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NEWS

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*****Gerontologists recruiting
older people for life en-
richment course.

DALLAS--Dr. Helen West and Dr. Hanno Weisbrod, instructors in gerontology at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas, are recruiting older people who want to become more active and want to help others do the same.

Through the new life enrichment program for older persons, the gerontologists are recruiting people from churches and service agencies for a training program to begin Sept. 6 at the Episcopal Continuing Education Center at St. Matthew's Cathedral.

"This program will be a possible alternate model to the cultural model of keeping the aged in a dependent state. The more dependent you are, the more government services you can get," says Dr. West, project director of the enrichment program. Many older people have problems accepting government services, regarding them as "handouts." For many of them church relationships are important, and for this reason the enrichment program is asking churches as well as agencies to send older people to the course.

The 12-week course will include training in physical exercise, deep relaxation techniques and psychosocial group process. Physical exercise will aid physical health, and relaxation techniques will help the participants cope with stress and tension. Older Americans experience a great deal of stress in a culture that equates youth with success and desirability. Group process training in how members of a group relate and work together will help these participants develop as leaders among the older people in their own churches and service organizations.

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first add life enrichment

Dr. Weisbrod, training director, stressed that this will be an intensive course requiring two days a week in class for 12 weeks with lots of homework. But when they have finished the course, they will have "an incredible demand" for their services, he predicted. They will be able to take on some leadership role to be decided with the church or agency sponsor. Agencies sending representatives will include Dallas County Nutrition Program, senior citizens centers and Visiting Nurse Association.

This course will serve as "basic training" with two 12-week courses to follow during the school year. Phase two will involve the development of leadership and outreach skills. Phase three will help participants become trainers and peer counselors, "phasing us out," said Dr. Weisbrod.

The eventual goal, he said, is a "network of people who will lead happier senior adult lives."

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