

Coalition of Texans with Disabilities Newsletter



June/July 1992

COUNTDOWN ADA: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

By Belinda Carlton, CTD Director

"Not with a bang, but a whimper." These are words from a poem whose title and author are long lost in my memory, but they best describe what I am feeling about the Americans with Disabilities Act. January 26, 1992, the deadline for compliance with Title II -- Activities of local and state governments has come and gone. Most state and local governments have taken no action, and I believe many local governments are still in the dark about ADA. January 26 was the compliance date for Title III -- Public accommodations operated by private entities. For-profit "experts" have been busily training plenty of lawyers and businesses on least possible compliance with the ADA under Title III. Some businesses have made an effort to comply, some have completely ignored the ADA and some have made a mess (I have seen out of code "handicapped" parking spaces painted on the concrete without a curb cut or ramp). Extremely high-priced "experts" are spewing forth fears and myths on Title I -- Employment. The media continues to do a poor job and only aids the misinformation.

As a disability community we were not ready for the ADA. Out across Texas,

however, I know individuals and organizations are taking action to bring about the promise of ADA --- but we're not communicating with each other. This dilemma is why we formed a Coalition -- to share knowledge and strategy and to increase the power and rights of Texans with disabilities. "Information is power only when it is shared between all the parties who have the ability to effect change." (another one of my lost authors) We must share our successes and failures on implementing ADA or society may well remember ADA, not as a bang, but a whimper.

Next month CTD, but only with your help, we will publish the first issue of the ADA Telegraph. The Telegraph will be a forum for exchange of information on ADA. Call, write or fax us your ADA. Tell us:

- Are you qualified to do and/or doing do site assessments and/or evaluations?
- What training have you taken?

ADA UPDATES

- Are you providing training to consumers or businesses?
- When, where, how often, did you have a good turnout?
- Have you developed a training curriculum?
- Are you are doing ADA evaluations or assessments for businesses or governmental entities?
- Are you charging a fee? How much?

Send us your local stories of ADA strategies or information you receive from across the nation. We would like to know the most frequently asked questions you receive regarding the ADA and the answers you gave. We will also pose your questions in the Telegraph for reader response.

The ADA Self-Evaluation Guide being distributed by the Governor's Committee lists CTD as a resource for the state. We must have your help to become that resource. CTD is on "every" publication in this state as a source for the names of people with disabilities in their local town who can help them with ADA.

Send information for the Telegraph to CTD by mail or fax to 512/478-3370.

WITNESSES URGE CONGRESS TO AMEND REHABILITATION ACT TO REFLECT THE ADA

The 1973 Rehabilitation Act needs to be updated to reflect the ADA, witnesses testified February 20 at hearings before the House Subcommittee on Select Education. The need for personal assistance services, consumer empowerment and research that focuses on helping people with disabilities should be guaranteed by the Rehabilitation Act, they said.

Without changes in the Rehabilitation Act, the ADA will be meaningless to many people with disabilities, witnesses told the panel. The ADA "will have little meaning to persons with disabilities who are unable to get out of bed or dressed without assistance to take advantage of their rights," said Sandra Swift Parrino, chair of the National Council on Disability.

It is recommended that the definition of personal assistance services be added to the Rehabilitation Act. Robert Williams of the United Cerebral Palsy Associations Inc. suggested providing federal funding for personal assistance services if the services are "designed to increase the individual's control in life and minimize reliance on others in making decisions and performing everyday activities on or off the job."

EEOC SAYS IT SEEKS CANDOR, NOT AMMUNITION, FROM ADA QUESTIONS

The EEOC, seeking candid questions from employers unsure about their duties under the ADA will not use information it receives through employer inquiries to launch investigations, the commission said January 27.

Employers who seek information or assistance from EEOC will not be subject to

inquiries. The commission believes that the majority of employers wish to comply voluntarily with the ADA, and will do so if guidance and technical assistance are provided.

The ADA compliance manual provides an overview of the law and lists names, addresses and telephone numbers of federal, state, local and non-governmental agencies that assist employers in fulfilling their duties under the ADA. The guide also includes copies of the statute and federal regulations that have resulted from the law.

The manual will be updated periodically as the commission develops more guidelines for compliance. Copies of the manual and other ADA materials are available from EEOC, Office of Communications and Legislative Affairs, 1801 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20507; 9800) 669-EEOC. To obtain copies of the manual in large print, audiotape, or in Braille, call (202) 663-4395 or (202) 663-4398.

