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Service

Handicapped Resource
Association of Texas
December/January 1996



the resource

Educating, advocating, and empowering adults with disabilities

A Newsletter Sponsored by Arlington Hardware

A Look at The Year 1995

April to December of 1995 was a time of redirection and continuous activity for HRA. We hired a new Executive Director and launched an examination of HRA's mission and programs. In the end, together we developed a clear Board vision of program and management priorities.

Here are some of the year's highlights. We:

- positioned the agency with potential funding sources and aggressively went after projects that were in keeping with our mission
- identified and moved into quality housing for the Arlington office and accomplished a similar move in October for the Dallas office
- explored six proposals for employment benefits; health insurance is still beyond the financial capability of the agency
- devised plans, made purchases, and contracted with technical and training resources for implementation of Phase One of automation in September. Six workstations were in place and training was complete by December 1, 1995
- put in place a trial training program for Attendants based on quarterly education to enhance their role and performance as well as income. Twenty-six enrolled. Entry wage increased from \$4.45 to \$5.00
- partnered with corporate friends and the Arlington Mayor to position HRA with Arlington leaders at a breakfast sponsored by Whataburger
- offered the agency as a facilitator for projects to benefit adults with disability
- professionalized the HRA newsletter by contracting with an editor devoted exclusively to its production; made possible through support from Arlington Hardware
- held an annual meeting preceded by an evening gala fund-raiser honoring previous directors
- added one consumer of HRA services to the Board of Directors

Whew! With this kind of inertia, we are positioned for even greater strides in 1996! We are now better prepared than ever to serve our clients, present and future...

DFW Classic Under Way

Plans for the 4th Annual DFW Classic Car Show are under way! Committee members are **Jim Person, Dave Davis, Carey Glenn, Nellie Harrell, Melinda Havran and Rosalie Wells**. This year's Show Director **Frank Ibarra** has set initial plans in

motion and finalized a contract with Marketing Director **Bob Callas, who was 1994's Show Director**. The DFW Classic has grown over the past four years to become an important source of funding for HRA and Great Southwest Rotary Club. (Last year, the

Club became the formal sponsor of the Show). The idea was born around a kitchen table, where **John Dycus and Dick Brink** brainstormed about fundraising possibilities for HRA. They dreamed that by HRA's 20th Anniversary in 1997, the DFW Classic would gain national status and feature some of the finest cars in the country. As this year's show promises to exceed 200 cars and to attract many of Texas' most knowledgeable car collectors, their dream may become reality.

The show is scheduled for July at the Ballpark in Arlington. If you'd like to enter your car, purchase booth space or volunteer, call **Frank Ibarra** or **Bob Callas** at metro (214) 814-0833 (voice mail and pager).

Bob Callas of Arendale Ford has agreed to donate \$50 to HRA for any new Ford sold by him before the show. Arendale will match this gift to make a \$100 donation to the organization.

WITHIN OUR PAGES

David Gentry in Argentina
Entitlements for Ad Valorem Taxes
American Airlines on Travel
for the Disabled
Ted Kennedy, Jr. Speaks on Travel
New Special Family Magazine
Just When You Thought it was Safe
(the perils of the electric
wheelchair)
Donor Corner

Dinner Spread by Big Six

When most people plan their holiday parties, they call a caterer. But when HRA needed to provide food for a special Winter Party to honor its Attendant staff, it only had to look as far as **Fielder Road Baptist Church**. Members of the Adult Six Early & Late Departments (referring to organizers of the church's two services and Sunday school classes), led by **Catherine Durbin**, prepared a delicious dinner with turkey and dressing, salads, vegetables, and desserts. No strangers to mass dinners, the Adult Six have been providing nighttime meals for the Arlington Night Shelter for the past eight years. They accepted HRA's invitation to help with the event because of their culinary expertise and efficiency cooking for large groups. Mrs. Durbin commented, "Rosalie Wells (HRA's Executive Director) came to visit us at the church one day and said, 'If only we had someone to prepare a holiday meal for our Attendants!' I thought to myself, 'I can do that.'" So she rounded up other members, including her husband **Arnold Durbin**, **Mary Alice and Gene Coats**, **Opal and Alton Daniels**, and **Jenny Lee Dycus**, to help. *Area caterers, no cause for alarm. The group has no plans to start a commercial business; they have their hands full with current projects.* HRA sends a Big Thank You to the Big Six!

