

RECOLLECTIONS OF

The Metropolitan Committee on Adult and  
Continuing Education

by

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### The Beginning

In 1967, a group of individuals working in various adult education agencies in the Syracuse community held an informal meeting. This was in response to my invitation for some agency representatives to meet at the Syracuse University Conference Center at Roney Lane.

We continued to meet periodically at various agency offices in order to become familiar with the personnel, facilities, and resources available to adults in the community. This was actually an early attempt at networking. A directory of names, agency addresses, and other educational opportunities evolved from these early sessions.

Gradually, it became apparent that more was needed than just a tour of facilities and a brown bag or inexpensive lunch. A long term process of creating relationships, building friendships, and developing a common educational understanding helped to refine concepts of adult and continuing education. Once it became apparent that each agency and the individuals in charge had nothing to fear, but rather could expect assistance and support from each other, barriers broke down and the overriding interest of providing educational opportunities to adults took over.

One of the reasons for the success of these early meetings was that they were kept short. All of the people involved had busy schedules, but found that what they received from the sessions was invaluable to their work, their plans, and their

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interrelationships. As time went on the length did vary, the format varied, but it remained without much structure.

### What's in a name?

I might say a word about the name. We started out with the name Metropolitan Syracuse Committee on Adult and Continuing Education. We used the terms adult and continuing education somewhat synonymously, but, of course, some people had attached different meanings to the words "adult" and "continuing." The title varied slightly depending on who prepared the notices and did the mailing. The Metropolitan Development Association (MDA) was just beginning in those days and it was trying to create an identity of "Metropolitan Syracuse." It included an extensive area around the City of Syracuse. It seemed appropriate to use the term Metropolitan. We frequently had people attending from Oswego, Morrisville, Utica, and surrounding areas.

We were quite aware that there existed a group called the Central New York Association for Continuing and Community Education. It was supported by the Bureau of Adult Education in the State Education Department in Albany. The Central New York Association was one of several that existed around the State and together they had an annual conference organized by the State Education Association. It was usually held in the southern tier at places such as Grossinger's, but they also met periodically in Syracuse and other cities. We were also aware that members of another group, the Continuing Education Association of New York,

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were from state supported two and four year institutions, City University of New York (CUNY), State Education Department, and some private institutions. They meet periodically, too, for continuing education purposes. In any case, we were concerned primarily with educators of adults in their role as practitioners while other national, state, and regional groups had other concerns and interests.

I might add that there was some occasional discussion about combining with the Central New York Association. However, the prevailing view was that little reason existed for combining because of our focus on a limited geographical area which was within an easy commuting range.

There was discussion about a name change from time to time and we conducted two or three surveys. The majority considered that the name was appropriate so we just continued with it. In 1975, the acronym MSCCE appeared but generally it was referred to as Metro.

#### Organizational Structure

In those early stages Betty Jane Vaughn, who was from the Library of Continuing Education (LCE) at Syracuse University and also on the Educational Resources Informational Center (ERIC) staff of the Clearinghouse for Adult Education, worked with me on Metro activities. There was actually very little structure. Whoever suggested a program would host a meeting and send out the notice. In the early days, B.J. Vaughn and I did the mailings.

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Gradually some of the other agencies took charge and arranged a meeting at their place. We frequently asked people if they wanted more structure and so in 1969 a leadership group was formed. It consisted of Dr. Marvin A. Rapp, president of Onondaga Community College; Father William Reilly S.J., president of Le Moyne College; and Dr. Alexander Charters, vice president for Continuing Education at Syracuse University. Mr. Henry McCormick, Director of the Syracuse Public Libraries, was named secretary. At time went on the leadership changed and the structure became less formal.

In one meeting I described the organization's purposes as follows: (a) to serve as a vehicle of communication among administrators of adult and continuing education agencies; (b) to discuss issues and problems of mutual concern in adult and continuing education; and (c) to conduct activities such as the production of a directory of agencies offering educational programs for adults.

