

JADARA

Volume 12 | Number 4

Article 18

November 2019

Columbus Colony- A National Prototype Community

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Recommended Citation

Nader, M. F. (2019). Columbus Colony- A National Prototype Community. *JADARA*, 12(4). Retrieved from <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara/vol12/iss4/18>

COLUMBUS COLONY — A NATIONAL PROTOTYPE COMMUNITY

F. Michael Nader, MSW

Columbus Colony is a friendship voyage by, for and of the deaf, deaf-blind, deaf-multihandicapped. Columbus Colony is also a national model community by, for, and of the deaf, deaf-blind, deaf-multihandicapped, hearing impaired and hearing.

The following will attempt to respond to a request from James T. Flood, Executive Secretary of the Ohio School for the Deaf Alumni Association (OSDAA) for an explanation of work accomplished to date and the additional work required to make Columbus Colony the prototype community it is projected to be. As you can imagine the first half of this request is somewhat less difficult than the last. However, my task is made easier by the solid accomplishments of the OSDAA and Columbus Colony.

The OSDAA is a voluntary, non-profit organization which was founded in 1870 and chartered by the State of Ohio in 1895. Its active membership is composed of graduates and former students of the Ohio School for the Deaf. The OSDAA is the sponsor of Columbus Colony. The key accomplishments of the OSDAA and Columbus Colony to date are:

1. Land acquisition since 1895 which now approaches 140 acres.
2. Establishment and operation of the Ohio Home for the Aged and Infirm Deaf since 1896.
3. Development of ten independent living cottages in 1976.
4. Assembled a multi-disciplinary team necessary for model community development.
5. Current construction of a 100-bed nursing home through a U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development loan under section

232 with financial assistance from the Battelle Memorial Institution Foundation.

6. Current construction of a 106-unit apartment complex through a U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development loan under section 202.
7. Formation of a "partnership" between the deaf and hearing community leaders on a Board of Trustees which is responsible for the planning and operation of Columbus Colony.
8. Development of a tentative three-phase Master Plan with the principle components in:

Phase I:

- Columbus Colony Apartments, a 106-unit facility
- Columbus Colony Nursing Home, a 100-bed skilled care facility
- Shelter house and picnic area

Phase II:

- Office Building
- Halfway House
- Opportunity House
- Community Clinic
- Community Center/Chapel

Phase III:

- Additional housing such as: cottages, apartments, condominiums, single family residences, and nursing home expansion
- Research center
- Commercial development
- Future facilities presently not identified

This list of accomplishments serve as a solid foundation for the vast scope of remaining work. Special recognition for boldness of vision should go to all past and present members of the OSDAA, its President Harvey Katz, Project Administrator Dotson Agnell and Executive Secretary James T. Flood.

Mr. Nader is Director of Planning at the Columbus Colony, Westerville, Ohio.

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Included in the 1971 *Second White House Conference on Aging* were recommended that authorities:

1. "Encourage organizations of and for the deaf — national, state and local — to sponsor housing facilities for aging deaf persons under existing laws."
2. Conduct a study of the feasibility of establishing for aged deaf persons a federally-supported model retirement community. It should be comprehensive, providing for all ranges of services — health, nursing care, recreational, and social facilities. The housing itself should offer all levels from completely independent to nursing home care . . ."

We believe and hope you agree with us that Columbus Colony is a response to these recommendations.

Basic to model community development are the Philosophy, Mission and Goal Statements of Columbus Colony which follow:

PHILOSOPHY*

Columbus Colony is a community of deaf people, by deaf people, and for deaf people who share the idealism of the national heritage, as expressed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights of the United States of America: that all men are created equal and have the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Columbus Colony believes . . .

- in the dignity and worth of each of its citizens irrespective of handicaps and other individual differences.
- in the unrestricted right of all its citizens to retain and to enhance their individual identities as independent members of the Colony and of the nation.
- in adapting the environment as necessary to assure equality of facilities, care, and services available to all Americans.
- in shared involvement of its residents to determine the nature of their community, needs, and desires — expressed by the residents or by competent advocates in the respective disciplines to establish an environment of optimum conditions to share

equitably, to the extent possible, the national heritage.

THE COLUMBUS COLONY MISSION STATEMENT*

Columbus Colony's mission is to capacitate deaf, deaf-blind and deaf-multhandicapped individuals to experience the most optimal level of living in a self-directed, model environment through responsible individual and group involvement in the total deaf and hearing society. Columbus Colony fulfills its mission by . . .

- providing varied types and choices of permanent and/or interim residential living and health care to meet individual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social needs in a multicultural environment.
- adapting the environment and/or providing supportive services enabling, to the fullest extent possible, responsible independent living and working.
- generating and disseminating knowledge through research.
- removing barriers of isolation through all modes of communication.
- expanding opportunities for learning and working through the deaf and hearing community involvement, leadership development, and educational programs.
- planning, implementing, and evaluating meaningful communications among deaf and hearing.

