Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Indian vocational trainees and their families will begin arriving March 4 at the former Walker Air Force Base, Roswell, N.M., to begin a "family residential training" program that will teach them the skills and experience necessary to live comfortably in an urban setting.

The training program at the new Roswell Employment Training Center will be operated by the Economic Development Operations division of Thiokol Chemical Corp., Ogden, Utah, under a Bureau of Indian Affairs contract, the Department of the Interior announced today. Partial funding is furnished by the Department of Labor.

When the initial enrollment is completed in late April, there will be 65 families, each with an average of 4.5 children; 10 "solo" parents, each with one or two children; and 150 single persons, 75 men and 75 women, living in what was Base housing adjacent to the city of Roswell.

The adults -- usually both husband and wife -- will take vocational training in a field of their choice. They will receive basic educational training reading, writing, math -- related to their job training, plus family life and social skills training in fields such as home and money management, child care, community living, health care and food marketing.

Vocational course offerings include auto mechanics, small engine repair, welding, food processing, clerical skills, baking, nurse's aide work, and warehousing. For those who cannot drive, driver training will be offered. Courses will last from nine to 18 months.

Beyond the vocational instruction will be planned recreation and social activities. Nursery and pre-school care will be available for the young children while their older brothers and sisters attend the Roswell public schools.

Robert L. Bennett, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, said, "There has been an overwhelming response to this program from tribal leaders and members throughout the Southwest. We anticipate there will be far more applications for training than opportunities available. "

He noted that the "family residential training concept is a recent innovation developed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and it is possible that it can be used to help other disadvantaged groups."

"Community leaders in Roswell are also enthusiastic about this project and have assured us of their full support," Bennett said.

A similar program is being operated under a Bureau contract by the Philco Ford Corp. at Madera, Calif.