



Laurie Carter and Joanne Monds note the dilapidated houses of Peter's Place.



Leroy Williams works on tabulating survey results.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY LAURENCE E. KEEFE

"The last couple of years have got these kids caught up in revolution — they're not interested in basketball only."

That's the opinion of Rolland Michael, director of family services at Genesee Settlement House on Dake Street in the inner city of Rochester.

He's talking about a pilot project he's running for a group of inner city teenagers which "is not recreation or babysitting, it's developing roles for them in the community."

So far, the 14 teenage boys that Michael works with have been publishing a monthly newsletter, called "Speaking Out To The People," have tried to get a book of their writings published, and are nearing completion of a sociological survey of an inner city area around Genesee Settlement House.

As a side project, 10 girls have been hired for the summer with federal funds and money from Urban League to do observation of the physical condition of the neighborhood. Their report will be included in the final results of the survey, to be published in October.

To walk through the inner city streets of Rochester with these teenagers means to experience their outrage at the broken windows, weeds and abandoned, decrepit houses.

"Look at that raggedy house there," says Barbara Jackson. "The windows are broken, somebody comes along, they can just toss a match in there and set the whole place on fire."

"That's where the rats live," Laurie Carter says, pointing to the half open door of a burned out warehouse on Peter's Place.

The boys who have been working on the survey since last October have been volunteers until this summer. And they didn't find that it was all fun.

"It sure was a pain to dodge them big-teethed dogs," said Calvin Rivers from behind the table littered with survey questionnaires. "But now we see it's a job the community needs, and even though we're getting paid for it, we're still doing it for the community."

Leroy Williams added, "The hard part was the complaints — from the guys working on the survey."

"The work gets boring, a lot of the time," put in David Nelson, "but then you tell yourself, somebody's got to do it, and you go on."

Now that the surveying part is over, the boys sit in their room with a single long table, coding and tabulating the results. "Sometimes I'll just meet with them for ten minutes in the morning, to plan their work for the day, and then not see them till the next morning," said Rolland Michael.

"Instead of talking about dropping out of high school," said Michael, "we're talking now about college and scholarships."

"That's how big a change has come over these kids since they got a chance to comment on their environment in a way that means something."

It sure beats basketball five days a week.



Basketball may not be everything to these boys, but occasional games end a long day of work.