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## What the blind association does

The Lancaster County Association for the Blind will make a public appeal for funds for the first time in its 52-year history, it announced recently.

The money will be used to help build a \$1.5 million for county blind and partially-sighted people. The present structure at 506 Walnut Street in Lancaster is too small for the scope of the Association's activities.

The new building will house a workshop, activity and therapy centers, teaching areas, an eye clinic to be open five full days a week, a library, pottery room, and other facilities.

Below is a story, sent to us by Claire Lombard of Marietta, about how the Association has helped one woman.

"Until I started going to the pottery class at the Blind Association five years ago, I had never gone anywhere by myself," remarked Polly Pennell. "Now, I go lots of places

and do things with them, and Mama doesn't worry about me. She knows I'll be O.K."

Polly, who lives with her mother on West Main Street, Mount Joy, has had seriously impaired vision since her birth in 1918. An attempt to restore her sight was made when she was about twelve years old. She was operated on for the removal of the cataracts she had had since birth, but the operation was not successful. At that time, she was defined as legally blind because her vision was less than 20/200 in her one good eye, and she believed that nothing further could be done to help her. Then, when she was about 30, she heard of the Lancaster County Association for the Blind, where she applied for help.

"Miss Paine was the head of it then," she said with her never-failing smile. "I got my first glasses through them at that time, and that helped me a lot." The glasses helped, and later her vision was improved even further with additional visits to the eye clinic.

The increased activities and expanded programs of the Association in the past six or eight years have opened a broad new door for Polly. From going nowhere alone ever before in her 55 years, she started attending pottery classes shortly after they began in 1972, a weekly event she rarely misses due to the Mount Joy Lions Club who provide transportation for her whenever class is held.

Because clay is a medium which can be controlled by touch, it allows the blind and partially sighted to accomplish creative work on their own, once a few basic techniques are mastered. That's why pottery was the first of the therapeutic craft classes begun by the Lancaster Association in its program expansion.

From its beginning in 1926 until the early 70's, the Association had concentrated its efforts on rehabilitation training in basic living skills for the blind and partially sighted, providing them with a means to be financially independent through its sheltered workshop, and presenting a program to educate sighted people about ways to prevent blindness. These are and will remain the basic commitments of the Association. However, the Board of Directors; its President, Robert Y. Garrett, Jr.; and Executive Director, Marion Campbell, believe an innovative enrichment program could be introduced without sacrifice to its original purpose and are acting on



Left, Polly Pennell; right, Kitty Brown. Photo by Pat Abel.

that premise.

Begun in 1972, the pottery class has been taught since its inception by Mrs. John H. Brown and Mrs. Robert Lombard of Marietta, who are presently assisted by Jessica Sheetz of Mount Joy, and Mrs. Richard Neiman of Lancaster. A star pupil, Polly has long since mastered the techniques of managing the clay and turns out an endless variety of earthenware pieces, decorative tiles, candleholders, bowls, baskets, and, most recently, a large bird-bath. Besides pottery, she enjoys attending the Social Club at the Association.

For the past several years, she has attended Beacon Lodge, a summer camp for the blind near Lewistown, which is conducted by the Lions Clubs in Pennsylvania. She is looking forward to attending camp again this year.

RTL, the radio station announced on the "birthday list" as she celebrated her 60th birthday April 14. Another of Polly's prime interests. She turns it on early to hear volunteers read the daily papers and listens for news about other members of the RTL family. This week her name was announced on the "birthday list" as she celebrated her 60th birthday April 14.

RTL, or Radio Talking Library, is a sub-channel of WLAN-FM broadcasting on a closed-circuit to the blind and partially sighted of Lancaster City and County.

Polly obtained her special receiver, pre-set to pick up only the RTL signal [or, when it's not on the air, WLAN-FM] at the Association headquarters where they are available to all blind and partially sighted. RTL, which was the first radio station in Pennsylvania to broadcast to the blind, will greatly expand its operation when the agency moves to its new headquarters building at 244 North Queen Street. As that location will be more than four times larger than the present building, there will be ample space to help meet the increased demand. Nearly all its burgeoning programs have waiting lists of applicants which cannot now be accepted because of space limitations.

An important asset of the new building will be an eye clinic, the first in Pennsylvania to be housed in an agency for the blind. Staffed and supervised by local ophthalmologists who have volunteered their services, it will have advanced equipment for vision testing and provide low-vision aids now found only in major cities. It will be open five days a week and will serve private as well as clinic patients.

A capital building fund drive is now in progress to raise the \$1.5 million necessary to prepare the building for occupancy, the first time in its 52-year history the agency has asked for community support in a capital drive.

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