

Huntington 'Y' Officials Happy

7-2-69 Leaders Club a Big Hit

By ROBERT CROGG

If the shady, green building just off the junction of Main Street and 25A in Huntington seems to be especially orchestrated with the sounds and sights of happy, laughing children this summer, it's probably because the Young Men's Christian Association located there is busy living up to its name.

Youth and youth service is the earmark of this famous organization which by its very title proposes to, and succeeds in, helping develop the physical potentials of its "young men."

Actually, the Huntington branch of the National YMCA was founded in 1946 on the site presently known as Hecksher Park. A man named Ed Norton was director. The organization works with girls as well as boys, but the key word in this operation is neither girl nor boy, but youth.

Ever since that January day, 23 years ago, when the father of present Director and Physical Education Secretary Mickey Norton, opened the gates to the young people of

Huntington, there has been a service activity group known as the Leaders Club. It is the pride and backbone and the secret of success in this local haven of youngsters.

The members of the Leaders Club devote their time and energy to working with children who many times are not more than a few years younger than they are. The work is totally volunteer, totally operated by the leaders who range in age from 11 to 16, and just about totally successful.

How successful? Well, Charlie Foris is a good example. The current basketball coach at Huntington High and former Suffolk All-Leaguer in three sports, The Press Quinby Award winner, scholarship basketball player at Wake Forest and Meigs' baseball prospect came from the Huntington Y.

Bob Brusch, now teaching and coaching in Denver, Colo., where he attended college on a football grant, was another Huntington Y product. He, too was a Suffolk All-League man from Huntington High who had a three-

year stint with the San Francisco Giants.

There are scores of All-American lacrosse players, among them the likes of Chris Pettit (West Point), Brian Lantier (Annapolis), Bill Pettit (Maryland) and John Bodine (Penn State), who were developed in the Huntington Y Leaders program.

But the Huntington YMCA's accomplishments have not all been in the past. This past March 15 in the Long Island Contest of Athletic Achievement, which is part of a National YMCA program of physical fitness competition, the Huntington boys compiled a total score good enough for second in New York State and 11th in the nation. The girls were even more impressive, scoring first in the state and eighth in the national scoring.

Mickey Norton, who explained that he "could go on for hours listing excellent athletes and students from the Huntington Y," seemed especially proud that this is only Huntington's second year in the Athletic Achievement Program participation.

Norton, credited the suc-

cess of these boys and girls to Bob Driscoll, a 14-year-old ninth grader at Holly Family High, and Gail Lamberta, 16, who starts her third year at Walt Whitman High in September. Bob and Gail are respective presidents of the boys' and girls' divisions of the Leaders Club. In hours of service, ability and interest in Huntington's special brand of youth development, these two are tireless workers.

President of the Huntington Y's Board of Managers, Gil Carl, a Field Supervisor for a New York based mechanical engineering outfit, has been on the Board since 1950 and has been connected in one way or another with the group since '46, explained it this way:

"The Leaders Club has been here since 1946 and is designed to allow young people who are truly interested to get an opportunity to let their leadership talents come to the fore," he said. "Our job as Board members and officers is to get some financial backing for this program."

The Y runs a deficit operation, receiving some assistance from the National Fund and some from memberships. But there is never quite enough money to go around. The important thing at Huntington seems to be, however, to get as much as possible in order to keep these young people doing a job thirty times their size.

As long as there are men like Carl and Norton, who realize the tremendous influence and value in young people like Gail and Bob and many others, Huntington parents will know where their children are through the summer months from eight until three.