

VISIT OF MRS. FORD AND FLIP WILSON
TO DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA VILLAGE

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PRESS RELEASE

In 1906 the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia officially opened the first public institution for the care of the aged and infirm residents of the District of Columbia. The first inhabitants were a hodge-podge of aged, infirm, indigent, alcoholic and mentally retarded individuals. The institution through dramatization of a woeful situation by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1940's, ventured into a more modern program for the care of the aged and infirm. Throughout subsequent years, each First Lady in turn, Mrs. Roosevelt, Mrs. Eisenhower, Mrs. Kennedy, Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Nixon expressed an interest in D. C. Village and its elderly residents.

D. C. Village is a component of the Department of Human Resources in the District of Columbia. It includes a 200-bed hospital complex and 10 cottage units which provide comprehensive care for 500 patients in the specialized field of geriatrics. The average age of patients at D. C. Village is 76 years. According to the latest figures there are 90,000 old residents in the District of Columbia who are 65 years or older. Five percent of the elderly over 65 require institutionalization.

The total effort of the professional staff at D. C. Village is directed toward helping the patients maintain their self-esteem, pride and the awareness that he or she has not been forgotten by the community. Through group activities the institution can maintain an important facet of the patient's socialization. The Community Activities Program seeks to effectively counteract the effects of institutional living by providing stimulating social, recreational and religious activities, ideally helping the patients to reach full potential in terms of personal fulfillment and contentment.

Many volunteers from surrounding communities donate their energy and service to the elderly by supplying and sharing new experiences. Regular visiting volunteers enable some of the patients to grow from acquaintanceship to concerned friends. The main goal is that perhaps some of the elderly patients will regain their confidence and security and return to their communities and neighborhoods and function as productive citizens.



FACT SHEET

1. 21.8 million Americans, or one out of every 10 citizens, is over the age of 65.
2. About 1 million, or five percent, of the nation's elderly live in nursing homes.
3. The average life expectancy is 71.3 years, indicating a higher percentage of elderly citizens as time goes on.
4. A disproportionate number of the American aged are women, who outnumber the men by 143 to 100. Women tend to outlive men by seven years.
5. A great many older Americans are plagued by poverty. 4.75 million of the nation's aged exist on \$2,000 or less a year which is well below the Federal Government's poverty line.
6. Medical care for the aged should emphasize the prevention of illness and preservation of health while keeping the aged in their communities and avoid institutionalization.
7. Society is urged to make better use of the elderly, drawing on their experience and talents and giving them a greater voice in matters that concern them.
8. The reservoir of talent tapped from the elderly has been utilized in the following ways:
 1. The Foster Grandparent Program, which pays oldsters for supervising dependent and neglected youngsters.
 2. The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) which pays out-of-pocket expenses for the elderly to entertain the handicapped and visiting homebound patients.
 3. The Senior Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) which reimburses retired executives for expenses incurred while counseling small businesses and community organizations.
9. - Government programs for assistance to the aged include the following:
 1. Financial assistance - through Social Security programs
 2. Health care - which includes Medicare and Medicaid.
 3. Nutrition - food stamps and programs enabling the elderly to have at least one hot meal a day.
 4. Housing - The National Council on the Aging publishes a directory of special housing benefits for the aged.
 5. Legal services - legal services are available for the elderly for legal assistance and protection of their rights and possessions.