CLASS ACTION SUIT FILED IN NEW YORK UNDER THE ADA

A class action suit against the city of New York was filed February 25, under the ADA. The suit, believed to be the first since the passage of the act, has been brought on behalf of the 200,000 hearing impaired residents of New York City.

The complaint states that equal access to the city's 911 Emergency System is required by the ADA and that the city has failed to adapt its system for hearing impaired people using the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD).

BUSH SEEKS \$197 MILLION FOR ADA ENFORCEMENT

President Bush proposed a \$242.8 million budget for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for fiscal year 1993. If Congress approves the request, EEOC's budget would be increased by \$32.2 million from fiscal year 1992. \$197.9 million of EEOC's funds would be earmarked for enforcement of fair employment laws, including the ADA. Congress appropriated \$168.9 million for enforcement activities in 1992.

TRANSIT AGENCIES TRY TO COPE WITH DEADLINE FOR ADA PLANS

The deadline has passed for transit agencies to submit plans for compliance with the ADA to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Now the five-year countdown begins for the agencies to be in full compliance. Some agencies planned well, while others are still trying to figure out where they will get the money for accessible buses, subway stations and paratransit service.

In New York alone, about \$230 million out of the planned total of \$500 million will be spent to make 460 subway stations accessible to riders who are blind or use wheelchairs. Transit agencies that did not file ADA compliance plans could suffer severe consequences, according to a FTA spokesman. "They stand a chance of no longer being eligible for federal transit assistance," he said.

The only way to avoid compliance is for transit agencies to qualify for a waiver of the regulations. So far, however, no waivers have been granted.

If you are interested in information on ADA compliance or waivers, call FTA's Richard Center at (202) 366-4043.

CTD TRAINS LEADERS ON ADA -- MOVES INTO STATEWIDE ADA IMPLEMENTATION CAMPAIGN

In mid-February, CTD provided a three day comprehensive training on ADA to 24 leaders from eight cities in Texas. CTD leaders were chosen by the CTD Board of Directors and had all expenses paid through funding received from Southwestern Bell Telephone Corporation and the Texas Institute for Rehabilitation Research (TIRR). Trainers Liz Savage and Chris Palames came down to Texas from the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) in Washington, D.C.

Training these leaders was the first component on a statewide ADA Implementation Campaign adopted by the CTD Board of Directors in January. The goal of the campaign is to bring about a statewide, coordinated effort to implement ADA.

Phase 2 of the ADA Implementation Campaign is for these 24 leaders to provide at least three ADA trainings in their respective cities and surrounding areas for people with disabilities by the end of this year.

Each trainee signed a commitment letter with CTD. In addition to providing three trainings, these leaders committed themselves to participate in the CTD ADA Implementation Campaign by organizing local ADA Actions in conjunction with CTD board members. The ADA Actions will be aimed at bringing about compliance in public accommodations and governmental bodies. Actions may be as simple as providing technical assistance or site assessments or as complex as organizing a formal action to persuade a flagrant violator to comply. Finally, these 24 leaders are available for technical assistance to anyone in their communities.

The commitment made by these individuals is significant and exciting. If you are interested in ADA training and becoming part of the ADA Implementation Campaign, call one of these leaders in your area. There are many parts of the state not represented so please let us know if you have ADA training and want to get involved with the Campaign. The leaders trained by CTD are:

CTD ADA "TRAIN THE TRAINERS"

Darlene Ballard

7342 Corian Park Dr.
San Antonio, TX 78249
Tx. Assoc. for the Deaf (TAD)
Texas Deaf/Blind Association
(TDBA)
Bexar Co. Deaf Council
(BCDC)
512691-1193 691-3311

Judy Wingard-Westbrook

1804 Corona
Austin, TX 78723
United Cerebral Palsy Assoc.
(UCPA)
CTD President-Elect
512928-2858 467-0744

Mary Dees

2312 Rogge Lane
Austin, TX 78723
Mental Health Consumers
Association
(MHCA)
CTD Board Member
512454-3706

Bill Hoover

316 W 12th St. S.405
Austin, TX 78701
CTD Staff
Personal Attendant Services
Task Force
Project Coordinator
512478-3366

Tony McGregor

4017 Greystone
Austin, TX 78731
Texas Assoc. for the Deaf
(TAD)
512471-4496 x304 (TDD Only)

Margarite Brooks

11604 Cross Timber
Austin, TX 78723
CTD
512258-3901

Laura Brown
316 W 12th St. S 405
Austin, TX 78701
CTD Staff: Texas Disability
Rights Network
Community Organizer
512\478-3366

