Elderly find fellowship, fun in association

by Pat Allen

Battalion Reporter

Every Tuesday and Friday afternoon, at 1402 Bristol Dr. in Bryan, senior citizens of Brazos County get together for a little fun, food and fellowship. They're members of the Bra-

zos County Senior Citizens Association, an organization helping the older adults of the commun-ity enjoy their lives.

"Something has to alleviate the feeling of being alone and growing old," Willie Belle Bogard, president of the asso-ciation, said. "We provide a

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their talents.'

The association was organized in 1976 by a handful of people who saw the need for such a group in Brazos County. In the beginning, members met in an old medical clinic on W. 28th Street.

Now, thanks to Jack Lester Sr., they have a new facility. It's two years old, worth \$1 million, and paid for.

Lester wanted to help senior citizens in the county, so he gave the association land for a building. He then told the association

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match his donation.

"I like giving money to people," Lester said. "This town needed a place like this for the

older people, and I'm happy I was able to help."

"Jack told us he'd give us \$50,000 and all we had to do was match him," Mickey McGuire, a member of the association and unofficial groundskeeper said.

"So we went out and began raising the money. We had bake sales and yard sales. We also received funds from the Brazos County Development Council and several donations from people in the community who really wanted to see a place for senior citizens," McGuire said.

McGuire takes care of the landscape and is an all-around handyman for the association. He paints and varnishes cabinets, raises the flags, sweeps the dining room and still finds time to sneak in a game or two of

dominoes.

"We did all the landscaping ourselves," he said. "Those professional guys wanted \$15,000 to do a job we did for less than \$2,000. We planted 70 shrubs and enough trees to start a forest."

When members gather at their "home away from home," they begin the afternoon with a covered dish lunch. Everyone

brings something to share.
This provides a family-like

place where older people can he would give \$50,000 to the atmosphere and allows the come for fellowship and use construction fund if they would ladies to show off their favorite recipies. Before the feast begins, visitors are introduced, and a prayer is given for members who are ill or absent

After lunch, the fun and

games begin. In one room ladies are quilting blankets that sell for \$150 to \$250. In other rooms people are making pottery items, painting china and sewing stuffed animals. The items are sold in the association's craft shop, and the money goes into building

maintenance.

Dewain "Pappy" Wade and friends are in another room involved in a traditional domino

"We have a good time here," Wade said. "We don't care if we get beat, we'll keep on grinning. That last game was nip and tuck the whole way. We're gonna get'em this time."

Lucille Newcomb joined the association in 1981. Her interests lay in the association's craft shop, which she manages.

"I love doing the quilting and taking care of that shop, but I especially enjoy meeting the people here and making new members feel welcome," New-comb said. "Many of the people here have lost their mate and begin to feel lonely and unwanted. We try to get them interested in games and crafts. We're a close family here, just like brothers and sisters.'

McGuire said the senior citizens are a group which needs service from the community. He

said many of their families have moved and they are left alone. "There's nothing worse than old people hiding themselves inside," he said. "We try to keep them living. One lady told me if it wasn't for this place that someone would have had to lock her one would have had to lock her up. She came here and was accepted by everyone. Another lady told me she'd be dead from boredom if it wasn't for this

One member might be dead because of suicide if the association hadn't taken her under its

wing.
"I was a wreck when I came here and I was really thinking about killing myself," Murial Stein said. "Everyone here has been so warm and friendly. I needed companionship and I found it here. What I get here you can't get from a doctor. You get back into the habit of living

lanes

years.



Bill Hughes, Battalion staff

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Lucille Newcomb, left, chairman of crafts, and Julia Cross work on a baby doll quilt together. The

quilt hanging on the wall behind them is a 1976-81 membership quilt

again and then you know you're going to make it.

The association also provides its members with activities away from the Bryan-College Station. For example, travel groups are set up among members and friends so that the senior citizens don't have to travel alone

McGuire said the association accepts as members anyone over 55 years old. He said he believes the youngest member is 62 and that James Lang, 95, is the oldest member of the group.

'We have about 350 members but the center is available to any senior citizen in the county,' he said. "The National Association of Federal Employees and the Retired Teachers Association use our center for their meetings also."

"Just seeing your friends en-joying life and seeing the satisfaction you're bringing to others makes all the hard work worth-while," McGuire said. "What you can do for others is what gives you satisfaction. I get the biggest kick out of helping peo-ple. When you start doing things for yourself, well, you're riding on the wrong boat."



the association's craft shop, along with pillow cases, and other hand-made crafts.

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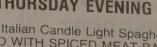
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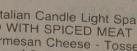
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