

## Finances Make Future Uncertain

*River Street Center: A Successful Experiment*

By MINDY CAMERON  
Statesman Staff Writer

The River Street Neighborhood Center, an idea that became a lively enterprise about six months ago, may be little more than a memory with the coming new year.

Unless the optimism of youthful volunteers prevails, the center will be a victim of the Office of Economic Opportunity budget cutting. The federal office has stricken all neighborhood centers from its budget with current funding to cease on Dec. 31.

Volunteers hope to keep the center in operation in spite of abandonment by the government. Most pressing need is for \$1,500 to pay rent on the small house at Twelfth and Grand and provide for heat and utilities for one year.

The River Street Center began providing resources to the neighborhood last July.

Susana Liveritte, director of training, public relations and personnel for the El-Ada Community Action Agency, which oversees the center's operation, said, "This is a real neighborhood center, not the band-aid concept that the others have been."

Center volunteers, mostly Boise State College students, and other interested members of the community outside the River Street Neighborhood agree.

Henry Durham, an Outreach worker for El-Ada Community Action Agency who has directed much time and effort to the River Street project said, "The center, by its existence, demonstrates its value to the community and the value of centers in any neighborhood like River Street."

"The crucial reason the River Street Center makes so much sense is that it provides the facilities the people need in their own community," said a concerned member of Boise's Junior League who has spent time looking into the needs of the center.

BSC Volunteer Liz Mowrey pointed to the programs themselves as being the best part of the center. "The center has made a lot of difference in the kids' attitudes and interest toward things,

They ask for tutoring now and that is a good sign."

Programs at the center range from tutoring for all ages to crafts, recreation and field trips. The center is not totally youth oriented as sewing classes for adult women of the neighborhood have been arranged at Boise State College. And other adult programs are available.

Many shelves in the small, five-room center are filled with books which anyone in the neighborhood may borrow. Tables for craft work take up most of the space of one of the back rooms. A newly-acquired television and couches are available for purely social gatherings. Girls have practiced cooking skills in the tiny kitchen and even boxing has been tried within the compact quarters.

While lack of facilities remains a major problem for the center, the playground directly across the street demonstrates what volunteer ingenuity has accomplished with practically no money and much time.

Liz Mowrey sees the playground as one of the major accomplishments of the center. It provides a place for children "to make their own play, to be creative," the BSC art student said.

The small play lot is rented for a token \$1 per year from a Boise businessman. Since mid-summer it has been transformed into a playground with a swing set painted in bright stripes, a stone block fence to separate small children from traffic and a black top basketball court.

Future plans for the playground, which seems likely to remain regardless of the fate of the center headquarters, are for setting of old telephone poles at varying heights to create a climbing area. A slide will be added; a playhouse is being constructed by inmates of the state penitentiary from materials donated by Kiwanians.

As with the center itself, the playground grew out of a need. "I never thought about kids not going places in Boise," Miss Mowrey said. "As a kid I walked all over and I've lived in most areas of Boise."

But for the small children of the River Street Neighborhood city parks and the well-equipped playgrounds were not within walking distance. Now these children have a

*A previous effort to establish a neighborhood center in the River Street area failed because, as a Community Action agency official put it, "Youths were put into an existing form instead of adapting that form to fit their particular needs." The current center, manned by volunteers is successful, but its future is threatened by government budget cuts.*

Center lot as a tot lot and putting a day care center at the site.

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youths and families, Henry Durham, said, the neighborhood does not have a majority of blacks. "They need it the most," he said.

To a large extent the needs of the neighborhood —

whether black or white resident — are being met, interested and involved persons feel.

Mrs. Liveritte said, "A neighborhood center really works when it reaches those who need it as River Street Center is."

A program that was not successful at the center failed when youths were put into an existing form instead of adapting that form to fit their particular needs, she said.

She referred to a 4-H program girls 10 to 12 years wanted.

"A neighborhood center gets what the people want to give them," Mrs. Liveritte said, and the 4-H classes were initiated. They failed, however, because many of the interested girls had to babysit for younger brothers and sisters. When center leaders said the girls could bring the youngsters to the meetings rather than miss out on 4-H, administrators of 4-H said the classes could not be run that way. The class was dropped.

Officials, volunteers and interested persons are hopeful that is not to be the case with the River Street Center — dismissal because it does not fit into an existing form.

Durham is convinced volunteers can staff the center and that the \$4,000 mentioned by Mrs. Liveritte for one paid staff member is not necessary for continuation past Dec. 31.

But he expressed less confidence in the rest of the community. "I'm not sure the rent money can be raised."

This would be a disappointment to Durham, who first worked with the center as a volunteer, then officially as an El-Ada employee.

He worked to set up the programs and recruit volunteers.

"I had good intentions of helping people," he said. "The center has become successful and now they don't want to fund it anymore."

Liz Mowrey is more optimistic the \$1,500 can be raised. "There are lot of groups in town with money and \$1,500 really isn't very much.

It seems like some group

*Entering the World of Books*

LAURIE MICHELS, rear, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Michels, 2120 Sunrise Rim, helps two young visitors find interesting reading material. The books, donated to the center, are available for anyone in the neighborhood to use. Many of the volunteers who work at the center are college students.

would put up the money," she said.

Miss Mowrey lives in River Street neighborhood and "it is the best I've ever lived in. I've felt at home almost from the start."

She and Durham agree that the rest of Boise doesn't understand the neighborhood. "People have asked me if it is safe to be on the streets at night here," Miss Mowrey said.

The center has provided an awareness to the outside community, Durham said. The center is a reason for outsiders to come here and when they do, they see what the neighborhood is like.

"The community is just now being touched by an awareness," he said. "It is hard to see why nobody was aware until somebody sets up a window."



TWO YOUNGSTERS who have made new friends and found new interests at the River Street Center are, front, Cozia Robinson, daughter of Willa May Robinson and Patricia Fort, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lilly Fort.



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But for the small children of the River Street Neighborhood city parks and the well-equipped playgrounds were not within walking distance. Now these children have a park of their own and many of them were in on the painting, clean-up, sand dumping and fence building which created the playground.

**Although much has been accomplished and even more is planned there are some obstacles which volunteer action hasn't yet overcome.**

The novice park planners would like some grassy areas to combat the mud problem.

Some eyes turned to the sod being stripped for the dormitory construction underway at BSC. But a college spokesman said this week that all salvageable turf had been taken by the city for a Greenbelt project

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One idea to insure continuation of the playground even if the center folds is for the city recreation department to hire youths to help at the lot, Mrs. Liveritte said. There are many young people in the area who could be hired, she added.

She said inquiries also are being made into the possibility of solving the park problem through Boise's Model Cities program.

Model Cities is buying "tot lots" and the local Office of Economic Opportunity sees the feasibility of Model Cities purchasing the River Street



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