense of physical limitations but they have a handicap that can be as much a hindrance in trying to find a job — they are 55 years old or older.

Many of these people are not content to play bingo, rock in a rocking chair or sit on a park bench and feed the pigeons for the rest of their lives. Nor can most of them financially afford these pleasures. At a time in their lives when most people expect them to slowly fade out of the work force many are instead looking for jobs or never leaving them in the first place.

Lois Sanderson of Philipsburg is a typical example of a senior citizen in Centre County who wants both to work and is forced to work for financial reasons. Sanderson, a widow who recently celebrated her 60th birthday, has worked now for seven months as an aide at the Philipsburg Senior Citizens Center. Before that, her only job had been working as a secretary for three years at a local television cable station.

Sanderson found her job through the Senior Community Service Employment Program, a county-wide program which is administered through the Area Agency on Aging. The program is funded by the government through Title IX of the Older Americans Act and is designed to help low-income persons 55 years old or older find employment.

According to the program's director, Val Brake, Sanderson is having problems meeting her living expenses.

"The reason I'm working is I'm too young for a pension," Sanderson said. "I've exhausted my savings."

When Sanderson's husband died, their home was paid for, but she faced financial difficulties because she is too young to draw Social Security and does not receive any widow's pension.

Sanderson, however, only works 20 hours a week at the center at minimum wage. This amounts to bringing home little more than \$50 a week. She again has her application in at the Area Agency on Aging hoping to find something with a little higher pay.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program, located in the Willowbank Unit of the Centre Community Hospital, is directed by Brake, himself reaching the graying stage evident in his salt and pepper beard. Brake said the Centre County program

has been only moderately successful. He has found jobs for 14 of the 44 elderly involved in the program. Eight of these 14 positions are totally subsidized by funds from the federal government.

Brake calls the program a "new child," brought into the Area Agency on Aging in April with a total budget of \$23,796. Ninety percent of this amount is provided by the federal government while the remaining 10 percent comes from volunteer efforts supported by the local government. The money is used for subsidized jobs and salaries for the people involved in the program.

*"A man's years should not be counted until he has nothing else to count."*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

When Brake became director he visited various employers in Centre County to conduct a job survey of large companies such as HRB Singer, Corning Glass Works and the University and small businesses with few employees, such as the Pennsylvania Military Museum and Cinemette Theaters. Although he was able to get senior citizens jobs in only two of the smallest organizations, Brake said Centre County employers do not discriminate against older workers.

"Yeah, they're interested but the jobs just are not there," Brake said.

He said the lack of jobs is because the University dominates the community and has said it is not hiring now.

He also said jobs are scarce because area industries are branch plants that hire at their headquarters and then promote and transfer from within the company.

"Most of the people I have are skilled but the only work available is unskilled," Brake said.

The real question in most employer's minds, however, has been why they should hire an older worker.

Brake said it was a myth that as people get older they tend to go downhill in performance. The best advantage to hiring an older worker, he said, is that he tends to be more reliable and has good judgment and common sense.

"The older person has a lot of advantages over the younger one in dealing with adversity," he said. "You don't, when you're young, find out what it's like to overcome all the obstacles in life."

Helen Harpster, manager of the

Nittany Manor Motel, has hired five people from the program, the most of any employer in the area, to fill positions of day and desk clerks and security guard.

"I consider them an asset," Harpster said and added with a grin, "Perhaps that's because I'm a senior citizen."

Harpster agreed with Brake that older workers are more experienced, more tempered to working and more conscientious.

"Also, I found they want to work or they would not apply," she said.

She is critical of senior citizens in one way. She said they are "reluctant to take instructions and follow them."

"They think they know as much as I do," she said. "They think who's she to tell me?"

This criticism caused Harpster to fire one of her desk clerks who found the job through the Area Agency on Aging.

Harpster said this clerk "had his own set way of doing things." The "final blow" came when he told a guest to park his 18-wheeler tractor-trailer in a back driveway instead of the regular truck parking lot, which caused the truck to get hung up in the driveway. When asked about the incident, the clerk said that was where he had wanted the truck.

Robert Kidder, manager of the University's employment division in the at the University.

Kidder said employees are hired on competency and not on age.

"I really don't care what the age is," he said. "I'm going to evaluate what needs done on the job."

The only job he questions as far as age is concerned is security positions. Because the job is geared toward apprehending and involves running, he said, some elderly workers might not be able to do the job.

Kidder stressed, however, the advantage in experience the older worker has over the younger worker.

