

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR CARE

Women Provide Love, Understanding

By MARCIA SHERROD
Family News Staff

For many women, the role of motherhood extends farther than the bearing and raising of their own offspring.

These women take their place as friends, advisors, guardians and teachers for sometimes hundreds of young people who need understanding and love.

Mrs. Margaret Applegate, a dorm counselor at Texas Tech University for 10 years, describes her role:

"It's mostly the experience of just being human; keeping eyes and ears open and saying the right thing at the right time—just being there when someone needs me."

"It's a role of country doctor, lawyer and minister. There's really no way to describe it," she says, "you just have to live it to really comprehend all that the job entails."

"Discipline is the least of it," she explains. "My role is mainly counseling personal problems—boyfriend, roommate or family troubles; and academic problems."

Her comfortable apartment located on the ground floor of the high-rise dorm provides a warm and homey refuge for coeds needing advice or merely wanting to chat with the dorm counselor. The cozy atmosphere

and soft-spoken voice of the dorm "mother" are often just the antidote for loneliness or a minor college crisis.

Girls knock on her door for counseling at all hours of the day and night. "It's not unusual for my telephone to ring all during the night," Miss Applegate adds.

For the last five years she has resided in Chitwood dorm, officially responsible for as many as 572 girls at a time—certainly a full life in itself. Yet Mrs. Applegate has five daughters of her own and 12 grandchildren. "The trouble with my own daughters," the gentle lady smiles, "is that they grew up too fast."

This year Mother's Day for Mrs. Willis Starnes, dorm counselor for Katie Rogers Hall, has special significance. She and her husband are expecting their first child this month.

With predictions and plans, toys and gifts, the college girls in her charge share the excitement and anticipation of the new baby.

Mrs. Starnes and her husband also live in an apartment on the ground floor of the dorm, which presently houses 288 girls.

"At first this type of life is hard to get used to," the young counselor explains, "but now my husband and I can't imagine living any other way."

The petite brunette, appearing hardly older than her charges, summarizes her duties as "just being here when anyone needs me."

Before her job at LCC, Mrs. Starnes was a head resident for a co-ed complex at the University of Texas.

"I've learned it's important, with young people, to keep lines of communication open," she notes. "And there's a time when young people must be encouraged to stand on their own two feet and make their own decisions. With 'apron strings' cut, they need someone to stand behind them and back their decisions. That's often where I come in."

Mrs. Joe Spencer

Mrs. Joe Spencer, houseparent at The Children's Home of Lubbock, is remembered on Mother's Day, not only by her own three children, but by 11 boys and

up to date on those previously in their care.

Mrs. Mabel Chafin

Mrs. Mabel Chafin, housemother at Buckner Baptist Home, is also honored on Mother's Day by the children in her cottage and her own three children.

Sometimes she finds herself honoree for a Mother's Day dinner prepared by her "family." Some years bright packages or a special cake show the children's appreciation for her place in their lives. Mrs. Chafin regards her houseparenthood as a very rewarding experience. "Just thinking of the lives we touch is heartwarming to me. If I feel like I've helped just one child in my charge, I know it's worthwhile."

Sometimes, Mrs. Chafin explains, it's a heartbreaking life. "It's easy to get too attached to the children. But they remember me long after they've left the home with letters and pictures."

Mrs. M. D. Richard

Special love and understanding are important in her work says Mrs. M. D. Richard, attendant at the Lubbock State School.

Mrs. Richard is in charge of Oak Cottage, housing 23 boys, ages 18-27. Working on an eight-hour shift, Mrs. Richard checks medications and supervises meals, daily routine and recreational ac-

tivities for the boys.

Since most of the boys have jobs on the campus, she makes sure they get to work on time.

A pretty day may find her batting or pitching softballs for a cottage softball game; or taking part in a basketball game.

"I'm a mother to all of them. Cavorting with them when they need to laugh and exercise and have fun; talking them out of being angry or upset; showing affection when they need to be loved."

Mrs. Richard, with six children of her own, has just adopted a 15-month-old girl. "I love children and have worked with them all my life. There's nothing more rewarding than seeing love in a child's eyes."



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Mrs. Margaret Applegate, photo at right, has been dorm counselor at Texas Tech University for 10 years. Office assistants like Miss Patti Gossett, left, Tech sophomore from Houston, and dorm legislator, Miss Dean Verner, make her job easier.