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Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall has sent a letter of congratulations to the Papago Candy Stripers, a group of 18 Arizona Indian girls who recently won first place honors from Parents' Magazine for youth group achievement in teenage public service.

On November 24 the Indian Hospital at Sells, Arizona, was the setting for a ceremony at which the Papago Candy Stripers were presented with the first place plaque and a cash prize of $500 for their outstanding volunteer work in the hospital.

The Secretary's letter, addressed to Miss Leona Thomas, President of the youth group at the time of the award nomination, read:

"Dear Miss Thomas:

"As president of the Papago Candy Stripers for the 1961-62 season, please convey to your fellow members and associates my warmest congratulations on taking the first prize in the Parents' Magazine Youth Group Achievement Awards for teen-age public service in 1961-1962.

"This, in itself, is an outstanding achievement well deserving commendation. In addition, as the first teen-agers to do volunteer work in any Indian hospital, you young ladies have set an example for other young Indian girls who may want to make a special contribution of services to their communities.

"All of us who have the privilege of working with the Papago people are tremendously proud of the Papago Candy Stripers and their record of helpful service to the patients and the staff of the hospital at Sells."

The Papago Candy Stripers originated after several ninth-grade students of the Sells Consolidated School read a teen-age novel entitled "Candy Striper," by Lee Wyndham (Julian Messner, Inc., 1958).

Special permission had to be obtained from the United States Public Health Service to lower the customary minimum age requirement of 16 years for visitors or volunteers in PHS Indian hospitals. This done, the group formed in November 1961, and began actual work inside the Sells Indian Hospital, on the Papago Indian Reservation in Arizona, in January 1962. Membership has ranged in number from 10 to 22 girls, in the 13 to 17 year age groups, and a larger membership is possible when girls in the 10th, 11th and 12th grades in off-reservation schools return home.

Candy Stripers, both boys and girls, are approximately 150,000 strong at present, and active in an estimated one-third of the Nation's hospitals; but the Papago Candy Stripers are the first such group of teen-age hospital volunteers to be found in any Indian hospital in the United States. Since they began working in the Sells hospital, these girls have contributed more than 1500 hours of afterschool time and Saturdays toward helping their own people, patients in the hospital.

Although the traditional uniform of the Candy Stripers (from which the organization takes its name) is pink or red and white stripes, the Papago girls chose turquoise stripes for their pinafores because

tU1~quoise is a "traditional" Indian stone and color.

Financial and technical advice and help have been given to the Papago Candy Stripers by a variety of groups and individuals, including Mrs. Lee Wyndham, Morristown, N. J., the writer whose book inspired the girls to undertake their volunteer service to the Sells Indian Hospital.

In addition to the plaque and cash award from Parents' Magazine, the Papago girls recently achieved further national recognition through an article about their organization which appeared in the October issue of "Today's Health," a publication of the American Medical Association.