Belinda Carlton
316 W 12th St. S 405
Austin, TX 78701
CTD Staff: Director
512\478-3366

Cathy Regalado
316 W 12th St. S 405
Austin, TX 78701
CTD Staff: Administrator
512\478-3366

Jim Webb
4514 Englewood Ave.
Lubbock, TX 79414
Lifetime Independence For
Everyone (LIFE)
806-762-4363
806-795-5433

Joe Fish
3608 S. Washington
Amarillo, Texas
Panhandle Action Center for
Independent Living Services
(PACILS)
806\352-1500 352-8630

David Vanderhee
P.O. Box 5035
McAllen, TX 78502
Valley Area Independent Living
(VAIL)
1-800-880-7733

Dolores and Marc Salazar
2831 Taylor
El Paso, TX 79930
Grupo Dignidad Igualdad
Oportunidad
(Grupo DIO)
915\566-4319
915\566-4319 (Marc)

Chris Mlynek
1821 Santa Anna
San Antonio, TX 78201
CTD Board Member
BCDC
Southwest Center for Hearing
Impaired
512\734-5850 (home)
512\699-3311 (work)

Mary Amos
8929 Viscount #239
El Paso, TX 79925
West Texas Assoc. of People
with Disabilities (WTAPD)
CTD Board Member
915\593-1097

Patricia Gates
5431 South Acres Drive
Houston, TX 77048
CTD
People Against Violent Crime
713\738-1854

Leticia Talamantez
P.O. Box 18212
San Antonio, TX 78218
CTD
CTD Board Member
American Council of the Blind
(ACBT)
512\337-3532

Dave Cullum
791 Bateswood, #309
Houston, TX 77079
CTD Board Member
Texas Paralyzed Vets Assoc.
(TPVA)
713\558-9361

Susan DeVault
8900 Glencrest Apt 7261
Houston, TX 77061
Center for Barrier Free Living
(CBFL)
713\643-1412

Tom Pugh
1918 D Lake Omega St.
El Paso, TX
West Texas Association of
People with Disabilities
915\857-3670

Linda Miller
5305 Bright Star Trail
Arlington, TX 76017
Handicapped Resources
Association
817\561-1484

Susan MacAnnelly
2606 Peppermill Run
San Antonio, TX 78231
CTD
Texas Disability Rights Network
Volunteer Leader
512\493-9850

Stephanie Thomas
1339 Lamar Sq. Dr. #B
Austin, Texas 78704
ADAPT
512/442-0252

CTD'S PERSONAL ATTENDANT SERVICES TASK FORCE KICKS INTO ACTION

My name is William Hoover and I am the new Project Coordinator for CTD's Personal Attendant Services Task Force (PASTF), formerly the Attendant Services Task Force. I am a quadriplegic as the result of a motorcycle accident in 1981. In December of 1991 I graduated from the University of Texas at San Antonio with a Master of Public Administration Degree.

I was hired by CTD in January of 1992 and moved from San Antonio to Austin in February. My first official day of work was February the third. Since starting work for the PASTF I have been busy attending meetings, meeting the major players, becoming familiar with key personal attendant service issues, and unscrambling the multitude of acronyms for the various agencies involved in Personal Attendant Services.

Accomplishments

Last year was very productive for the PASTF. As you may have noticed, the Task Force underwent a name change from Attendant Services Task Force, to Personal Attendant Services Task Force or PASTF. One of the most notable accomplishments of the Task Force, for me anyway, was the acquisition of a grant from the Texas Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities funded by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission which created my position to provide administrative support to the PASTF. Indeed, until recently, the PASTF was an all volunteer effort.

The PASTF had six very successful meetings last year. In addition, the Task Force co-sponsored a workshop on Personal Assistance Services with UCP-Tx and DATCIL and actively participated in numerous work groups being held at DHS aimed at developing better attendant services. Three outreach meetings were also conducted by the Task Force in El Paso, San Antonio, and Houston. We have also been an active participant in the Texas Respite Resource Network Task Force. An informational Handbook titled *Attendant Services in Texas: An*

Overview was also developed by the Task Force last year.

The PAS Task Force was instrumental in securing the passage of SR 887. SR 887 puts the guiding principles of attendant services into legislation. We also participated in the development of the DHS Community Services position statement and the DHS Community Impact statement.

The Task Force was an active participant in the drive to close State Schools for the mentally retarded and we worked with the DD council to develop a plan to fund a training program for people with developmental disabilities to become personal attendants. Most recently, we participated in the new TRC initiative to have clients of TRC trained by Independent Living Centers to be personal care attendants.