"The older worker is probably going to be more successful in finding employment at Penn State because the younger worker does not have the experience to satisfy our requirements," he said.

Most of the people he knows at the upper levels of University administration, he said, are older people who got their jobs through their maturity.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment Standards Administration has issued a booklet making a case for the older worker. According to the booklet, studies on older workers show:

- their attendance is likely to be better than that of a younger person;
- they change jobs less frequently;
- on production jobs the output of an older worker up to age 65 favorably compares with that of a younger worker and in professional jobs there is little difference in output; and
- learning ability does not decline with age.

Even armed with these facts, many older workers have to combat their own stereotyped image.

"I think there's no question there's a general trend on the part of society that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks," said Joseph H. Britton, chairman of the Gerontology Center at the University and also chairman of the Senior Citizens Advisory Commission in State College. Britton said, however, that he personally does not believe this is true.

He concurs with government studies that say older workers are generally more experienced, absent less and more dependable.

Britton also cited the detrimental effects on an older person who wants a job but is forced to sit at home.

"Morale is another global concept to the extent that work is a meaningful part of one's own concept of self," Britton said.

Brake estimates two-thirds of the older people he sees have some form of income but are not content to just sit at home.

Harpster said one time she owed one of her older workers an hour and a half in pay but he said it did not matter since he was happy to get out and be active.

"I found this is what they want to do — keep active," she said. "They want to work."

John Hall, a 71-year-old Bellefonte resident, retired nine years ago from the Sutton Engineering Co. in Bellefonte after working 25 years in the cost department.

"I like to be busy," Hall said. "I'm busy all the time."

has reached a time when people over 50 make up a larger percentage of the population than any other age group except those from 11 to 24. Employers in this community may have to look towards the older worker to fill vacancies.

*"I think there's no question there's a general trend on the part of society that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks."*

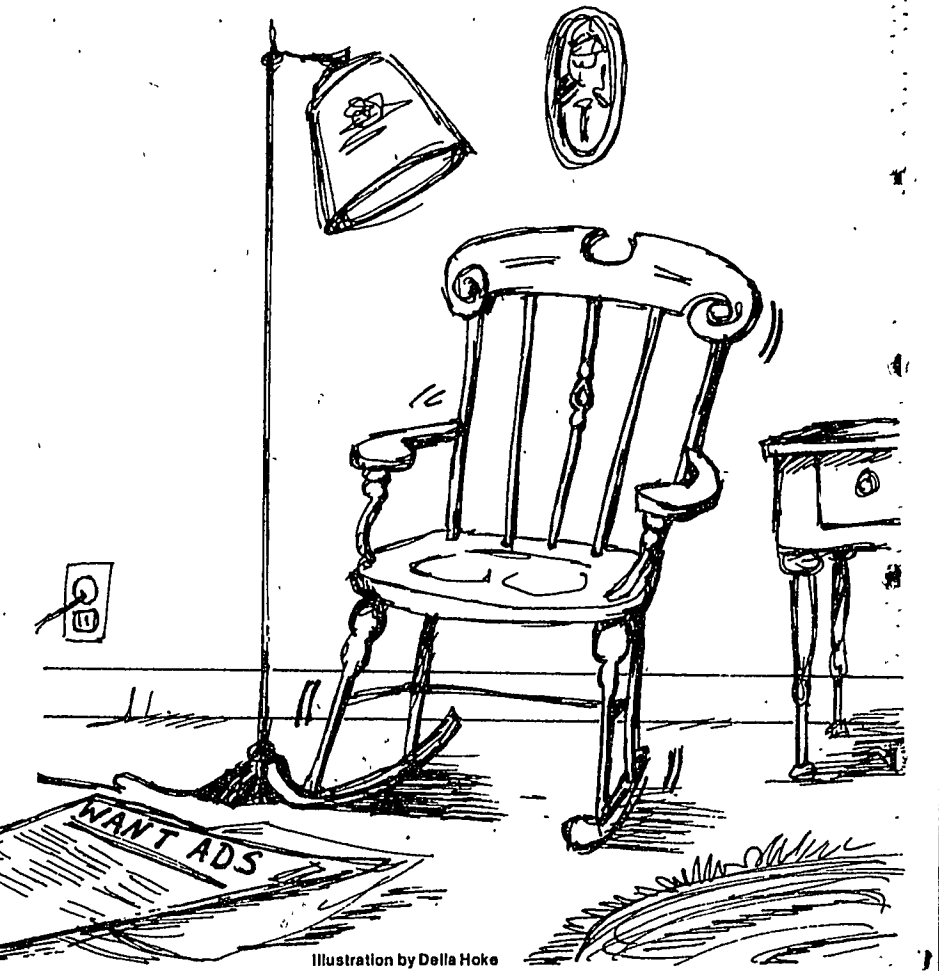
Hall is back at the Sutton Engineering Co. helping with inventory work. Through the Area Agency on Aging he has been offered three other jobs in the last month.

