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NON-CIRCULATING

Highlights

Vol. 6, No. 4

Austin, Texas

November/December, 1988

ITSD Project Arlington project links technology to service delivery

Like most second graders, Michelle Thompson is working hard to master the intricacies of spelling. Michelle's getting some extra help with her homework though, through the Integrating Technology into Service Delivery (ITSD) project, which operates from the University of Texas at Arlington.

Michelle was born with cerebral palsy. She has a seizure disorder and difficulty with language and fine motor control. She is in special education, and spends most of the day in a self-contained classroom, but participates in a regular education music class.

Michelle works with a computer in her classroom and also after school in her Easter Seal program to help her improve her expressive and receptive communication skills and also to make the physical work of writing less laborious for her. But because she didn't have a computer at home, it was difficult for her to practice what she'd learned at school. That's where ITSD comes in.

ITSD is funded by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, on behalf of the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities. For the past three years the project has worked to link technology, individuals, and agencies in order to enhance the lives of people who have developmental disabilities in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area.

The project uses electronic networking to hook up old computers with new users. Individuals and companies that have computers they are replacing or no longer need, donate them to the project which refurbishes them and places them in the homes of people who have developmental disabilities. (Recently, American Airlines

donated 25 computer terminals they no longer needed to the project).

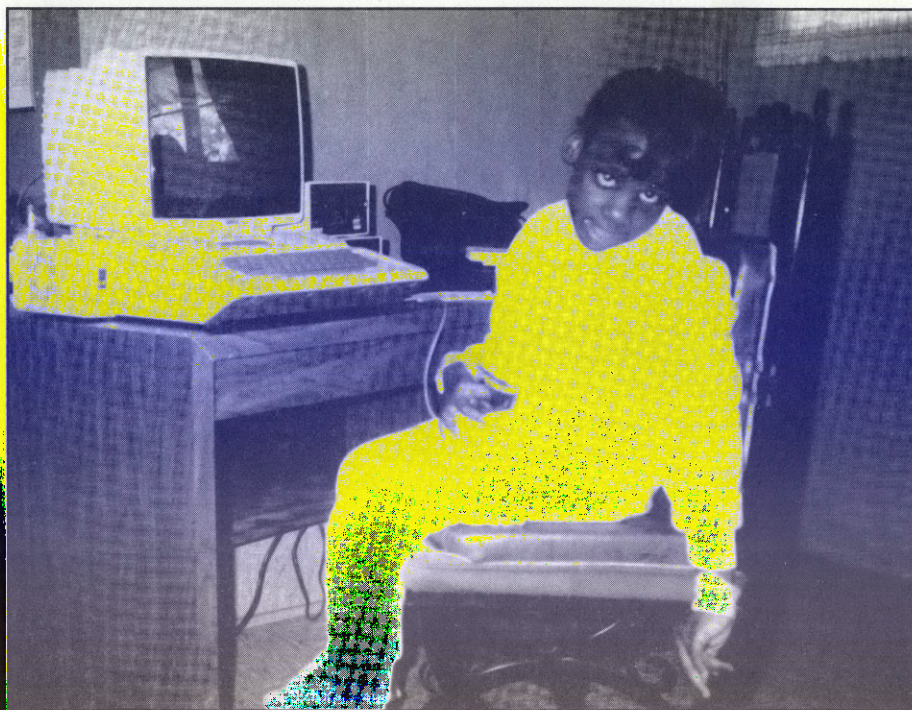
Recycled hardware is just one aspect of ITSD's efforts to integrate technology into the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

The project has established an electronic bulletin board, the DD Connection. The bulletin board contains electronic mail, software, and the Developmental Disabilities Technology Library (DDTL). The DDTL is a database listing of technology-related agencies, experts, and publications. The DD Connection operates 24 hours a day and can send messages and files to approximately 3,000 other bulletin

boards worldwide. The DD Connection is free except for standard long distance charges for those calling or outside the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex.

According to ITSD project director, Betts Hoover, people use the DD Connection in a variety of ways. Parents use it to meet other parents or professionals in order to share information and experiences. Some prefer the anonymity of the electronic system as a way of asking questions they are not yet comfortable asking in person. Professionals, particularly those who live in outlying areas, use the bulletin board to make and keep professional contacts.

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Michelle gets an assist with her homework from her home computer.

From the Chairman

by Lee Veenker

You're coming in loud and clear and we are eager to keep the conversation going. We've had several excellent opportunities this year to have the input, involvement and participation of the public in Council activities.

Supported employment is one of the topics we heard a lot about from you. The importance of this topic to people with developmental disabilities was eminently apparent at the "Working It Out" conference we held in Austin last May. The energetic participation of the more than 350 administrators, service providers, consumers and parents who attended the three days of the conference was more than lively discussion, it was a statement of public policy.