Barnes & Noble Wrappers Wrap Right into the Season

Thanks to volunteers who were up to their elbows in scotch tape and green wrapping on December 14th and 24th! HRA was one of several local nonprofit organizations stationed at Barnes & Noble bookstore, providing free giftwrapping to B&N bookbuyers. Patrons were asked to give small donations for the service, and all revenue from the two days went to HRA. Our generous wrappers included HRA friends **Darlus Schoonover**, **Lois Lipman**, **Sharon Cox**, **Margie Honau**, **Louise Laine**, **Anita Garmon**, **Judy Beverly**, **Mary Ann McDaniel**, **Kate Johnson**, **Shiela Acosta**, **Cassandra Acosta**, **Olivia Acosta**, **Jan Fletcher**, **Lynn Brink**, **Phyllis Badgett**, **Rosalie Wells**, **Jody & Ken Newbauer**, **Mike Burgess**, and **Melinda Havran**. Thanks to all!

December Meeting Sets Tone for 1996

The frosty night of **December 28** brought the monthly meeting of the HRA Board of Directors! The meeting set in motion the first phase of HRA's board development program. The Board evaluated HRA's needs in terms of skills in its Board Members; evaluated interests of each member, and identified individuals to elect as new members. The Annual Report and Audit Report for 1994-1995 were presented.

David Gentry Returns from South America

In our last issue we reported that former Board President David Gentry was to undergo an experimental surgery to repair nerve damage to his spinal cord. The surgery was performed December 6 in a hospital outside of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and David is back!

He will begin physical therapy next week. David, whose injuries paralyzed him from the neck down fourteen years ago, now has some feeling in his shoulders, upper arms, and fingers. He has more muscle control and sensitivity in his upper arms, but is expected to begin seeing substantial results after about five months.

David had a positive experience in the Argentinian hospital with Dr. Carl Kao, who also practices in the U.S. Within a few days of his arrival David got a crash course in Spanish medical terms. "The first word I learned was 'pain,'" he says, soon followed by 'ice,' 'water' and a few other words important to life in the hospital. There were 24 hour telephone numbers he could call to contact English speakers in case of emergency, but David never needed them. (We actually believe he spent his time practicing phrases he learned before he left, such as "una cerveza por favor").

David is grateful to everyone who showed support during the ordeal. "Thank you for your prayers, for the cards, and thanks to everyone who saw me off at the airport. It was very much appreciated," he says.

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Legislative News

According to a new law passed this summer, you may be eligible to pay your ad valorem taxes on your residence homestead in quarterly installments. HB 1882, which went into effect on August 28th, allows those with disabilities the same provisions as for those 65 or older. The Property Tax Division of the Tarrant County Tax Assessor's office says that you may take advantage of this new law if you are eligible under section 1113 entitlement for the disabled. Simply take your tax statement and send one-fourth of the amount along with a letter stating that you wish to participate in the installment payment program for the disabled. You will not pay penalties or interest on your installments.

Tarrant County does not expect a great burden on schools and other organizations which benefit from full payment of ad valorem taxes. They say that in Tarrant County there are a total of 5,370 people with disability exemptions who could possibly apply for this provision - a small number in comparison with the 56,000 persons over 65 who already pay their taxes in this manner.

The Worst is Over

The worst is over for the 104th session of congress and workforce training consolidation. On October 11, the full Senate cast its vote on S. 143, the Kassenbaum Workforce Training Consolidation Bill.

The bill passed the Senate on a vote of 95-2. As hoped, it passed without drastically altering the vocational rehabilitation program. The bill appears to require some fairly minor changes in Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. These changes are expected to strengthen the links between Vocational Rehabilitation and the generic workforce training programs.

VR remains a distinct program, with its own dedicated funding. And, people with disabilities will continue to receive job training services from professional counselors who are well-versed in their specialized training needs. Texas Senators Phil Gramm and Kay Bailey Hutchison were included in the "aye" votes.

