The following account of the WPA recreation program has been approved by Edward C. Lindeman, Director of the Recreation Division, and may be reproduced under his name if desired. A selection of photographs is available from the Division of Press Information. See list of captions on last page.

For Release to Newspapers
Sunday, November 13, 1938, and thereafter

WPA PROVIDES LEISURE-TIME ACTIVITIES FOR MILLIONS: 10,000 COMMUNITIES PARTICIPATE

Five million Americans, in the course of an average week, find amusement, exercise and cultural stimulation through recreational leadership supplied by the Works Progress Administration. For the most part they are people who inhabit that collective "other side of the railroad tracks" known to practically every city and rural community in the land: people who do not belong to golf and tennis clubs, who do not visit the theater or concerts or lectures, who have no outlets for the energy left them after a day of toil or dispiriting idleness.

But recreation programs as operated by the WPA are not confined necessarily to these. They are democratic in spirit, community-wide in application and may embrace in a single activity the banker and the baker, landlord and tenant, employer and employee. For recreation today is a need of all the people as a complement to their routine lives and as a profitable means of investing their new hours of leisure.
Forty thousand WPA recreation leaders—95 per cent of them are from the relief rolls—are now conducting leisure time programs in some 10,000 communities in more than half the counties of the United States. In a small town the recreation center may be found in a vacant store; in a large city the various projects will be located in parks, playgrounds and community centers and often in school rooms and yards after school hours.

There is practically no form of healthful physical, social or cultural activity that is not carried on in these WPA projects. The long list includes dramatics, swimming, dancing, baseball, music, puppetry, weaving, festivals, woodworking, metal craft, camping and a hundred other activities.

At the edge of New York City's Hell's Kitchen, on the roof of Christ Church, and surrounded by rearing walls of warehouses and office buildings there was during the summer a WPA "day camp" for children from the neighboring tenements. They went there as if they were going to a day camp in the woods. They wore their oldest clothes, and they brought along wieners and potatoes to roast. On the roof, the sides protected by a wire netting, there were lean-tos made of branches, scattered logs and stones, a tent, earth (in boxes), and plants (in pots). On that roof the children rubbed sticks to make a fire. They roasted their wieners and potatoes. They played games with a soft ball. They gathered around an old Indian guide, or a former pony express rider, or an old-time cowboy (there are several attached to various WPA projects), and listened to old-time stories. In the late afternoon, the office crowds below hurrying to the subways, the children descended, as if back from the woods, traditionally tired but happy.
At the Denver, Col., Civic Center last spring was held the Fourth Annual International Folk Festival. It used as its slogan Walt Whitman's words: "I hear America singing." It included 500 participants representing 33 nationality clubs and lodges. The festival was sponsored by a civic committee composed of delegates from 23 social and educational organizations. Under WPA recreation leadership the various participating groups studied, prepared and rehearsed for a year preceding the festival. Every foreign consul in Denver was actively interested in the event.

On the day of the Festival, 8,500 spectators thronged the Midway. Booths along the way displayed examples of craft work of various nationalities. Informal groups danced Old World dances. The formal program was given at the Greek Theatre, and consisted of folk dances, songs and unusual instrumental music. It included numbers which had originated in the pasts of the American Indians, the Spaniards, the British, the Swedes, the Negroes, and other racial groups which had contributed to the region's culture. It was considered one of the most spectacular events ever to have taken place in Denver, and it attracted more participating organizations than any event in the city's history.

The various WPA recreation projects have as their purpose, in common with all WPA projects, the employment of the unemployed. But they also have a further purpose: to demonstrate to American communities a public recreation program which, with the coming of more stable times, may be taken over by the communities and included in their permanent budgets. With this end in view a recreation program is never started in any community without the assurance of local backing through a Recreation Council.
Churches, lodges, boys' and girls' clubs, business men's organizations, veteran's organizations and trade unions may be represented in such a council; also individuals interested in public recreation. Where there is already an active public recreation department, WPA projects may extend programs previously established; there are other places where the program must be built from the ground up.

