

ASSOCIATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED

521 McMECHEN STREET

Baltimore, Md.

Phone Madison 8478

William H. Langley, President; George A. Owens, Vice-President; R. Maurice Moss, Secretary; Harry O. Wilson, Treasurer; Prof. Francis M. Wood, Asst. Treas.; Robert W. Coleman, Manager; Linwood G. Koger, Attorney.

Executive Committee—Rev. Albert J. Greene, Chairman; Dr. James E. Bell, W. Deaver Boston, Rev. George F. Bragg, Miss I. Myrtle Carden, Rev. Daniel W. Hayes and Rev. Ernest Lyons.

History of the Organization

Prior to 1913 the colored people had taken no interest in their blind, the reason being that no Negro up to that time had brought it to their attention. We feel it was a God-send that Mr. Robert W. Coleman attended the work-shop for the blind, for he could better understand conditions than a sighted man. As he had had experience as both sighted and blind, he realized the unfortunate condition of the latter and felt it his duty to start this agitation.

From 1911 to 1913 he held meeting after meeting in an effort to create enthusiasm for the blind.

On October 15, 1913, at the residence of Mr. William H. Langley, he succeeded in organizing the Maryland Association for Colored Blind. The original members of the board were: William H. Langley, President; Harry O. Wilson, Treasurer; Mason A. Hawkins, Secretary, and Robert W. Coleman, Organizer and Manager; Messrs. J. Clarence Chambers, G. Russell Waller and Henry J. Thomas. Other early members of the board were Dr. J. O. Spencer, Dr. Ernest Lyon and Dr. E. J. Wheatley.

In 1921, Rev. A. J. Green was selected as Chairman of the Executive Committee, which position he has since served with honor.

The Maryland Assn. for Colored Blind was organized for the purpose of advancing moral, social, religious and industrial development for colored blind; also to extend to them sympathy and brotherhood.

Among the early activities of the Association were the following (1913-1923):

1. Public demonstration at Richmond Market Armory.
2. Securing medical attention for blind individuals.
3. Securing privilege for blind to sell Afro-American.
4. Securing privilege for blind to attend Automobile Shop at Douglas High School.
5. Securing cooperation of the Y. M. C. A. for annual excursions, continuing until 1923.
6. Securing from Y. W. C. A. and Y. M. C. A. membership for the blind without cost, upon application.
7. Presented check for \$10.00, first money received at a benefit at the Fourth Regiment Armory June 17, 1920, to assist in paying for the instruments of the Blind Band.
8. Appealed to Dr. Spencer to accept blind students at Morgan College.

There are two periods in the history of the Association. The first was that of agitation, the other of construction. The latter began by a lecture with stereographic views by Dr. R. Tunstall Taylor at the First Baptist Church, on or about January 1, 1923.

Mrs. Putts and Dr. Cobb of the school board were invited to attend this meeting. Rev. A. J. Green and Mr. R. W. Coleman publicly requested and insisted during the course of the meeting that the school board make some provision for education and care of crippled children. Subsequently the schools for crippled children were opened March 1, 1923.

Another constructive element was the visit to Overlea to observe the methods of teaching and to note conditions of environment under which the students studied, lived and worked.

Following this was the Christmas treat at the Maryland Workshop for the Blind on December 29, 1925.

Then followed the second annual social hour and party at Sharp Street Community House, on February 22, 1926.

The next three important features of construction were: First a letter to the press by Dr. James A. Bell, "The Relation of Handicapped Individuals to Society."

Second, a letter from Supervisor Francis M. Wood favoring the acceptance of blind students in the Douglas High School, and the opening of classes for those students of defective speech. Also the opening of a class in the Teachers' Training School for the training of teachers for handicapped children.

Third, which we deem probably most important in public agitation and construction was a mass meeting held on May 16, 1926, at the Royal Theatre, at which time all the handicapped and social agencies regardless of creed or color were asked to cooperate. This was done to bring before the public their responsible duty to humanity. Rev. Ernest Lyons was the efficient chairman and Dr. Steindler of Fort McHenry delivered an excellent paper.

Later, the unanimous consent was received by the organization from the Board of Governors of the Children's Hospital School, Greenspring Avenue and 41st Street, to erect a colored annex onto the present building.

The Association has been instrumental in raising a fund for the education of the handicapped.