-Consumer News

Sandra Carroll

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Reaching Out to Special Families

exerpts from an article by Mary Jacobs, Dallas Morning News

In 1982, a CAT scan revealed that John Cimmerman's infant son was born with part of his brain missing. Doctors told the Cimmermans that Phillip would be severely retarded, unable to walk or talk, and that he suffered from cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and a hearing impairment. He wasn't expected to live past infancy.

Mr. Cimmerman had been in the full-time ministry, but had no real direction. Through Philip's tragedy, he used his faith to weather the experience and discover his niche in the ministry - serving disabled people and their families.

He and his family have launched a Christian magazine called *Special Family*, subtitled "Restoring Hope to Families with Special Needs." Plans call for bimonthly distribution to begin in January. The magazine is aimed at families with a disabled child, parent, or spouse, and blends practical information with a spiritual perspective. "We've seen the need for this publication," says Mr. Cimmerman. "People with a disabled family member feel so isolated." Many families are further isolated by the stereotypes, often well-intentioned, that surround the disabled. They urge churches to reach out to the disabled by providing needed facilities, such as wheelchair ramps, but also by simply treating people with disabilities as they would anyone else. For information about subscribing to *Special Family*, call (214) 256-8014.



Thank you to Cliff Jones at Pilgrim's Pride for providing - at cost - 120 -count 'em- PLUMP FROZEN CHICKENS for gifts to HRA Attendant staff! There wasn't a skinny yellow chicken in the bunch, and they went over fabulously! Now HRA attendants can have TWO chickens in every pot. Board member **Lynn Brink** expertly coordinated bird logistics.

An IBM workstation has been installed in the Dallas office, increasing the total number of HRA workstations to six!

Thanks, Board Vice President **Phyllis Badgett** for decorating our offices for the holidays! HRA friends **Sherian Lucas** and **Millie Price** donated decorations.

Welcome Judy Beverly, HRA's new Attendant Manager in the Dallas office! Judy has been in the North Texas area most of her life as a nursing home administrator. She ran nursing homes in Euless, Corsicana, and Waxahachie, and served as House Mother for Christ Haven Childrens Home for ten years. She is a single grandmother of three grandchildren, a ten-year-old and 16-month-old twins, and has a degree in Mental Health and Mental Retardation. "I'm thrilled to be with HRA," she says.

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Just When You Thought it Was Safe...

by Jim Talley, from *TechTracks*

Electric Wheelchairs were a leap of technology for people who needed a wheelchair. It allowed them to get around independently and it increased their scope of possibilities considerably. The original electric wheelchairs were relay operated and you could go slow or fast in any direction, but those were your only choices. A lot of furniture got rearranged with these first electric wheelchairs.

The next step in the electric wheelchair evaluation was the development of "proportional control". This was a big change because an electric wheelchair user now had fine control instead of jerky-jumpy movements. With this progress came problems. If the joystick got worn or dirty inside, the chair would sometimes make a full-speed turn to the left or right with no warning. Or, if you left it turned on, it would sometimes take off full speed backwards or forwards. Because of liability and safety concerns, all the major manufacturers went back to the laboratory. Using integrated circuit and computer chips they developed sensitive intelligent circuits to guard against these sudden episodes of loss of control.

They were successful. The chairs are now smart enough to anticipate most dangerous electrical anomalies, EXCEPT, there is now reason for concern that radio wave interference from sources such as cellular phones, CB radios, and strong radio frequency fields can interfere with the safety circuits. I guess the message is: Don't drive your electric wheelchair close to a cliff if you are talking on your cellular phone. Could this mean that wheelchair users are becoming YUPPIES?

Arlington Human Service Planners have chosen Rosalie Wells to chair its Aging and Disabled Service Group. The group seeks volunteers who have special interest in housing and transportation for these populations. If interested, call Ms. Wells at (817) 469-1977.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS PROFILE SERIES

"I joined HRA to help support the people who make a difference," says Aryn Merchant, our newest member and Treasurer of the Board of Directors. Merchant will concentrate his efforts mainly in educating the local community about the organization's programs. "Many people are unaware of the organization and the services it provides. I think HRA should be well-recognized in the metroplex. Celebration HRA was a wonderful first step in increasing awareness of HRA, and we need more programs like it." He hopes that events such as Celebration HRA and the DFW Classic will continue to enhance the organization's image to the community.

