

**H** IN ITS 19TH  
**R** YEAR  
**A** OF  
SERVICE

Handicapped Resource  
Association of Texas  
December/January 1997



## Vision Arlington to build homes geared to disability

Handicapped Resource Association and the Arlington Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities are helping the Vision Arlington program recruit an Arlington household with a family member who has a mobility disability for an accessible housing project.

Vision Arlington is a collaboration of the Junior League of Arlington, Liberation Community, the City of Arlington, and East Arlington Renewal.

Vision Arlington is in the process of constructing nine new homes near New York Avenue and Glen Haven St. just south of Abram in East Arlington. As a part of the project, special attention will be given to accommodating a home to the needs of a person with mobility impairment. Loan applications are being sought for families who meet income criteria, qualify for a first lien mortgage with a private lender, and whose architectural accommoda-

tions can be built into the design of a newly built home. The income criterion is based on 80% of the Area Median Income (for example, a family of three must earn less than \$34,000 annually).

Once an income-eligible family is approved by a private lender, a new home will be built with architectural accommodations made to the extent allowable. The buyer must qualify for a mini-

mum \$54,000 mortgage loan. The home will appraise for approximately \$72,000. (HUD subsidizes construction).

**Income limits and application forms may be obtained from Marla Sapp of Liberation Community at 534-7180.** Marla will schedule appointments to pre-qualify income eligible applicants. Preference will be given to applicants who currently work or live in Arlington.

-Regina Marette, Home Coordinator, City of Arlington.



## Update on the Architectural Barrier Removal Program

An Arlington project to remove architectural barriers in the homes of low income people with disability finally made its way into reality last September. After a four month process of meetings, a City Council approval and a City of Arlington Housing Commissioners' approval, the program is in operation!

To seek out potential applicants, over 72 letters were sent to potential candidates or referral sources. Forums were given at venues including an Arlington Apartment Managers' Association meeting, to spread the word to tenants. Both Arlington newspapers, HRA's *The Resource*, and the *Senior Sentinel* carried stories about the program.

During the first three months, the program received 24 applications; from these, 11 completed applications and six approvals have been made to date.

Demographically, most of the applicants live in East/Central Arlington in 76010 and 76011 zip code areas. Approximately half are under the age of 13 with the other half over 55. Numbers are almost equally divided between homeowners and renters. Almost 90% are recipients of Social Security.

**The program welcomes your individual applications. To apply, call Olivia Acosta at HRA (817) 469-1977.**

## HRA receives funding from County

The Tarrant County Commissioners' Court recently awarded \$10,000 in funding to HRA, to be used to provide 3700 hours of Personal Attendant Care to low-income individuals with disabilities in 1997. According to County Administrator G.K. Maenius, the funding is part of a Public Assistance Fund awarded each year to organizations helping the local community. For the past three years, the County Commissioners' Court has agreed to fund HRA along with the Rape Crisis Center, MHMR, The Youth Collaboration, the Fort Worth Arts Council, Child Advocacy and others. For HRA, the funding makes up a portion of what had been lost due to last year's legislative cuts and prevents HRA from reducing services.

### HOUSING ISSUE!

Three Articles full of Opportunities for Housing

Subsidies

Tax Benefits for Disabled Individuals

Suggestions for Understanding Disability

## A B&N Christmas

Thanks to everyone who volunteered to wrap Christmas gifts at Barnes & Noble on December 16. If you shopped at the crowded South Cooper store that day, you might have seen **Jamie McCartney, Monette Johnson, Olivia Acosta, Justin Carroll, Lynn Brink, Mike Love, Keith & Peggy Aholt, Mary Ann Johnson, Katie Johnson, Anita Garmon, Sharon Cook, Margie Homan, Louise Provence Laine, or Maria Lopez** "luring" customers to the HRA table with offers of free giftwrapping and a chance to make a donation.

Apparently **Keith Aholt and Justin Carroll** were, let's just say, *enthusiastic* while on the job. They attracted a veritable bevy of "wrapees".

Many thanks to **Barnes & Noble** for allowing us to invade and wrap, wrap, wrap.

## Auto fans, get ready.

"Car guy" **David Shuford** is the 1997 Director of the DFW Classic Car Show at the Ballpark in Arlington!