The talking, networking, and exchanges of ideas and opinions that began at the conference can become a foundation for building a statewide system of supported employment in the future.

In June we heard from others of you. With Advocacy, Inc., the Council co-sponsored "Here To Stay: A State of the Art Conference on Community Integration." We heard from parents of children who have developmental disabilities. We heard them say that they want their kids to grow up like other kids, and that they think that happens most naturally when they grow up with other kids — at home, at school, in the neighborhood.

We heard something else this time. We heard parents of kids who don't have disabilities say that they want their children to learn and grow and play with children who have severe disabilities. We saw the excitement of people who believe we can create a different world for children who have developmental disabilities — a world built not on exclusion and separation, but on access and opportunity. We heard parents say that kids belong with other kids, period.

We were pleased that a number of you took some time to review and comment on the Council's revised goals and objectives. The Council concurred with a number of the suggestions from the public and has now approved goals and objectives that will help us measure

how well we are achieving our mission to help bring about genuine independence, productivity and community integration for all people who have developmental disabilities.

And, of course, as is mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, we were glad to meet with so many of you at our recent forum in Dallas.

Currently the Council is involved in what may be our most important opportunity yet to incorporate the experiences and opinions of people with developmental disabilities into its planning process. As a result of Public Law 100-146, the Developmental Disabilities Act Amendments of 1987, each state DD Council is charged with making a recommendation to the governor and legislature by January 1, 1990, concerning "the most appropriate agency or agencies of the State to be designated as responsible for provision and coordination of services for persons with developmental disabilities."

The recommendations contained in this "1990 Report" are to be based on a comprehensive review and analysis of the eligibility criteria and effectiveness of the major service programs for people with developmental disabilities in Texas. The Texas Department of Health has been awarded a grant to conduct the policy analysis study on the Council's behalf.

In addition to the analysis of programs, the Council is required to conduct a survey of consumer satisfaction with services for people with developmental disabilities in the state. The survey, which is being conducted through a grant to East Texas State University involves face-to-face interviews with 500 individuals who have developmental disabilities in six regions of the state.

The Council is very encouraged that Congress has recognized, through the DD Act, that the only way to develop programs and supports that are genuinely responsive to the needs of people with developmental disabilities is to ensure that consumers who use those programs are involved in their planning, implementation and evaluation.

We believe that with the 1990 Report we are taking a significant step toward planning for a service delivery system that is designed around the needs

and wishes of the individual, rather than one that requires people to fit as best they can into established programs.

After the Council has had an opportunity to review the policy analysis study and the consumer satisfaction survey, we will formulate our initial recommendations about the agency we believe should be designated to serve all people with developmental disabilities.

At that point we want to hear your reactions. The Council will conduct a series of forums around the state in order to receive public input about our proposed recommendations before we present them to the governor on the first day of 1990. The forums will be held in the spring of 1989 and we will announce exact places and dates as soon as they are finalized. In the meantime, thank you for your input this year and please let us continue to hear from you. One final thought. With so much of our focus on 1990, it's easy to forget that we have not yet begun 1989. I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the members and staff of the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities to wish all of you a joyous holiday season and a happy new year.

Public Forum

Transportation, respite and employment are top issues

More than 50 individuals, including 17 people who gave testimony, attended a public forum sponsored by the Council on September 8, 1988, at the Bachman Recreation Center in Dallas. The forum was held as part of the Council's ongoing efforts to obtain input about matters of importance to the general public regarding services and supports for people with developmental disabilities. Fourteen Council members, as well as several members of the Council staff, were on hand to hear ideas, opinions and experiences about a variety of topics including accessible transportation, respite care, supported employment, parent training and self-advocacy. Many speakers commented on more than one issue at the forum.

Six speakers addressed the issue of

transportation at the forum, making it the topic most frequently discussed. Speakers commented that accessible transportation is essential to assure independence, productivity and community integration and that accessible transportation will not come about until people who are able-bodied join with people who have disabilities in calling for such access. Speakers called for fixed route buses equipped with lifts as well as a back-up paratransit that runs often enough to meet demand without requiring 24-hour advance notice.

Employment for people with developmental disabilities was another topic discussed by a number of speakers. Parents and advocates of people who have autism, deaf-blindness and cerebral palsy expressed the need for more

employment options and one speaker noted the lack of funds available for the long-term support of people with developmental disabilities in supported employment. The Council was encouraged to advocate for increased state funds for supported employment activities.

Families of people who have developmental disabilities reported that respite continues to be a desperately needed support. One speaker, who had moved to Texas recently, noted that in his home state of New Jersey, families were eligible for 40 hours of respite per month, one week's respite at a hotel a couple of times a year and a Saturday drop-off center for children with developmental disabilities. Other families
continued on page 5.

