

in 1948, I think, that the Baltimore Civitan Club, responding to a plea made by my friend and your friend Thomas F. McNulty, sparked a movement to establish a permanent organization which would devote itself exclusively to the problem of retardation. The interest the Club displayed at that time resulted in the Club's undertaking a major project of "Aid to the Subnormal." Money-raising activities were launched, the Fund for Mentally Retarded and Handicapped Children, Inc., was established as a non-profit scientific and educational foundation. One of the first undertakings was the establishment of scholarships for the training of persons to teach retarded children. Afterward, the other Civitan Clubs of the area joined the Baltimore Club, and as a result, aid to mentally retarded children became a major project of the Clubs of this district, and great strides were made in the improvement of the care and treatment of these children and in scientific research. As I have said, the people of this State, and people elsewhere in the country where the movement has spread, owe to the members of Civitan Clubs a debt which can never be adequately paid.

As recently as 1949, services for the mentally retarded in Maryland consisted of a State training school, primarily a custodial institution, a total of only approximately 160 classes for these children in all the public schools of the State and one private day school in Baltimore. The public apathy in this area was lamentable, and truly the parents of these mentally handicapped children bore the great burden of this apathy. The medical profession itself reflected to some extent this public defeatism. Research in the field was meager. Few physicians were equipped by training to give the distraught parents good advice, to say nothing of hope for the future. But then, spurred on by Civitan, a movement got underway to correct this deplorable condition. Parents, educators, legislators and others were enlisted in the movement, creating classes, workshops, clinics, recreational facilities and other services for this hitherto neglected segment of humanity. In 1949, the Maryland Society for Mentally Retarded Children, at that time comprised of eight parents, was organized. Today that organization has a membership of more than 1,500 families. Though small in numbers in the beginning, the membership of this Society was imbued with the spirit of action, and as a result of plodding and persistence, it soon was able to convince legislators of our State that a public program for aid to the mentally retarded was long overdue.

The public schools of the State took the lead in this program, and progress was so pronounced in this area that Maryland soon was in a position of leadership in the entire nation. School rolls were opened to