In a southern mill town there was a small park and club house used only for entertainment, once a year, of the New York officials of the mill. Until the local executives of the mill were invited to join the Recreation Council, the recreation project workers could not get permission to open the club house to the public. But after a year on the Council, and after studying the town's recreation problems, the factory executives offered both the park and the club house to the WPA recreation project for public use.

In another town in North Carolina, there was a small public library which had been closed for years. The WPA recreation leader had never been able to open it. No one knew who had the key. But one day the key was found and the door was opened. Inside there was a plaque, recording the gift of this library to the town by a former mill owner in memory of his father — "TO BE A PLACE OF RECREATION FOR THE PEOPLE." The bank that was in charge of the trust had failed, and the library had been locked up. It was opened again after some WPA repairs had been made and a large assembly room upstairs was used for social recreation by the WPA project.

The human values realized from community recreation programs are almost too well known to require re-telling: the effects upon juvenile delinquency, school attendance, petty law violations and civic morale
are well-established facts. "Case histories" of personal rehabilitation are even more plentiful and often more dramatic. Typical, perhaps, is the case of the seemingly incorrigible eleven-year-old school girl whose teacher sought the help of the WPA Recreation Supervisor at the playground the girl frequented. The supervisor took an interest in her, found out what sort of activities were needed to capture her active imagination, and at last won her cooperation. Several months later the teacher rendered a report of a more industrious and companionable girl who had lost her previous indifference and irresponsibility.

Stimulated by the WPA recreation program, the public demand for additional recreation services has opened a new field of employment to persons trained on the program. WPA recreation workers are recruited almost entirely from the relief rolls. Many have professional degrees but never have had a chance to enter their professions. Over 3,000 of them, in a recent study, gave their former occupations as students; more than 2,000 had been teachers, over 1,000 had been musicians. Forty-two per cent had had some college education and 95 per cent some high school education or better. Many of these have turned their WPA training to profit by securing jobs with local recreation bodies, school, camps and similar organizations.

Public recreation is not offered as a substitute for a high standard of living; nor is it provided to keep the masses unthinking and contented with their lot. Leisure time activities will not cure economic ills. They may, by awakening the public to this social need, also awaken it to other needs. The democratic theory of public recrea-
tion, it has been observed, is an enemy of drillmasters and martinets who substitute duty for play. In a democracy, individuals learn how to play with one another because they want to, not because of some dictator's orders.
The following photographs to accompany
Release No. 4-1824 "WPA PROVIDES LEISURE-
TIME ACTIVITIES FOR MILLIONS", may be
obtained from the Division of Press
Information, Works Progress Administration,
1734 New York Avenue, Washington, D. C.
Please order by number.

101 - Typical guests of the WPA Day Camps in their "native environment" in New York City.

102 - Rustic surroundings created on a roof-top in downtown New York by WPA recreation workers provide the nearest approach to the "great out of doors" that many of these youngsters have ever experienced.

4770 - Useful crafts are taught in many recreation centers. These young men in Kansas City are building their own canoe.

4792 - Model building of many sorts under trained supervision is offered in most WPA recreation centers. This fledgling aviator is pictured in the WPA recreation center in Kansas City.

16232-C - The WPA provided not only the ski course here pictured at Haverhill, Mass., but recreational leadership for skiing and other winter sports.

2636 - This is a group of pre-school children in New York's populous Harlem District who are cared for during the day by WPA recreation workers.

14459-D - Moore Park, Miami, Fla., where recreational leadership is provided by WPA workers.

7279-C - Street play made safe on New York's East Side by WPA recreational supervision.

5683 - A recreation center and outdoor swimming pool in Stearns, Ky., built by WPA labor and supervised by WPA recreational leaders.

16766-C - These Oregon housewives are finding a creative use for their leisure-time in clay modeling classes conducted at the WPA recreation center.

13677 - An expert craftsman in this Baltimore, Md., WPA recreation center maintains his own skill while training youngsters in the intricacies of woodworking.

9686 - Supervised play for adults as well as children is a part of the WPA recreation program. These horseshoe pitchers are enjoying themselves on a WPA-supervised playground in California.