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Handicapped Resource
Association of Texas
December 97/January 98



THE RESOURCE

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Newsletter sponsored by Westlake's Arlington Hardware

Handitran Study

A study of Handitran is a good foundation for determining the need and extent the service should be expanded.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments is expected to complete a ridership study on Arlington's Handitran service in April that should provide insight into what demands are being made on the service.

We already know about 200 requests for rides are turned down each month. What we need to know is why. It could be riders are requesting same-day service, which is not available. It could be riders are requesting service on days and times the vans do not run- holidays, evenings and Sundays, for example. It could be greater demand for days of operations the service already runs or peak times during which demand is high. We need to know where these people are coming from and going to.

Armed with that information, transportation officials can better understand the needs and determine the most cost-effective solutions. A resident's committee is recommending expansion of the service, but some detailed information on use is needed before that recommendation can be properly reviewed and solutions identified.

Demand for Sunday service, for example, may be coming from churchgoers who want to use the shuttle to get there. Options might range from coordinating private transportation through the church

and its members, to half-day service, if the demand drops in the afternoon. Either could save taxpayers money compared with simple expansion of the service throughout the day.

The service handles about three passengers per hour, and any review should include a look at ways to improve that number, as Council Member Joe Ewen has suggested.

All that must be put in perspective with other transportation needs, from South Arlington shuttle service around The Parks mall and the possibility of limited bus service.

The Council of Governments study is a good first step to making those determinations.

-from the Opinions section of the Arlington Morning News, December 27, 1997.

Funding eases 1997 cuts, allows restoration of attendant hours

HRA can now provide \$10,000 worth of attendant hours which would have been lost to last year's State contract funding cuts. Tarrant County Risk Management recently awarded the sum to HRA. Although the money is a boon to HRA's attendant services, it will make up only a portion of the funding lost last year.

The agency also received a \$5000 grant from the Bank of

America Foundation; which will go into a general operational fund.

Thank you, TCRM and BOA!

New position at HRA part of new long-term plan

The HRA Board of Directors recently took a new direction in its strategy to find solid leadership for the coming years. The Board recently hired long time HRA Program Director **Dave Watson** as Executive Director. Watson will oversee the administration of the agency and manage all of its programs and functions for providing Attendant Care. In addition, the Board plans to hire a Funding and Development Director, who will be HRA's "public face" in charge of corporate giving, events, grant writing, PR and board development. Keith Aholt, President of the HRA Board, commented on the new strategy. "With this plan, Dave Watson can do what he does best, retaining his full time job as Program Director while taking on the administrative responsibilities of Executive Director. Then, we can continue our search for a second person to be out there in the community, making more people aware of what HRA is and bringing in funding."

If you are interested in applying for this position, please mail your resume directly to HRA, to the attention of the Search Committee.

Grace Fohor comes to HRA through Masters Program

HRA has a new Masters Program intern! **Grace Fohor** has come on with HRA as part of her on-the-job training!

Grace was with Sears Credit Corporation for 24 years before signing on with the Tarrant County-based Masters program. She is the third person HRA has employed for a several-month-long internship, and we are glad to have found her!

The Masters Program is run by The Working Connection of Tarrant County under the Training Partnership Act, and is designed for people over 55 who wish to re-enter the job market.

On-the-job training is only one of many choices for Masters participants, according to Lil Browning, Director of the program. It also provides a job listing and placement service (in conjunction with the Workforce Commission and the Tarrant County Employment Network); in addition it can also provide participants with a counselor who helps them establish job goals, arrange training, and even enroll in courses related to the job objective.

Two other now-permanent employees of HRA, **Betty Baker** and **Monette Johnson**, are former Masters program participants.

Did you know that DART provides training on how to use the bus, train and light rail services?

If you're curious as to how to use DART buses and trains to get around, DART has something called the Travel Training Program. A DART representative will travel with you and show you how to maneuver on and off the train and light rail cars and how to get into the wheelchair securement area once aboard. For information call Bus/Rail Interface Training at 214-828-8576.



