

**Universal  
Press Clipping Bureau**

Omaha, Nebr.

*Established 1908*

Cedar Co. News  
Hartington, Nebr.  
(Cir. W. 2,617)

JUL 19 1978

CEDAR COUNTY NEWS, Wednesday, July 19, 1978—15

## Label Them "People" First

Everyone wants to be known as a person, recognized as a human being. But entire segments of our population are not known as people first, they are known by the labels that others have put on them—mentally retarded, epileptic, spastic, and other similar terms. A human being is a person, not a disability, and an organization of people known as Project II are working very hard to make sure that persons with a handicap are known as "people first."

Project II recently visited Region IV Services-Bloomfield talking to clients about self-advocacy and encouraging them to attend a "People First" conference scheduled for August 26-27 at the Kellog Center in Lincoln.

Ray Loomis, chairman of Project II, got the idea to start a rap group in Omaha two and a half years ago. He had organized by-monthly get-togethers for persons with handicaps in Lincoln, where he first lived after his release from Beatrice. By the time he left to move to Omaha, the group had grown to about 125. The first rap session in Omaha drew only three persons, but the word

spread and the group now has 30 or 40 regulars, and a current membership of more than 200.

Project II meets for social reasons and recreation, like dancing, bowling and camping, but they have a more serious purpose as well—to help handicapped people help themselves. While self-advocacy was possible in the civil rights and women's liberation movements, it was assumed that persons with mental retardation weren't capable of effectively communicating their needs. Project II is changing that belief. The group discusses living problems like finding jobs and maintaining their apartments, but also addresses issues such as rights, how and when to speak out, solving problems and working as a team.

Anyone wishing further information about Project II should write Ray Loomis, Project II Chairman, c/o Greater Omaha Association for Retarded Citizens, 3212 Dodge Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68131, or call David Sudbeck, Area Director, Region IV Services-Bloomfield, 607 South Broadway, Bloomfield, Nebraska 68718 (402-373-4358).