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Mississippi Health Project Annual Report No. 7

Alpha Kappa Alpha

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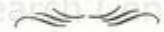
**THE
ALPHA
KAPPA
ALPHA
SORORITY**



**Health
Project**

A.K.A. PUBLICATION No. 7

**The 1941 Mississippi
Health Project**



**SIXTH
ANNUAL BULLETIN
December, 1941**

Acknowledgments

The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority wishes to make grateful acknowledgment to:

Dr. Thomas Parran, Surgeon-General, and Dr. R. A. Vonderlehr, Assistant Surgeon-General of the United States Public Health Service, for their assistance in supplying the materials in the Wasserman unit for the section on venereal disease control; Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, Health Education Specialist, United States Public Health Service, for literature and posters on health education; Mr. Milo Perkins, President of the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation for interest in the Dietotherapy Project; Dr. Felix J. Underwood, Executive Officer of the Mississippi State Board of Health; Dr. R. C. Ricks, Director of the State Laboratories; Dr. R. D. Dedylder, Director of Bolivar County Health Department whose whole-hearted enthusiasm and cooperation are among the outstanding highlights of our six years service; the Bolivar County Farm Demonstration Agent; Mayor Benjamin A. Green and the citizens of the Negro town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, where the staff members have been quartered for six years; and to the chapters of the Sorority for their showers of clinical supplies and garments for personal hygiene clinics.

DEDICATED

TO

IDA LOUISE JACKSON

FOUNDER OF THE HEALTH PROJECT

Foreword

This is the story in word and in picture of the unique health work of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority in rural Mississippi--an area of sub-marginal land and of sub-standard living for countless thousands--really "a poor people in a rich land."

The Health Project has revealed many significant findings, but none more important than the fact the standard of health is indissolubly linked to all the socio-economic factors of living, and is raised or lowered along with all changes in the total cultural pattern.

Health Committee Members

Dorothy Boulding Ferebee Chairman	Washington, D. C.
Ethel Hedgenan Lyle	Philadelphia, Pa.
Ida L. Jackson	Oakland, Calif.
Irma F. Clarke	Chicago, Ill.

Health Staff Members

Ida L. Jackson	General Director
Mary C. Wright	Dentist
Ruth A. Scott	Personal Hygienist
Evanel Renfro	Nutritionist
Charlia V. Cole	Nutritionist
Ella V. Payne	Nutritionist
Marion Carter	Clinical Assistant
Hattie Lash	Clinical Assistant
Tomannie Thompson	Clinical Assistant
Dorothy Boulding Ferebee	Medical Director

Assisted by the Bolivar County Health Department Medical Director, Dr. R. D. Dedwylder and his field corps of nurses, and eight physicians from Bolivar County: Doctors Austin, Brevard, Brookshire, Cockelham, George, Minter, Pogue, and Simmons.

Introduction

OUR NATIONAL PROJECTS

Delivered over a nation-wide network of the Columbia Broadcasting System, "WINGS OVER JORDAN" program, Cleveland, O., October 12, 1941.

Seven years ago, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, a national organization of 3000 Negro college women, inaugurated a rural health service called the "Mississippi Health Project", sometimes referred to as the "Cotton Field Clinics" in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. These clinics were designed to improve the health of Negroes in sections of the country where medical care is greatly needed, but where, because of race prejudice and discrimination, the Negroes' share of health benefits are the least.

Statistics had indicated that the Negro population has higher sickness and death rates than those of the white population in the United States. Innumerable studies had shown that the Negro race constitutes a disproportionately high percentage of the Nation's ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clothed third. Recognizing the distressing problems of the masses of our people, especially at the lowest economic levels, and recognizing the fact that health is one of the primary needs of all underprivileged people, we set out to offer something beyond an academic discussion of the deplorable conditions of this group. Realizing also the limitations of any single effort, the "Cotton Field Clinics" have attempted to make only a small scale demonstration of a constructive approach at least to a segment of the total problem.

During each of the past seven summers, 12 to 14 volunteers, including physicians, dentists, nurses, public health workers, dietitians, and school teachers staffed the mobile clinic, which travelled by automobile into the deep rurals of Holmes and Bolivar County, Mississippi, to bring directly to the little farm house, to the weather beaten school, to the dilapidated church, or even to clinics set up under the trees, a complete health service for children, and a partial one for adults. The service included full physical examinations, with weights, measurements, and blood tests; vaccinations against smallpox, toxoid injections for protection against diphtheria; dental services, simple fillings and necessary extractions; a dental prophylaxis with a new tooth brush and powder for every child, and training in their correct use.

To combat malnutrition, we have added a diet kitchen where the plantation mothers, while their children are being examined, were taught how to convert their meager diets of meat, meal, and molasses augmented by the surplus commodity foods, into a balanced meal. Over the charcoal stove or pail, the dietitians demonstrate the kinds of dishes that can be pulled out of a pound of oatmeal and a box of raisins, or the nutritious drinks that can be poured from dried skim, or evaporated milk. After hours of weary walking and blistering heat, these plantation folk were all eager to taste the new foods, and more eager still to try them out for the family. Every mother was given a supply of cod liver oil, powdered spinach, calcium, and dried milk for the small children of the family.

