

# Neighborhood Center Seen For Gaston-Dilley Sector

APUS 10-30-67

A Neighborhood Center for the Community Action program has been proposed for the Gaston-Cherry Grove-Dilley-Laurelwood area.

Peter H. Cullen, director of the Neighborhood Center program at recent meetings in Gaston, with residents of Gaston, Cherry Grove, Dilley and Laurelwood attending.

CAP is fighting the war on poverty in Washington county, Cullen said, and the recent meetings are exploratory to see what extent the local area people want to be involved in the fight.

"If the people want it, we will help them set up a neighborhood center in the area," he said. "CAP already has helped open a center in North Plains and Timber, and one will open in Sherwood next month."

A neighborhood center program must be directed by local people, who pool their efforts to set up programs to solve their own area needs, he added.

Primary target for the program will be low-income families. It is hoped they will be involved in the program, and will have a strong voice in deciding what programs are best for the people, Cullen said.

Programs can range from a GED class to a well-baby clinic that would be conducted by Washington County Health Department.

Main focus of any meaningful program, Cullen stated, must be on jobs and education. "If you want to break the cycle of poverty in a family," he said, "you must see what can be done about getting

a better job, or putting someone on a training or educational program. The idea is not to give the people a hand out, but a 'hand -up' on the way to a better life. But we will not take anyone's problem from him. He will have to solve his own problems and we will help all we can."

He said the neighborhood center, by its presence in the area, gets persons together to look at total needs of the community and not just focus on one or two isolated problems. "Needs of babies as well as senior citizens and all age groups must be examined," he added. "This, of course, is a tall order, and will take time. But to begin is the first step to solving these problems."

Next meeting will be Tuesday, November 7, at 8 p.m. in Gaston fire hall. A lot of interest and many questions are being asked about the program, and attendance is growing with each meeting, according to Cullen.

"If interest continues to grow," he said, "and people come to the meetings, then in the not-to-distant future the area people will elect, at a public meeting, an area council which will be the advisory board for all programs in the center.

Without this area council, CAP cannot operate a neighborhood center in any area of the county."