

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES UNITED

Basketball, volleyball, track and field competition, arts and crafts shows, a cross-continent bicycle trip — all of these, and more, are offered to teenagers in the Worldwide Church of God through Y.O.U. — Youth Opportunities United.

This month Y.O.U. observes the completion of its first full year of activities and events for Church youth. But the concept of youth programs is hardly new to the Church. Herbert W. Armstrong has long recognized the importance and value of properly educating youth, and providing constructive, challenging opportunities for adventure and personal growth. To train young adults to be future leaders in the Church and community, he established Ambassador College in 1947. In the early 50s Imperial Schools extended the educational program of the Church to the grade- and high-school levels.

In the Wilds. In 1962 the Summer Educational Program (S.E.P.) began in Big Sandy, Texas. Three years later it moved to a new camp near Orr in the wilds of northern Minnesota. Each year several hundred Church youth 12 to 18 years of age trek to Orr for a wide range of exciting activities — archery, canoeing, cheerleading, cooking out, fishing, rock climbing, swimming, water skiing, water polo and volleyball. For many, the highlight of the summer sessions is a six-day canoe trip through the lake country of the U.S.-Canadian border region. (In addition, a backpacking program has been held for several summers in Estes Park, Colorado.)

S.E.P. is a golden, never-to-be-forgotten opportunity. But what about the thousands of other Church youth who are not able to attend? There have always been locally organized Church youth programs for them, but many came





to see the need for a nationally organized program.

The prototype for the national youth program was a series of local and regional basketball games culminating in the National Basketball Tournament held in March 1975. Afterwards, Garner Ted Armstrong enthusiastically gave the green light to make Y.O.U. official. He appointed his personal assistant, Jim Thornhill, to be National Youth Coordinator. Mr. Thornhill is an all-around sportsman who was for several years a phys-ed teacher at Ambassador College, and who continues to lend his services at the S.E.P. summer camp in Orr. (You should see him water ski!) He is capably assisted by Ron Dick and Mike Blackwell.

Four-Year Scholarship. The first two events sponsored by Y.O.U. in the summer of 1975 were a photography contest and regional track and field meets. Talent contests also got underway in local churches leading to semifinals at various sites of the Feast of Tabernacles that fall.

The 12 finalists won all-expense-paid trips to Pasadena, California, where on November 29 they performed before a standing-room-only crowd in Ambassador Auditorium. Andy Whelchel, 17, won first prize, a four-year tuition-paid scholarship to Ambassador College, with his drum composition, "Time." The second-place prize was a two-year tuition-paid scholarship. Third and fourth place cash prizes were also awarded.

Bikecentennial. The 1976 agenda is jam-packed with more sports events, arts and crafts shows, etc. In addition, the Ambassador College, Big Sandy, bicycle touring team (in conjunction with the Bikecentennial '76) is sponsoring a 4300-mile, coast-to-coast trip. The 25-member team will be joined by about 75 "well-cycled" Church members, with priority going to young people participating in Y.O.U. The trip will start at Astoria, Oregon, in June and wind up in Williamsburg, Virginia, in August. □

Ken Evans — GN