David, a local guru of the North Texas Volkswagen Club, has been working behind the scenes with the DFW Classic for the past several years, rallying support with car clubs and encouraging car owners to show off their finished products.

But this year he was bold enough to step into the spotlight and take on the leadership of the popular and growing show.

"To work with two things I'm crazy about - Volkswagens and baseball - feels like heaven," he says.

He urges anyone who likes cars, baseball, HRA, or any combination thereof to consider volunteering with this year's show. Just call the DFW CLASSIC HOT-LINE at metro (817) 461-3750. A *real person* (maybe even David) will answer your call.

## WHAT'S YOUR "DISABILITY I.Q."?

When we think about people with disability, we tend to concentrate on physical barriers; doorways too narrow for wheelchairs or the lack of sign language interpreters at live performances.

But public attitudes and misconceptions about disabilities are the biggest barriers that people with disability face. Stereotypes persist that prevent our society from breaking down negative attitudes about the disabled. What are some of the myths and realities about disabilities? What can we do to change the way we look at and regard people with disabilities?

### MYTH: Disability means inability.

Many with disability view their limitations as a fact of life, and go to work, educate themselves, enjoy life and participate in society as much as the non-disabled.

### MYTH: Persons with disabilities do not, or cannot, speak for themselves.

Anyone who automatically addresses themselves to the able companion of the person with the disability, as if the disabled person was not present, mistakenly assumes that the person with physical disability must also have a mental, emotional or behavioral disability. Most do not.

### MYTH: All persons with disabilities are hearing impaired.

Many people speak in raised voices to those with disabilities, whether or not that person has hearing loss. Physical disability is a completely separate problem from hearing impairment.

### MYTH: No one actually uses parking spaces designated for disabled people, so it is alright to park for a few minutes while you run some errands.

Accessible parking near a facility means all the difference in the world to someone who is disabled. People with disabilities do use the spaces, provided others have not taken them first.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Relax. If you are not sure how to act or communicate with a person, just ask them what you should do.

Shake whatever a person offers: a hand, prosthesis, foot or elbow.

If the person uses a wheelchair, sit down so that you are both at eye level.

Don't assume the person needs or wants assistance, but don't be afraid to ask politely if they do. If the offer is accepted, then listen to the person's instructions. Your offer might be declined; if so, do not insist.

Don't avoid words like "see", "hear", or "walk" in conversation. Use ordinary language rather than stumbling for other words to compensate.

People who use wheelchairs do not consider themselves "confined to a wheelchair"; on the contrary, the chair gives them freedom and mobility.

Children are naturally curious, and they probably will have an uninhibited curiosity when they see someone with a disability. Most people with disabilities won't mind answering a child's questions; scolding children for asking such questions makes them think there is something "bad" about having a disability.

*-adapted from a Fact Sheet produced by the AARP.*

## Tax benefits available to disabled individuals

In the computation of income tax, the IRS allows many medical and dental expenses to be deducted from income, provided you itemize deductions on Schedule A. Also, because of recent changes in tax laws, you may deduct only the amount of total medical expenses exceeding 7.5 % of your adjusted gross income (in this case, of the individual with a disability or his or her parents). Deductible items may include:

- Special equipment such as a motorized wheelchair, specially equipped automobile, and special telephone for persons who are deaf.

- Special items, including artificial teeth, artificial limbs, eyeglasses, hearing aids and their component parts, crutches, and dogs for the sight and hearing impaired.

- Payments for the installation of equipment in the home, or for similar improvements made for medical purposes, such as ramps or elevators for heart patients. If these improvements increase the value of the property, expenses incurred will only be deducted to the extent that they exceed the increase in property value. Also, capital expenditures incurred by a physically disabled individual for the removal of structural barriers in his or her personal residence qualify as a medical expense deduction where the expenditure is necessary to accommodate the disability.

- Payments to a special school for an individual who is mentally or physically disabled, if the principal reason for attendance is the institution's resources for alleviating the disability.

## Introducing Mike Love

--Cynthia Brink

Board Member Mike Love is at home today. I caught him resting and reading the paper with his wife Cindy, and his dog and cat. It's a cold, hibernation sort of day; a good day for you to meet him.