Goals

Our plans are just as ambitious for this year. Indeed, in 1992 the Personal Attendant Services Task Force plans to work with the legislature and the Texas Department of Human Services and the Texas Rehabilitation Commission to bring about increased attendant services. In view of the projected budget shortfall for the state of Texas and its programs, the PASTF must do all it can to protect the gains we have made in increasing the availability of attendant services. Accordingly, we will be seeking committed individuals to be contacts in our Personal Attendant Services Alert Network. To get involved contact the CTD office in Austin at 512-478-3366.

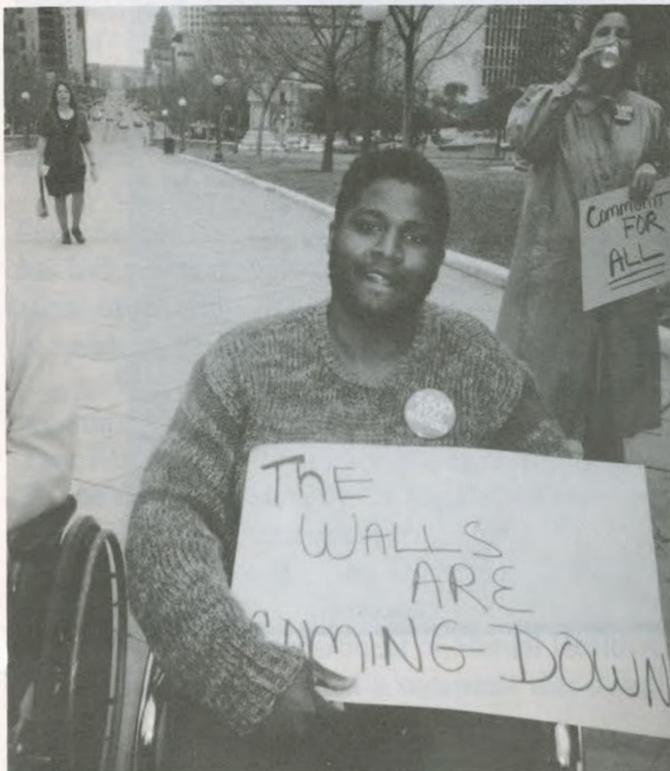
The Task Force is also committed to holding at least two PASTF meetings in cities outside of Austin. **We will also**

conduct a statewide conference regarding topical Personal Attendant Service issues, November 19-20 in Houston.

We are currently in the process of producing a study on the recruitment, training, and retention of personal care attendants. In addition to these activities the PASTF will continue to put out monthly alerts, bi-monthly bulletins, and a quarterly newsletter to keep members informed of the activities of the Task Force.

This will be an active year for disability issues because of the increased awareness generated by the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA), the fact that this is a presidential election year, and because of the recent proposals for national health care reform. Accordingly, there is a lot of challenging work to be done by the PASTF.

I look forward to working with the members of CTD and striving to accomplish the goals of the PASTF. Please join us at the Task Force meetings which will be held in Austin at the DHS Public Hearing room, 701 West 51st Street from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. The meeting dates are on Tuesdays May the 26th, July the 14th, and September the 8th. Together, with organization and commitment, we can be instrumental in increasing the delivery of personal attendant services in the state of Texas.



JERRY LEWIS AND MDA GROUP AFTER EVAN KEMP'S JOB

MDA spokesperson, Jerry Lewis, has complained to President Bush about statements made by Evan Kemp, Chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, who has publicly criticized MDA for using the "pity" approach to appeal for funds. Lewis said in his letter that Kemp was "misusing the power of his governmental office" by making anti-MDA statements.

The latest attack from Jerry Lewis came May 22, in the form of a press release by the Task Force on Public Awareness, a volunteer group of people served by the Muscular Dystrophy Association, who voted unanimously to oppose the reappointment of Evan Kemp. The group states, "Mr. Kemp's attacks are having a divisive effect on the civil rights movement of physically challenged individuals."

Throughout his career, Kemp, who has muscular dystrophy, has opposed the portrayal of disabled people as helpless or childlike, a consistent theme of the MDA telethon. Mr. Kemp has remained extremely professional during this controversy and his statements reflect the spirit of the ADA.

The board of directors of CTD took a position on March 28 in support of Evan Kemp in his opposition to Jerry Lewis and the MDA telethon's technique for fund raising and their portrayal of people with disabilities. The position states, "The MDA position reinforces the old attitudinal barriers that keep people with disabilities from joining the mainstream of society. We find MDA's position an antithesis to the philosophy of the Americans with Disability Act."