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MUCHISIMAS GRACIAS A TODOS!

Big Thanks go out to **Mary Ann Johnson**, who updates our Wall of Fame, a collection of clippings, releases and photos of the goings on at HRA. The Wall hangs in the Arlington office. Come by and take a look!

HRA participated in Barnes & Noble gift wrapping again this year (the agency keeps any donations it receives for this service). Our faithful band of happy wrappers included **Sharon Cook, Margie Homan and Louise Laine**.

For the Winter Party honoring HRA Attendants and Staff, local "chefs" always provide us with a delicious assortment of goodies. **Katherine Durbin, Mary Alice Coats, Cathleen Turner, Juanita Russell, Rachel Scott and Jennie Lee Dycus**, all of Fielder Rd. Baptist Church, gave of their time, energy and cooking expertise for the third year straight!

Bicyclists cross Vietnam, break ground for intercultural understanding

from The Dallas Morning News, David Lamb, Friday Jan 2.

A bunch of middle-aged veterans from Vietnam and the United States - many of them disabled - set out on an improbable journey Thursday, January 1 to bury a war and test the limits of sinew and heart.

They gathered with their bicycles at dawn in the shadow of Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum in Hanoi and behind a police escort pedaled off for what was once known as Saigon - 16 days and 1,200 miles away.

Three of the riders are blind and rode as stokers on the rear seat of tandems. Seven are partially paralyzed, but their three-wheeled hand cycles - a low-slung carriage pedaled by hand - sped along as surely as the standard bikes ridden by vets whose missing leg or legs had been replaced by high-tech artificial limbs made of carbon fiber.

Along the way to Ninh Binh, the first night's stop 55 miles south of Hanoi, thousands of children lined Highway 1 - the war-battered route the French called the Street Without Joy - and shouted all the English words they knew: "Haaaalo," "Very good," "OK."

"I really didn't know how I'd feel coming back to Vietnam," said Dan Jensen, 48, a commercial photographer from Sioux Falls, S.D., who lost his right foot to a land mine in 1971. "But the minute I stepped off the plane, I felt as though I was completing something.



It was very emotional. One thing I know for sure: I don't feel any animosity toward these people."

Nguyen Van Bao, at 71 the elder statesman of the ride and a 33-year veteran of the Vietnamese

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army, pedaled briskly and stayed in the pack just behind Mr. Jensen. Twenty-five years ago, during the Americans' Christmas bombing of Hanoi, he was guarding a power plant that U.S. jets attacked in seemingly endless waves.

"Actually, I hated you Americans then," Mr. Bao said. "If anyone had said that on New Year's Day in 1998 I'd be bicycling from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City with American veterans, I'd have said they were, well, crazy. But that was then and this is now. This is a new chapter."

Riding new 24-speed Cannondale mountain bikes, the participants - some neither veterans nor disabled - who left Hanoi on January 1 include 39 Americans picked by T.E.A.M. Sports and 14 Vietnamese chosen by Hanoi's Communist government.

With the Americans and Vietnamese riding as a single team in which the slowest rider sets the pace, Greg Le Mond of Medina, MN., hung we'll back, stroking at a leisurely clip. A three-time winner of the Tour de France and a T.E.A.M. Sports board member, he was 13 when the war ended.

"To tell you the truth, I get more inspired riding with disabled athletes than I ever do with so-called

able-bodied ones," Mr. LeMond said. "Professional athletes get caught up with money, but these people never forget exactly why they are out here."

T.E.A.M. Sports and the veterans foundation presented a check for \$200,000 to build a new orthotics clinic at Hanoi's Bach Mai Hospital, where 30 patients and staff were killed in the Christmas bombing of 1972. Vietnam's National Symphony Orchestra serenaded the U.S., riders with Auld Lang Syne.