To teach better rules of personal hygiene, gaily colored posters suspended from clothes lines portrayed the importance of the bath, care of the skin, teeth, hair and nails. Just to fix the lesson more securely, the personal hygiene teacher aided by two nurses, would borrow a child from the audience, and plunge him into a huge tin tub, graphically demonstrating proper body care.

THE STAFF

Each child who served as a subject was the first to be fully outfitted with new clothes from head to toe, selected from a large assortment of new garments which were donated by many of the 151 chapters of the sorority.

For the adults, there were treatments for minor ailments, the ever prevalent malaria, and initial treatments for venereal disease when necessary. The health departments of these counties, which work closely and cooperatively with the health unit, were given all surplus drugs to complete the follow-up work throughout the year.

The Sorority thus brought a specialized health service, new hope, encouragement and vision to more than 15,000 people struggling against disease and poverty. But the health project has done something else. It has graphically demonstrated the inter-relation of every social and economic activity as a part of a whole. Our observations and studies in the field have reinforced our conviction that the problem of health is one of many facets which link it to the entire social order; for disease is both the cause and result of many miserable social and economic conditions. This conviction inspires us to use every valid media of group expression to establish the Negro at all social levels into a status of wholesome existence.

The Sorority has, therefore, extended its work through a legislative committee, known as the Non-Partisan Council, to make its members more aware of other social needs among Negroes, and more eager, actively, to help the Negro achieve a fuller participation in all phases of American life. We are convinced that the fundamental and ultimate achievement can be obtained only through the economic self-sufficiency of every Negro citizen. Healthful food, sanitary housing, wholesome recreation, medical services -- these things should be acquired through sound economic channels.

To this end, the committee works in support of the passage of progressive social legislation, not only in the fields of health, of child welfare, of housing and of kindred areas, but also legislation designed to assure economic equity and opportunity.

To deny the Negro the opportunity to engage in work which will enable him to buy decent food and clothes for his family, to live in something better than a disease infested alley, to keep him from being a reservoir of infection to his neighbor and his community, is no longer an affront solely to our race; it is a menace to our nation, for no nation can achieve maximum efficiency if the contribution of any segment of the population is wasted.

We want to impress upon employers, both public and private, and upon labor union leadership the patriotic necessity for fuller employment of Negroes in industry, in civilian defense, in consumer and health programs. It is unpatriotic and inefficient in this crisis to permit discrimination against workers and citizens because of class, color, creed, or sex. Negro Americans, now, as in the past, want the opportunity to do their full part.

The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, while making its contribution toward improving the health, efficiency and well-being of the minority group of which it is a part, realizes a nation-sweeping, all-out effort is imperative at this time.

We, therefore, appeal to the America that is providing world leadership in the struggle to keep democracy alive, to give that equality of opportunity which will remove the inconsistencies between democratic theory and existing practice -- to make democracy a reality in our Nation.

Dorothy Boulding Ferebee, M. D.
National President.



Volunteer groups like these have given ready and willing service for seven, hot summers.

THE DENTIST AT WORK



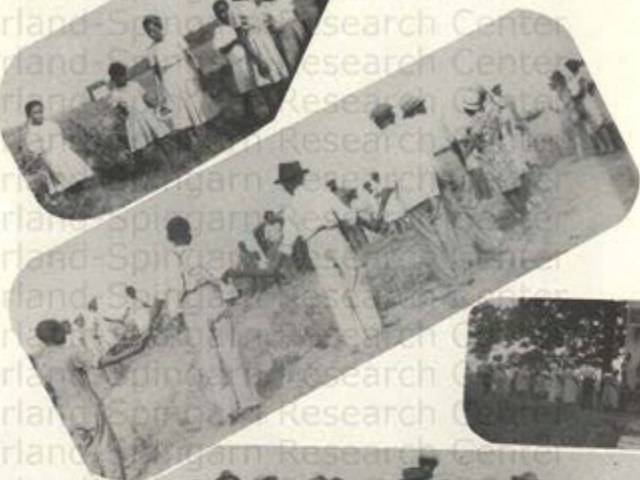
The dentist always has a long waiting line, all eager for the dental care so essential to good health.

THE COTTON FIELD CLINICS



Physicians work indoors or out, wherever there is space or a group ready for the much needed services of examinations, treatments, and blood testing.

RECREATION



Play is a lost art. Small groups are slowly guided into simple games and talks on recreation and leisure.

PERSONAL HYGIENE CLINICS



These little people proudly show their new outfits won after a full demonstration of good body care.

WHERE WE WORK



Glimpses of little church, school, or under-the-tree clinics, where many thousand families have been served.

NUTRITION DEMONSTRATIONS



No more meat, meal or molasses, but a well-balanced diet is our goal.

NUTRITION CLINICS



Good, nourishing food, at little cost, prepared over a charcoal pail even in the fields.