The pressure is currently on Bush to force Evan from the job. CTD urges you to take a position on this issue and let President Bush and your Congressperson know if you "AIN'T JERRY'S KID."

ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS PROGRAM APPOINTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The State Architectural Barriers Program recently appointed the ten member Elimination of Architectural Barriers Advisory Committee. The Committee, which must include at least 51% of people with disabilities, was established under House Bill 39 which considerably strengthened our state architectural barriers law. The Committee will undoubtedly play a vital role in the future strength and compliance of architectural barriers laws in Texas. If you have questions or would like to make a recommendation, contact the following members:

Elimination of Architectural Barriers Advisory Committee

William L. Adling

2529 74th Street
Lubbock, Texas 79423
Office (806) 748-0880
FAX (806) 795-4565

Jerry W. Allen, P.E.

4412 Perry
Ft. Worth, Texas 76133
Office (817) 335-2611
FAX (817) 877-5646

Donald R. Eubanks

2108 Firestone Drive
League City, Texas 77573
Office (713) 332-6344
FAX (713) 338-6625

Joyce Frieden

3634 North Braeswood
Houston, Texas 77025
Home (713) 666-9482

Lewis Sherman Harper

1 Courtney Place # 503
Big Spring, Texas 79720
Office (915) 264-3700

Anne Jackson Kinkel

2924 Meadowbrook Drive
Fort Worth, Texas 76103
Office (817) 335-3000
FAX (817) 335-1025

Lisa Dianne Krepps

3804 Jasper Drive
Horizon city, Texas 79927
Office (915) 544-3399
FAX (915) 593-1096

Miriam J. Partridge

5115 Hialeah Drive
Houston, Texas 77092
Office (713) 956-1539

John Robinson, Jr. AIA

4026 Tealwood Drive
Austin, Texas 78731
Office (512) 452-7220
FAX (512) 452-7273

GOVERNOR APPROVES CLOSURE OF TRAVIS AND FT.WORTH STATE SCHOOLS

On Tuesday March 31, 1992, Governor Ann Richards approved closure of Travis and Ft.Worth State Schools but decided not to close Mexia State School, basing her decision on the impact such closure would have on the economy of the Mexia School community.

Citizens of Mexia organized a caravan to the city of Austin to rally against the school's closure. An estimated 4,000 Mexia residents attended.

"We cannot in good conscience destroy a town and adversely affect the lives of its 7,000 good men and women," the Governor said. Of the over 6,000 jobs in Mexia, 1,800 are at the Mexia State School.

The Faculty Review Task Force had recommended that Travis and Mexia institutions be closed as part of a settlement agreement to end a long-running lawsuit against state schools for mentally retarded people.

Closure of Fort Worth and Travis State Schools would mark the first ever elimination of public institutions run by MHMR. Texas would be the 23rd state to close or recommend closure of large institutions for people with mental retardation.

Travis State School has 600 retarded residents and 1,300 employees. Fort Worth State School has 350 retarded residents and 1,040 employees. Mexia State School, the largest retardation institution in Texas, has 735 residents and employs 1,800 people.

Of the 13 state schools in Texas, Fort Worth State School has the highest cost per resident and has had the worst history of questionable deaths and abuse of residents. It also has the highest percentage of residents recommended for community homes.

When the Governor refused to accept the recommendation to close Mexia State School, the Task Force reconvened on Tuesday morning, March 31, the deadline issued by the legislature, and issued a substitute recommendation to close Ft. Worth State School instead. The Governor accepted the recommendation that afternoon.

The Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation issued a statement that it will

proceed as quickly as possible on closure and they hope to be able to meet the 1995 deadline for closure of Ft. Worth State School. Travis State School is slated for full closure by 1999.

Governor Richards wants to convert both the Fort Worth and Travis schools into drug rehabilitation centers for state prisoners.

Proponents will continue to fight the closures and we can expect a battle during the next regular legislative session beginning in January, 1993. If the Governor calls a special session on public school funding this summer, is anticipated the state school closure issue will be on the agenda.

The disability community must continue to keep a vigilant eye on this issue. This is the farthest down the road we have come in the past fourteen years of attempts to close our "warehouses" for people with mental retardation.

We must also pause and applaud each and every individual and organization who brought us this far, but the most important thing we must do today is write Governor Richards and thank her. ON July 16, 1991, the Governor issued a statement promising to support legislation to consolidate from 13 to 11 the number of state schools and to begin the process of changing funding and delivery patterns to focus on community based services. She is delivering on her promises. We will need her support again and again and again on the issues of community based services for Texans with disabilities.