Mike's involvement with HRA began when he was President of Great Southwest Rotary, met HRA's John Dycus and learned about the organization and the DFW Classic Car Show. "The more familiar I became with HRA, the more exciting I thought it was. I wanted to know how I could be more useful to the organization," he recalls. But as a registered architectural interior designer in the State of Texas with a specialization in accessibility under the State's new Accessibility Standard, it wasn't hard to find a fit.

During the past several years Mike has become one of the most active members of the DFW Classic Car Show Committee, and has always remained in the forefront of the planning, regardless of the project. In 1996 he joined the Board of Directors and hit the ground running as Interim Secretary. At the same time, he assisted Executive Director Rosalie Wells in developing criteria for, and the implementation of, the Architectural Barrier Removal Program. For 1997, his first full year of Board membership, Mike says he is anxious to see HRA continue to expand its program of services and is pleased with the positive direction it has taken in terms of income and efficiency. HRA tips its hat to Mike! Heck, even the "impartial" Newsletter Editor finds it difficult to be impartial when it comes to Mike Love and his work.

## DONOR THANKS

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**VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL GRANTS TO BUILD ADAPTIVE HOUSING OR REMODEL**, according to an April 12, 1996 issue of *Housing Affairs Letter*. Grants are awarded up to \$38,000 for permanently and totally disabled veterans, and in a second program, offers \$6,500 for those veterans who have suffered loss of both upper extremities or who suffer from service-connected blindness.

Funds can be used to help finance construction of a specially designed home, or may be used to remodel an existing home under certain requirements.

For more information, contact Brian Bixler, Office of Specially Adapted Housing, at (202) 273-7355.



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## Computer Programmer Training for People with Disabilities

"This is one of the most marvelous opportunities I've ever seen for people with disabilities to gain entry into lucrative jobs," says Don Moore, an instructor in El Centro College's Computer Programmer Training for People with Disabilities. But Don is more than a teacher touting the merits of his course. Ten years ago, he was one of its first students.

Don's life took an abrupt detour after he contracted Guillian Barre Syndrome, a mysterious disease that strikes the nervous system in the wake of a viral infection and can render a person paralyzed. Don had been a construction electrician, atheletic and active. But Guillian Barre left him a quadriplegic for eight months.

With time, Don regained some use of his limbs, but his once atheletic life had to be redirected. As a client of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, he was recommended as a likely candidate for a new program that was being coordinated by the Dallas Mayor's Committee for the Employment of Disabled Persons and IBM. The programmer training was billed as an intensive, highly selective course designed to provide high salaried employment opportunities for people who could pass a battery of stiff requirements: acceptance of their disabilities, a desire to succeed, ability to work under stress, a high level of reading comprehension, and attention to detail, among others. El Centro College was chosen as the site for the program.

In Don's case, before he entered the program he had had little experience with computers. But a rigorous eight month classroom course and two months of internship landed him a full time job with Mobil Oil, where he worked for ten years.

During the past decade, the program has matriculated over 130 students, and 94% have been placed in high salaried jobs (average of \$31,333). In 1996 the program was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services as one of three in the nation using "exemplary approaches for increasing competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities."

--DCCCD Foundation Newsletter

Expand your knowledge...

### What in the world is a **PHYSIOGNOMIST?**

*A Pysiognomist is a person who practices the art of determining human character through facial features.*

## Chickens fare well at winter party

Special thanks go to the good pilgrims who organized 1996's annual Winter Party in honor of all HRA Personal Attendants and Staff. Those who attended on that cool December 11 partook of a delicious lunch prepared for them by volunteers from Fielder Road Baptist Church. Volunteers were led by Katherine Durbin and included Opal Daniels, Jennie Lee Dycus, Gwen Burk, Rachel Scott, Juanita Russell, Ruby Hutchins, Louise Carter and Linda Speed.

Lynn Brink obtained a flock of frozen chickens from Cliff Jones of Pilgrim's Pride, who provided them as gifts for the Attendants. Board President Melinda Havran thanked the Attendants on behalf of the Board of Directors for a year of hard work, and in return, Wendell Alford, an HRA Attendant, returned the employees' thanks for honoring them with the event.

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