COLUMBUS COLONY GOALS*

Columbus Colony is a demonstration model for integrated community living which has application for both hearing and non-hearing communities. The model inherently involves interactions and relationships among many public and private groups and individuals on a local, state and national level.

Columbus Colony will . . .

- project a positive image of the deaf through a demonstration of the abilities and capabilities of the Colony residents as contributing members of the society.

*Draft statement for operational purposes pending revision and refinement by Board of Trustees and Board of Governors, and approval by the Board of Trustees.

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- provide varied residential, recreational, commercial, health, and other specialized facilities to meet individual and group needs of residents.
- provide supportive services, individually prescribed to facilitate independent-living among the deaf and hearing, to the extent possible.
- bridge and enhance communications between the hearing and the non-hearing communities.
- provide Columbus Colony residents and staff with growth experiences through their participation, as appropriate, in all aspects of external community life.
- provide hearing and deaf non-residents with growth experiences through their participation, as appropriate, in all aspects of Columbus Colony community life.
- improve understanding of deafness and its implications.
- develop leadership for self-direction and awareness of options and opportunities for the deaf.
- conduct needed applied research to extend the knowledge base and to identify further research needs regarding deafness as it relates to living, working, learning, mobility, career development, communications skills and equipment, social adjustment, economics, safety, self-attitudes and public attitudes, recreation, leisure, family planning, drugs, alcoholism, heredity tendencies, surgical techniques, language skills, decision-making, employment skills, finance, and the like.

The Philosophy, Mission and Goals provide the direction for policy formation and development. An additional building block is the initial characterization of what Columbus Colony should become. This initial characterization was obtained through a questionnaire developed by Battelle Columbus Laboratories, Brona, Inc. (Community Development Consultants to the OSDAA), and deaf professionals and volunteers.

The composition of the sample consisted of 31 questionnaire respondents, divided into the following categories:

OSDAA Board of Governors 12
 Professionals (Deaf/Hearing) at
 Columbus Colony 13
 OSDAA members and wives of
 Board of Governors members 6
 31

The questionnaire sample obtained is not expected to be a statistically significant one, and is not intended to represent the desires of the general population of deaf persons in Ohio or elsewhere. The results are intended to display to the questionnaire respondents how they agree or disagree on community attributes and serve as a basis for future efforts.

When the majority viewpoints, represented by questionnaire data are expressed in statement form the Columbus Colony Model Characterization would provide for:

1. Deaf people of all ages.
2. Deaf-blind and deaf-mulihandicapped people.
3. Mentally ill persons who are not a threat to others in the community.
4. Hearing people who would be expected to learn to communicate with the non-hearing residents, but their number would be kept in the minority.
5. A wide variety of housing types.
6. Health care services consisting of a prototype nursing home and out-patient clinic open to residents of the surrounding community if their capacity permits this without a reduction of services to residents.
7. Provision and operation of training programs for its staff of doctors, nurses, social workers, administrators, and other professionals to help them understand deafness better.
8. Vocational training for residents would be provided by existing community agencies.
9. Education programs for children would be provided through existing community schools.
10. An Opportunity House for independent living training, housing for those in need of support services or temporary housing.
11. A Halfway House to assist people in learning to work in the hearing community, help people who have been in prison, or who have problems with drug and alcohol abuse.
12. A wide variety of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities adopted to as many

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handicaps as possible and ranging from crafts to sports to theater.

13. A mixture of both city and country — somewhat like a modern rural village with a town square, well-kept streets, sidewalks, and large, open, grassy areas and walkways.
14. A Community Center/Chapel for recreational, social and all denominational religious purposes.
15. A small Commercial Center.
16. Transportation services.
17. All building and grounds designed for barrier-free movement.

As you can see Columbus Colony is a complex, exciting and challenging undertaking. The OSDAA Board of Governors recognized that hearing community involvement was essential for such an undertaking. Based upon this recognition a Columbus Colony Board of Trustees composed of both deaf and hearing individuals was formed and held its first meeting on February 3, 1978.

Some of the initial priorities of the Board of Trustees have been:

1. Resource Mobilization Assistance
2. Philosophy, Mission and Goal Statements, and
3. Search for a Columbus Colony Executive Director

These priorities will provide the base for policy formation and further model development which can be transportable in whole or part across the country.

A strong link must be maintained between the deaf and hearing population in the volunteer, professional and non-professional areas. This can be achieved in various ways but crucial is the goal of placing deaf individuals in key planning and operation positions.

This approach should create better understanding and narrowing of the communication gap. The result should produce more available and accessible services for a long neglected population.

As stated in the Goals Statement, The Columbus Colony model inherently involves interactions and relationships among many public and private groups and individuals on a local, state and national level. For further information contact Dr. James T. Flood, Director of Public Relations and Communications or G. Michael Nader, M.S.W., Director of Social Planning and Program Development at Columbus Colony, 6971 Sunbury Road, Westerville, Ohio 43081. Phone number: 614-890-5533; TTY number 615-890-3914.