The Honorable Ann Richards
Governor of Texas
Room 200, State Capitol
Austin, Texas 78701
1-800-HELP TEX

AROUND THE STATE

TEXAS DISABILITY RIGHTS NETWORK GOES INTO ACTION

San Antonio:

The Texas Disability Rights Network of CTD has moved forward rapidly in San Antonio. The goals of training leadership, developing a committed organizing team, selecting an issue, and working toward a large group meeting with decision makers or "action" have all been met in the past 6 months. On January 12-13, consultant Jim Dickson conducted a two-day training for leaders in San Antonio on the basics of power and how to organize for change. Basic principles of mutual accountability, starting/ending on time, and responsibility were adopted. Additional leadership training sessions will be conducted this summer.

Four key issues and several others were identified in a March 10th meeting with 36 individuals in San Antonio. Key issues identified included: 1) Accessibility of the Alamodome; 2) a media campaign; 3) an ADA campaign; and 4) civil rights denied people with disabilities who are jailed. The denial of civil rights to people with disabilities in Bexar County jails was overwhelmingly chosen as the issue the group would actively pursue. The issue was spurred by a story of a deaf man who was arrested and kept in the Bexar County jail for 12 days without the benefit of an interpreter.

A research team and a logistics team were formed to identify decision makers, the objectives of an action (demands), and how the bigger problem could be broken down into smaller, winnable actions. The broad package, decided upon at a large group

meeting on April 27, included the following demands: 1) physical access at the jail; 2) interpreter services (booking and interviews/interrogations); 3) a TDD available to inmates; and 4) cross-disability sensitivity training.

Decision makers identified were Sheriff Harlon Copeland and Chief County Jail Administrator Tom Barry. Because this is an election year, Mr. Ralph Lopez, Democratic candidate for Sheriff was identified as another potential key player. Both Lopez and Copeland were asked to attend a "candidates forum" to respond to the demands of the TDRN and disability community on June 13. Because of the County Commissioners Court's power to approve funding for the Bexar County jail budget, we requested the presence of Judge Longoria, who presides over the court.

The action, which had been scheduled for June 13th, was cancelled because new developments resulted in a change of direction. A strong directive issued internally at the jail requires all officers in booking and interviews to adhere to Federal law and to a contract with the Bexar County Deaf Council to provide interpreters. We feel that the pressure exerted on jail officials by members of the TDRN and Bexar County Deaf Council resulted in this directive. Bexar County Deaf Council confirms that, so far, the jail is calling for interpreters as needed. We will continue to closely monitor the situation.

This positive step is an exciting

accomplishment!

On June 16, options on our next step were discussed in a group meeting. It was the consensus of the group that the best way to secure our remaining demands (TDD access, sensitivity training, and physical access) was to send a smaller negotiating team to the jail. We hope that a written commitment we have received from Democratic candidate for Sheriff, Ralph Lopez, to ensure civil rights of persons with disabilities arrested and booked- if elected- will provide increased leverage.

The long-range goal of the Texas Disability Rights Network Project is to build local cross-disability power bases across the state. Ultimately, our strength lies in our ability to produce large numbers of people with disabilities to meetings with decision makers.

MEMBERS STOP FARE INCREASES ON SAN ANTONIO TRANSIT SYSTEM

CTD Board members Chris Mlynek and Leticia Telemantez, along with numerous CTD members, joined more than fifty members of the disability community in San Antonio to protest plans to increase fares and impose new eligibility criteria for people with disabilities who ride VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority, San Antonio's transit system.

Sounding the theme "Strength in Unity" disability advocacy groups expressed their concerns at a VIA Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, February 25. As a result, any proposal to increase fares will be tabled until an efficiency study of bus operations is conducted. Also, members of the disability community were able to help put a freeze on rider eligibility and service area until guidelines mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act can be

interpreted.

The VIA Board also agreed to establish a six member policy-making committee consisting of three VIA Board members and three members from a citizen's advisory committee. This committee would meet at least once each month to discuss issues pertaining to services for persons with disabilities. Consumer input would be solicited on all relevant issues.

BUYERS BEWARE: LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE

One of the latest insurance rip-offs consumers should guard against is long-term insurance, a type of coverage that claims to pay for items not covered by Medicare. In theory, long-term care insurance covers nursing home or in-home care for periods of more than 12 months.