Even the government, as noted in its booklet put out by the Employment Standards Administration, is seeking to eliminate age discrimination in employment.

"I think if you have anything to offer, people have work for you," he said.

"A man's years should not be counted," the booklet quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson, "until he has nothing else to count."

According to statistics from Sales and Marketing Management, Centre County



**GASINO  
CARIBBEAN**

a poker  
player's paradise

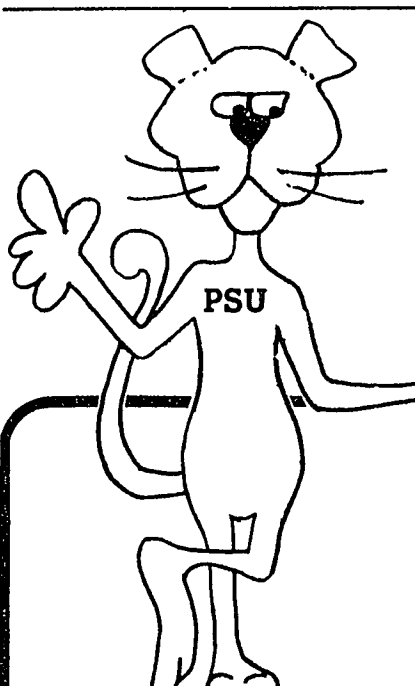
HUB Ballroom  
Friday, March 16 7 pm

**Wilson's**

234 E. College Ave.  
Under Mid-State Bank  
Hours 9:00-5:30 Daily  
Mon & Fri 9:00-9:00

 <b>Outdoor Products Day Pack</b> •Water Proof •Padded Straps •Re-inforced suede Bottom Reg. \$23 <sup>95</sup> <b>\$18<sup>95</sup></b>	 <b>Outdoor Products Summit Day Pack</b> •Water Proof •Padded Straps •2 Way Zipper Reg. \$16 <sup>95</sup> <b>\$12<sup>95</sup></b>
 <b>Dunham Hiking Boot</b> •Genuine Leather •Vibram Sole Reg. \$59 <sup>95</sup> <b>\$43<sup>95</sup></b>	 <b>Insulated Water Proof Work Boots</b> Reg. \$49 <sup>95</sup> <b>\$29<sup>95</sup></b>
 <b>Genuine Leather Hiking Boot</b> Reg. \$49 <sup>95</sup> <b>\$34<sup>95</sup></b>	

**ALL CAMPING EQUIPMENT—BACK PACKS—SLEEPING BAGS ON SALE — STOP IN — COMPARE PRICES!!**



## PENN STATE BOOKSTORE

SPECIAL BEGINNING OF TERM HOURS

Both McAllister and Ground Floor HUB locations are open the following hours to serve you.

TODAY 8:30 AM — 8:00 PM

Saturday, March 10th	9:00AM-5:00PM
Monday, March 12th	8:30AM-8:00PM
Tuesday, March 13th	8:30AM-8:00PM

Beginning Wednesday, March 14th, regular store hours in effect, 8:00AM-5:00PM.

Only the Ground Floor HUB Supply Store is open Saturday 9Am-1PM

## PENN STATE BOOKSTORE

ON CAMPUS

Owned and operated by the Pennsylvania State University.

We're Going To Keep On "Freezing" Until The Day of the Irish!

Laurel Glen's "FREEZE ON RENTS" Deadline has been extended to St. Patrick's Day, **MARCH 17, 1979**

Lease an apartment for next September at this year's rates. **No Increase** for 1979-80 leases if we receive your application (and security deposit) by March 17th.

Take advantage of our low rates now. And save yourself some **GREEN!**

**INCLUDED IN THE RENT:**

- All Utilities
- Cable TV Service
- Free Parking
- Wall-To-Wall Carpet
- 24-Hour Emergency Maintenance
- Free Bus Service

Office Hours: 8:30-5:00 Weekdays  
11:00-3:00 Saturdays  
Evening Appointments Available



LAUREL GLEN

APARTMENTS

10 Vairo Blvd.  
State College, Pa. 16801  
814-237-5351

With the "Luck of the Irish", you too can rent at last year's rates!