Rarely, if ever, has an event in Vietnam brought together foot soldiers from both sides, and although they had a long way to go from Ninh Binh, across the old Demilitarized Zone, through places with ghostly memories - the Street Without Joy is teaching them that, as one vet put it, "We all ride the same road."

Australia Bound (g'd on ya!)

-by Cynthia Brink

If you ever get the chance to travel to Australia, GO! This November I was fortunate enough to spend an entire month down under, right outside of Sydney. It was an opportunity no one should miss.

The city is truly beautiful, built on curving fingers sandwiched between bright blue inlets fed by the famous Sydney Harbor. Having lived inland all my life, it is still amazing to me to see such a modern, moving city that doesn't just stop at waters' edge. The Sydney Harbor water is as vital to the city as its concrete and steel and arts and music and business. Commuters go home every day on ferries as often as they go by rail or bus or car. The city just seems to keep on going, land or no land, its reflection cast out into the bay.

The morning we landed in the huge Qantas jet, I was sitting next to two Australian women who had been on vacation for two weeks in Hawaii. As we descended, I'll never forget their expressions of awe, as if seeing the city for the first time. "Ooh, there it is!" "Look how beautiful."

This is how Australians view their country - and especially their Sydney. Australians are world travelers, but I never met one who wanted to leave for good. One told me, "Look around you. Why would I want to live anywhere else?"

Every day I made my trek by train across the Harbor Bridge into the city. Below me was the Opera House, and across from that, the beautifully restored section from one of the first penal colonies in Australia, called The Rocks. It truly was beautiful. Sydney is as cosmopolitan a city as any in the world. People are open, honest and straightforward to a fault. It has an interesting history and an exciting sort of "frontier" feel. The country is forward-thinking; placing much more emphasis on future trade with its Asian neighbors than with anyone else on the planet, including Europe or the U.S. -And the food is great.

I began thinking that everybody should have the chance to go to a place like Australia, and embarked on a

quest for information on accessibility for the Australian tourist. I went to the trusty web, and Poof! There it was in all its glory:

http://www.sasquatch.com/ableinfo/lk_travel.html.

This is the travel section of *The Able Informer* website, and in it you can find all sorts of links and resources. You can also find here a book called Easy Access Australia by Bruce M. Cameron. It's got info on air and land transport, rental cars, the Australian Standard for Accessible Accommodation, maps of accessible points of interest, descriptions of affordable and accessible accommodation - and all of the research has been done by wheelchair users!

Another resource listed here is called STARS, an attendant program run by the Australian government providing transport, sightseeing and companionship services for tourists with disabilities. Telephone is 061-2-02-9287-2918.

On this site I even found some links for wheelchair accessible 4WD Adventure Tours!

If you have any information, or would like to share a travel story, please write or call me and I'll include it in the next newsletter. (817-265-6518; alux@why.net)

FDA approves implant that can restore movement to paralyzed limbs

From *The Dallas Morning News*, Associated Press.

The Food and Drug Administration approved the world's first surgical implant to restore movement to a paralyzed limb recently, an electronic hand that helps quadriplegics feed themselves, pour coffee, and even write a letter.

NeuroControl Corp.'s Freehand has implanted electrodes which send electric impulses to muscles that force a paralyzed hand to move on command. Freehand offers hope to about 54,000 U.S. quadriplegics who retain some upper body movement but cannot move their hands to perform the most basic of tasks.

The FDA says the \$50,000 implant promises to be the first in a line of increasingly sophisticated devices to force paralyzed limbs to work.

A surgeon implants a 2-inch processor into the chest, threads electrodes under the skin down to the patient's better hand and attaches them to hand muscles. Patients wear a small joystick under their clothing or on the opposite shoulder.

A jerk of the shoulder sends an electronic signal to the implant to tell the thumb to move toward the fingers in a pinching motion. Tap a button on the chest with the arm, and the device forces the muscles to grasp a larger object like a cup. The faster the shoulder jerks, the quicker the hand movement.

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