Like other forms of "Medigap" insurance, however, long-term insurance leaves many elderly and consumers with disabilities footing the bill for costs they expected were covered. Fine print restrictions exclude just the kind of care consumers thought they were buying. In addition, the value of policies are not adjusted for inflation, let alone for double digit increases in health care costs that have been the norm in recent years.

In January, Texas' Office of Public Insurance Counsel (OPIC) proposed to strengthen rules on long-term care insurance. The Texas Department of Insurance has also been directed to develop uniform benefit packages similar to the Medicare supplement structure so that consumers can more easily understand their policy options.

Until these regulations are imposed and thoroughly reviewed, the safest way to protect yourself from this insurance is not to buy it.

NATIONAL BRIEFS

FLORIDA, WASHINGTON RULINGS CALL TRANSSEXUALISM "HANDICAP"

A Florida human rights commission and a Washington state court ruled last month that employers illegally discriminated on the basis of disability when they fired male workers for dressing as women.

The Florida Commission on Human Rights on February 21 ruled that the Jacksonville sheriff's department violated the state's civil rights law when it dismissed a male jail guard for dressing like a woman. The commission's action followed a Washington appeals court decision February 10 that the Boeing Company violated that state's rights act when it fired a worker because of his dress.

"Transsexualism is a recognized disorder, and, in my opinion. . . we have to find it's a handicap," Commissioner Judith Kavanaugh said in a statement quoted by the Associated Press. The ADA specifically excludes transsexualism.

DEMOCRATS, SSA COMMISSIONER ARGUE OVER WHETHER SSA NEEDS MORE MONEY

Social Security Commissioner Gwendolyn King and House Democrats debated March 5 whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) needs more money and staff. House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security Chairman Andrew Jacobs (D-Ind.) observed that much "human energy is wasted in pretending the obvious is not true" -- that SSA is short of personnel.

Subcommittee members pointed out that SSA has reduced its staff 20 percent over the past seven years. The reduction in staff has been accompanied by growing backlogs of disability cases and a sharp increase in SSA telephone busy signals.

Rep. J.J. Pickle (D-Texas) said the

projected 70 percent increase in disability cases being filed with SSA would increase the current backlog from 800,000 cases to 1.4 million by the end of 1993. As a result, disabled Americans would have to wait seven months, rather than the current three months, to receive an initial decision on an application. King said the contingency funds would be used to reduce the 800,000-case backlog.

HEALTH CARE ACCESS DENIED TO MANY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, REPORT SAYS

Of the nearly 43 million Americans lacking access to primary health care, 10.1 million -- or 24 percent -- are disabled or elderly Medicare beneficiaries, according to a report released February 27. Lives in Balance: A National, State and County Profile of America's Medically Underserved, which provides a county-by-county ranking of Americans' health status, was prepared by the National Association of Community Health Centers. Contact: Stephen Gaskill, (202) 638-2121.

SENATE APPROVES BILL THAT WOULD ESTABLISH ASSISTIVE MONKEY PILOT PROGRAM FOR VETS

The Senate March 11 approved legislation, by a unanimous consent agreement, that would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish a four-year pilot program to furnish assistive monkeys to quadriplegic veterans with service-connected disabilities.

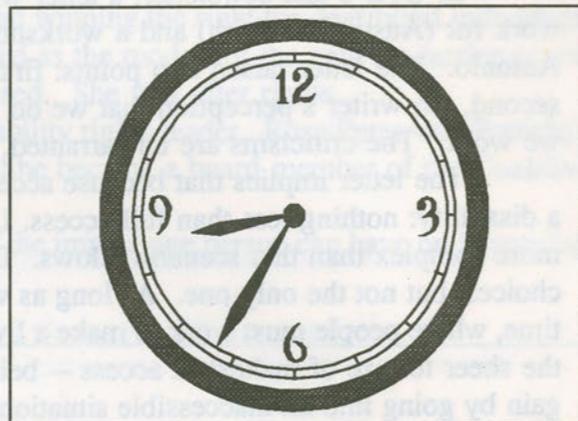
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THE 1992 ANNUAL CONFERENCE "TOWARD INDEPENDENCE" (SPINA BIFIDA ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA)

June 17 - 19 in Dallas, Texas
Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion

ARC/TEXAS 1992 ANNUAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE

June 19/20 in Dallas, Texas
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Westin Galleria Hotel Dallas



ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION ON MENTAL RETARDATION

June 30 - July 3
"Perspectives of Change -- Examining the Past/Exploring the Future"
Marriott Hotel, Corpus Christi

