VISTA, college projects

Student workers serve community

By BLAKE REDDING
Thrasher Reporter

A small but enthusiastic group of Rice students involve themselves in civic projects voluntarily each week, working in several areas aimed at helping the underprivileged.

One of the most rewarding projects is the tutoring of elementary-aged Negro children. Working with VISTA, many of the workers go to Hester House, a settlement house in one of the poorer sections of the city.

Sociology Projects

Val Lowery, one of the tutors, says that rides are available to any interested persons and that the schedule is flexible according to the willingness of the workers. Most go once or twice a week though.

Other tutors come from Dr. William McCord's Sociology 201 class, working on several class projects. The course requires field work in a variety of areas.

There is tutoring, in connection with VISTA, in the Bottoms, a particularly squalid area of Houston; work at the Houston Psychiatric Institute, Harris County Juvenile Detention Home, a State Prison Farm near Huntsville, and in the Settegast area.

Close Rapport

Students go at least once a week, often two or three times for the tutoring.

The tutoring in the VISTA related programs involves mainly drilling in basic phonetic and arithmetic skills. There is a low tutor-student ratio, usually 1:1 or 1:2, allowing for a close rapport with the children, "playing the pal" as one tutor put it.

Information on the VISTA work can be gotten from Val Lowery, Davis Phillips, or Becky Rosenberg (all Rice students) or Sandy McElroy, a VISTA volunteer working with the Houston Council on Human Relations. Dr. McCord should also be able to give further information to any interested students.

Brown Program

A different type of program, similar to one that used to be held by Jones College, is now being carried by Brown. Every Saturday afternoon, a group of Brown girls, led by Val Lowery, picks up a group of Negro children selected by VISTA workers and takes them on outings to such places as the art museum or library.

Future plans include visits to the San Jacinto battlegrounds, a radio station, and completion of various handicraft projects. One girl explained, "Although these projects may sound Mickey Mouse, you must remember that these kids have absolutely no cultural background and have lacked the ordinary escapes of childhood."

Most of the students involved in the community service are very enthusiastic about it and agree that it is very worthwhile. "The kids are starved for affection and come to really love you," one tutor said, noting that the only real excuse for not getting into the program would be a complete intolerance for children.