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---FEATURES

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**Seminary Student Pushes
For Seniors' Ministries**

LOUISVILLE (BP)--When a group of students, led by 23-year-old Gary Cook at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here, decided to undertake a class study of what Southern Baptists are doing in ministering to senior adults, they never dreamed it would blossom into a full-fledged convention study of the situation.

A second-year master of divinity student with a long-time involvement in senior adult work, Cook said he never expected the class project to lead to a resolution at the 1973 Southern Baptist Convention in Portland.

A member of the Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Cook is director of activities for nearby Baptist Towers, a senior adults home ministered to by the inner-city congregation.

Cook, a native of Little Rock, Ark., also organized a senior adults Vacation Bible School at Walnut Street Church which averaged 75 adults attending.

As a result of their study, Cook and his Southern Seminary colleagues concluded that the convention could be doing a great deal more in ministering to senior adults.

They contacted Albert McClellan, associate executive secretary and program planning secretary of the SBC Executive Committee and asked what they could do to help strengthen the senior adult ministry among Southern Baptists.

McClellan outlined several ways of getting SBC attention, including proposing a resolution at the annual convention. The youth decided on this course.

Cook attended the 1973 Southern Baptist Convention in Portland where he presented a resolution "urging" our churches to creatively seek to meet the needs of senior adults."

His resolution pointed out that from 1900 to 1970 the percentage of citizens in the United States over 65 years old has risen from approximately four per cent to ten per cent.

The resolution, passed by the Southern Baptist Convention, also proposed that "the convention's Executive Committee do a feasibility study on the need for a major survey of present and future ministry to and with senior adults and to take appropriate action."

The committee asked Leonard E. Hill, managing editor of the Baptist Program, to find out what is being done among state conventions, SBC boards and commissions in the area of senior adult ministries.

Hill's report, submitted to the committee at their September, 1973, meeting indicated "very little is being done by SBC agencies and state Baptist Conventions to specifically meet the needs of elderly persons.

"The awareness that older adults have special needs and can make unique contributions is slowly beginning to develop within the SBC even as a similar awareness of the needs and potential of older persons is developing in society in general," the report said.

Cook attended the September meeting and noted for the Executive Committee areas of action where he hoped the resolution on senior adults would gain results.

He proposed a senior adult magazine (the Baptist Sunday School Board has been considering such a publication), production of films with senior adult topics, promotion of senior adult groups in local churches, creation of a convention-wide senior adult day, and the enlistment of senior adults into a new missionary program much like the US-2 or journeyman programs.

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"Programs of mission work for senior adults should be initiated, and just as much emphasis should be placed on the senior adult program as existing programs. The Peace Corps and VISTA effectively use many senior citizens," Cook said.

SBC President Owen Cooper said in his Portland address to the SBC that an estimated 80,000 Southern Baptists reach retirement age each year. Of this number 975 could be reached annually for two or three years of service in some type of mission work, Cooper said.

After studying Cook's recommendations, the Executive Committee asked the Inter-Agency Council, which has a representative from every SBC board and agency, to do a complete study of what Southern Baptists can do in ministering to senior adults. The council is to report to the Executive Committee in 1975.

Cook worked with senior adults while a student at Baylor University, Waco, Tex., serving as director of a nursing home ministry for the campus Baptist Student Union. He was chairman of the senior members' committee at Seventh and James Baptist Church, Waco, and began the XYZ (eXtra Years of Zest) Club for senior adults.