For more information, contact: Scott Barto, TAMR Program Chair
c/o Interface Management Associates
6300 La Calma Drive, Suite 410
Austin, Texas 78752
(512) 451-5212

THE FIFTH STATEWIDE CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION OF THE DEAF

August 12 - 14
Stouffer Hotel
Austin, Texas

For more information, contact: David Ramirez or Paula Archer
Texas Education Agency
Services for the Deaf
4241 Piedras Drive East, #181
San Antonio, Texas 78228-1422
(512) 735-1214

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In CTD's last newsletter, a letter written by Stephanie Thomas of ADAPT criticized the organization I work for (Austin Interfaith) and a workshop conducted on organizing and power at CTD's convention in San Antonio. The letter raised two points: first, that Interfaith does not refuse to work in inaccessible churches, and second, the writer's perception that we do not organize to change the accessibility of the churches with which we work. The criticisms are unwarranted.

The letter implies that because access is a civil right, there is only one correct option for a person with a disability: nothing less than full access. I do not agree. Disabled people are multi-dimensional; our lives are more complex than that scenario allows. Disability is one of the most important characteristics that shape our choices, but not the only one. As long as we live in a world where access is not guaranteed 100 percent of the time, where people must work to make a living, the reality of everyday life forces disabled individuals to weigh the sheer torture of makeshift access -- being carried, lifted, read to, written to -- against whatever benefits we gain by going into an inaccessible situation. For example, ADAPT occasionally chooses to crawl into meeting rooms because it judges the long-term benefit of such a dramatic protest to be worth the temporary break with principle. Similarly, I have chosen to work with churches that are not covered by access laws because I judge that I will gain more through the experience than I will lose.

More important, I believe the work of Austin Interfaith (some of which must regrettably occur in inaccessible places) will in the long run give people who have been denied power -- including people with disabilities -- the ability to control their lives. That is what both Stephanie Thomas and I are working to bring about. Austin Interfaith's goal, and that of its parent, the Industrial Areas Foundation, is to empower people to participate in the political decisions that affect their lives and families, their neighborhoods and schools, and their communities. The methods IAF uses (which I was teaching at the CTD convention) have been proven over the years and all around the country to be effective in empowering citizens and getting reluctant governments to redress injustices. Our priorities are set by the member congregations, not by our organizers like me. When members, disabled or otherwise, of our congregations choose to make access a priority issues, as an organizer, I will be in a position to help make that happen -- but only because I have been carried up and down a lot of stairs beforehand.

Refusing to enter any place that is not fully accessible is a false option for people with disabilities who must live and work in a society that has not required full access of all buildings, homes, and businesses. Disabled people must make choices every day about access and living life: whether to attend a housewarming party for friends who live upstairs. . . whether to get a second opinion from a respected physician who has not made her office accessible. . . or whether to work in a job where full access is not possible or at least not currently available. The disability movement strives to give people with disabilities the right to make their own choices, and sometimes we chose to put our other interests before access. This is not to say that disabled people and their allies should not speak out against inaccessibility and organize to change it whenever faced with such injustice. Before joining Interfaith, I directed CTD, marched on Washington for ADA, and fought for improved access on the UT-Austin campus. I still believe and work for the goal of universal access, but perhaps Ms. Thomas and I differ on some strategies for achieving that goal. By empowering people, Austin Interfaith is advancing that goal in ways different from ADAPT -- but no less valuable.

Carole Patterson, Organizer
Austin Interfaith

Patterson was executive director of CTD from 1989 - 1991.

THE POWER OF ONE LOST

Do you remember an article awhile back in Disability Rag, entitled, "The Power of One?" Rosa Perea, a longtime deaf/blind activist, was an illustration of the power of one to change the system. She was willing to take on anything and always looked beyond her self-interest to the broader issue. Many of you will remember Rosa for challenging Southwest Airlines in a lawsuit and winning the right for deaf/blind individuals to fly independently on their airlines. The court decision was used as the model for the new air carrier access regulations. Rosa could have won damages in this suit, but refused. She was after rights.

On February 27, 1992, we lost this tireless and selfless disability rights leader. Rosa Perea was President of the Texas Deaf/Blind Association from 1987 until her death. She became a board member of the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities this past November.

We salute your efforts Rosa and regard you as a symbol of the impact one person can have on improving society for all people. Rosa, you will truly be missed.

THANK YOU CTD SUPPORTERS! October 1991 - May 1992

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FAX 512/593-1096

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(work) 512/472-0105

Gene Brooks, 11604 Timber Cross

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