A number of people arranged more than one program. I am hesitant to name people because immediately you know some very key people will be omitted. However, Dr. Robert Laubach from Laubach Literacy took the leadership for several years in arranging programs and called himself program chair of the Metro Committee. He did a very fine job. Dr. John Blasi of Le Moyne College and later of Onondaga Community College was regularly involved. Then Dr. James Fratto of Le Moyne College arranged several meetings. I might mention also that Dr. Robert

Giambatista of BOCES was not only helpful in hosting some of the meetings, but arranged some very fine programs. Later, Betty Katona, Director of Nurses at Community General Hospital, became the leader and made a substantial contribution by arranging meetings and programs of various kinds. As her responsibilities at the hospital increased, things fell a little bit into limbo, although Dr. Nancy Gadbow and Dr. Roger Hiemstra of Syracuse University arranged a few meetings and updated the mailing list.

Metro met at several locations, including the following: Consolidated Industries, Le Moyne College, Syracuse Public Libraries, Regional Learning Service, Onondaga County Extension Service, BOCES, Hancock Air Field Education Services, Syracuse University, Central City Business Institute, Hutchings Psychiatric Center, Educational Opportunity Center, State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Laubach Literacy, and Literacy Volunteers of America. Other interested parties included: the Syracuse Public Schools, the Syracuse Council of Churches, WCNY-TV (Channel 24), and the Educational and Cultural Center of Oswego and Onondaga County (ECCO).

### Metro Activities

As Metro developed, the purposes of the committee remained generally as described earlier. Certainly the professional development or continuing education of ourselves as educators of adults was important. The topics of meetings and corresponding discussions were in line with these purposes. I don't think

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there was a conscious decision about which topic should be emphasized at any one time. There was a great variety ranging from programs about various special agencies like the Armed Forces to specialized services such as cable television to special issues like the pros and cons of mandatory continuing education. There were, of course, many programs about local adult education agencies.

A number of international figures also spoke. As I recall there were various colleagues from UNESCO, China, Australia, and Denmark. We were visited by such national leaders as Ms. Betty Ward, president of the Adult Education Association of USA; Ms. Rose Mary Pattison, president of the National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education (NAPCAE); and Dr. William Shannon, Executive Director of the National Advisory Council of Extension and Continuing Education (NACE).

Meetings sometimes led to special activities. For example, we set up a sub-committee on Cable TV to facilitate communication with a community TV station. Metro cooperated fully with the Bi-Centennial Committee of the Syracuse and Onondaga Cultural Resources. It also contributed to National Adult Education Week and New York State Adult Education Week for some years.

Another project that we engaged in early was the development of a Directory of Adult Education Agencies specifically to give the name, address, and phone number of a person to contact. In this way, we could refer an adult to another agency, or to a specific person in another agency. The Directory worked very

well and provided a useful start in establishing coordination and collaboration. It was initially developed and published by the Library of Continuing Education, Syracuse University.

In 1975-76, Dr. Francis Macy of the newly developed Regional Learning Service, formed a sub-committee to develop another Directory which was published and given wide distribution. Late in 1978, Dr. Grace Healy of the Civil Literacy Project of the S.U. School of Education, and Jean Kordalewski of the Regional Learning Service developed and published a third Directory. This latter Directory of Adult and Continuing Education was published by the Onondaga County Education Information Center. It is clear there was an evolution and continuity to the various Directories developed over the years and they proved to be valuable resources in enabling adults to obtain access to educational opportunities in the area.

#### Our Heritage

Over the years members had various discussions about the work of the Committee. These discussions resulted in one case with a visit from Mr. Sam Brightman, editor of the publication Adult and Continuing Education Today. He came to Syracuse, talked with many individuals, and visited many agencies. He wrote a series of four articles which were published in this national journal. He did a superb job in reporting the facts and providing the flavor of metropolitan Syracuse adult and

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continuing education programs. It also informed national and international adult educators about Syracuse.

A great many people were involved in a variety of ways in the work of the Metro Committee over the years. Their work is meaningful to the extent that "adults are able to have a little more control over their present circumstances and their future destiny."

#### Postscript

In 1989 Dr. Norbert Henry from Le Moyne College, and Dr. Roger Hiemstra, Syracuse University, formed a committee and began to develop a more formal structure for adult and continuing education professionals in the area. The name of the new organization that formed officially on July 1, 1990, is Central New York/Coalition of Adult and Continuing Education (CNY/CACE). It should be able to continue and expand the many activities initiated by the Metro Committee.