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A Sketch of Project D.A.W.N (Deaf Adults With Need)

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A SKETCH OF PROJECT D A W N (DEAF ADULTS WITH NEED)

By NANCY RARUS, Teacher, American School for the Deaf

Confucius said a picture was worth 10,000 words. It would be interesting to know what he would say today in the age of Modern Media, when it comes to a four-color transparency.

With the transparency I am demonstrating, you can see which States were represented in Project DAWN in 1970 and 1971 and which States will be represented in 1972.

People have asked of those of us who participated in this much needed and dynamic workshop-education program what we did in California as if they thought we were learning how best to visit California, how to find our way around and how to budget while visiting.

To put it all in a nutshell, the answer would be that the 1970 participants were kept on their toes for four solid weeks. The program was so demanding that it took us more than a year to unwind, only to find that once we were immersed in the required follow-up work, we were more swamped than ever with ramifications which developed out of our participation in Project DAWN.

"Principles of Adult Basic Education" was one of the two program course offerings. The other was a micro-crash course in sensitivity training or group therapy. The latter course was offered so that we might learn to keep our minds and our mouths better connected.

After completing the courses and visiting numerous resources with carry-over values for our return home, we thought we had not learned as much as we had expected. However, after a year had passed by, we could see that we had not only learned a great deal, but had learned how to get the ball rolling. Thereby, I can safely say that Project DAWN was a micro-leadership training program in disguise.

At present, in our second year of field work with the novelty worn off, I think that we are learning the art of perseverance.

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Project DAWN (alias MLTP – Micro-Leadership Training Program) has brought about these direct and indirect developments:

1. Establishment of informal, i.e., lecture series, and formal Adult Basic Education programs;
2. Establishment and/or strengthening of connections between the State government and the deaf community, i.e., Task Force on Special Needs of the Deaf type which includes leaders from the deaf community and State people which in turn encourages the development of State councils of organizations serving the deaf or State associations of the deaf and from these, State commissions are sprouting;
3. Publication of state-wide newsletters for the deaf;
4. Promoting a feeling among the deaf that there is need to resort to the right of self-determination policy (heretofore, the deaf were never in on the scene of decision-making affecting their education and rehabilitation);
5. Establishing manual communication classes thereby strengthening State RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) chapters and increasing the availability of interpreters for deaf adults attending secondary continuing education classes;
6. Building rapport between the deaf adult community and the hearing parents of deaf children.

The above illustrate what can be accomplished through workshops such as Project DAWN. The project is now at the point where curriculum guidelines are being planned dealing with State funding sources and other matters.

In closing, I would like to say that Project DAWN and the deaf community need each other. The development of an effective State adult basic education program for deaf people depends upon their full cooperation.