Merchant, a restaurant director since 1995, is General Manager of Whataburger in Arlington. He is one of 300 Certified Food Management Professionals, as determined by the National Restaurant Association. He is a member of the Dallas Restaurant Association, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, and the Economic Planning Board of North Texas.

Project Mobility Gets Wheels



When Brad Herrin became quadriplegic a couple of years ago, a group of friends searched for a way to help. The group led by Michael Stallings organized **Project Mobility**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to "providing transportation to enable those with disabilities to continue a productive position in society." With research, they found that the Texas Employment Commission does provide modifications to vehicles for the disabled, if the modifications allow them to go to work, but requires the disabled person to provide the vehicle. A raffle gave them the funds they needed to provide Brad with a new minivan (which he still uses) with about \$40,000 worth of modifications. After the project for Brad, the group wanted to continue helping others who needed transportation, so with their leftover funds they began looking for another candidate. HRA employee **Olivia Acosta** was just that candidate. Olivia will soon receive assistance with her purchase of a previously owned van to enable her to more easily get to work! Yea Project Mobility!

American Airlines' Arrangements for Passengers with Disabilities

If you travel often, you might want to know the answers to these questions. American Airlines is a leader in accommodating the disabled.

Do I need to prearrange wheelchair assistance? AA suggests that travel agents request wheelchair assistance at the time of reservation, and that the person traveling requests the wheelchair upon arrival at the airport. The skycap or AA Customer Services Representative will obtain the wheelchair as soon as the customer requests it, and will escort the customer to the departure gate. Customers should also arrange for assistance at connecting airports as needed.

Can passengers take wheelchairs on the plane? American offers a special Wheelchair Service which allows a customer to check his own wheelchair at the departure gate and claim it at the arrival gate free of charge. Manual wheelchairs may be checked at curbside, the ticket counter, or the gate. AA asks customers with battery-operated wheelchairs to check in at least one hour before departure to ensure proper boarding of their wheelchair. AA also recommends you check the chair through to the final destination, as the additional time require to claim and recheck may compromise the ability to make your connection.

What about boarding smaller planes? American Eagle has developed a special wheelchair lift to board customers in wheelchairs safely and easily. These lifts will be available at all American Eagle airports by the end of 1995.

What other services are available? Service animals may travel inside the cabin on most routes. Contact AA for specific destination requirements. Oxygen service is available for a fee, if a reservation agent is notified within 48 hours before departure.

Ted Kennedy, Jr. speaks at Annual Educational Conference on Travelers with Disabilities

"Public attitudes create barriers to the disabled - not disabilities," commented Ted Kennedy, Jr. at American Airline's second annual Educational Conference on Travelers with Disabilities last December 2. As keynote speaker, he touched on concerns over cuts in healthcare funding for everyone including the disabled. He discussed the existence of disincentives to employment and the need to help people get back to work; the need to reduce high school dropout rates among disabled children; and the need for affordable and accessible housing and transportation. "Expanded opportunities in education and work are of no value without transportation," he said.

Kennedy, who has worn a prosthesis since losing his leg to cancer as a child, has spent much of his energy as an advocate for the civil rights of people with disabilities. He has worked with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and has served on the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. He is currently involved in research on environmental factors leading to disease and disability, and is the director of the New Haven Lead Safe Home and Community Health Project, a community-based initiative addressing pediatric lead poisoning, one of the leading causes of mental retardation.

Emcee of the event was **Amy Baxter**, AA employee, Ms. Wheelchair America, and former HRA Board Vice President.

Seven additional speakers representing the blind, the deaf, the travel industry, the ADA, The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and the National Committee on Travel for Persons with Disabilities, presented that afternoon.

THE RESOURCE

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- ◇ Volunteering. Please call me.
- ◇ Donating. (Check payable to HRA)
- ◇ Subscribing to your newsletter. (\$10 per year)

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