Council supports Americans with Disabilities Act

While the 100th Congress finished its work without taking action on the Americans with Disabilities Act, the bill has the strong commitment of the senators and representatives who sponsored the measure to work diligently for its passage next session.

The proposed legislation is the first comprehensive civil rights bill barring discrimination against people with disabilities. It offers the same protections against discrimination on the basis of a person's disability that the 1964 Civil Rights Act provided on the grounds of race, color, religion or national origin.

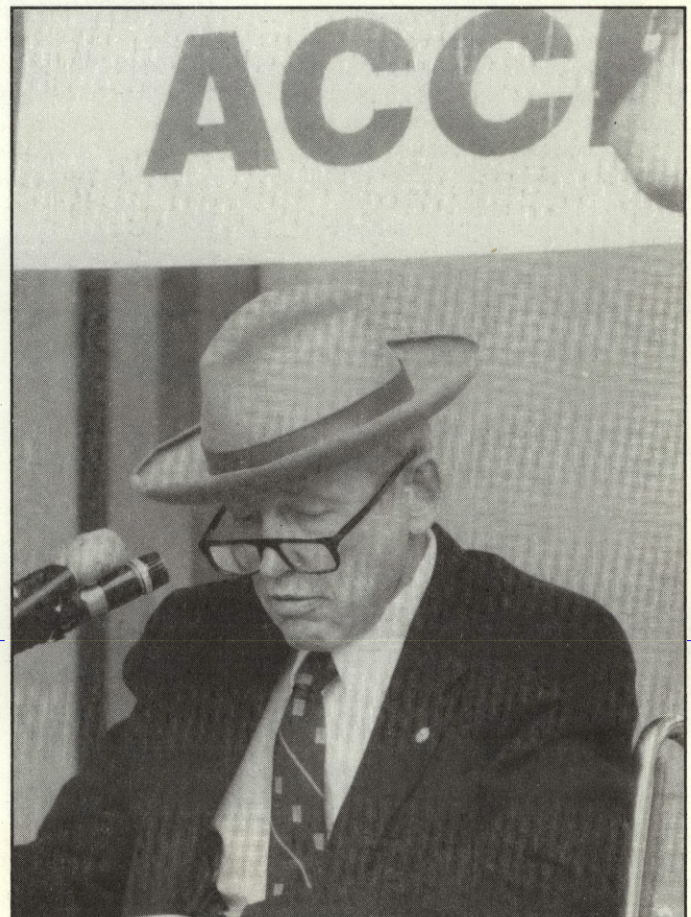
The Texas Planning Council voted unanimously to support the Americans with Disabilities Act at its September Council meeting and informed Congress of their support through letters to the co-chairmen of a joint Congressional hearing on the bill, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Rep. Major Owen (D-New York).

The hearing was held in Washington, D.C. on September 27, 1988 and was attended by more than 200 individuals. Two panels of consumers from around the country presented testimony to Congress about the experiences they have had and the discrimination they have faced as a result of disability.

The hearing was the culmination of several months efforts in which people who have disabilities have inundated members of Congress with examples of discrimination they face daily in employment, housing, education, transportation, communication, recreation, health care and more.

The Americans with Disabilities Act would attempt to address these issues in a comprehensive manner. Currently only Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 significantly addresses discrimination against people who have disabilities, but its scope is limited to federally conducted or assisted programs, thus making state and local governments, as well as the private sector, unaccountable for discrimination they may practice on the basis of disability.

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Justin Dart, Jr. announced the introduction of the Americans with Disabilities Act at a rally this spring in Dallas.

Assistive technology bill becomes law

A new law will make it possible for people with severe disabilities to exercise more control over their lives and to have greater access to the world. President Reagan signed the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act (P.L. 100-407) into law on August 19, 1988.

Assistive technology can open doors for people with severe disabilities — literally, as well as figuratively. The use of assistive technology devices can allow people who have very severe disabilities to communicate, to use the telephone, to eat independently, to play records and tapes without assistance, to turn on the television set, to control the temperature and the lighting at home, and to move from place to place. Assistive technology gives people with severe disabilities greater opportunities for independent living, more options in employment and more access to social and recreational activities.

The use of new devices and creative applications of existing technology can equip people, even with very severe disabilities, with the control they need to make choices about their own lives, to follow their own habits, and to live by their own schedules. The law will assist states in developing and implementing consumer-responsive statewide programs of technology assistance for individuals with disabilities that will allow them both

to acquire information and to obtain assistive technology devices and services.

The bill has two major sections. Title I creates a state grant program, which is intended to promote coordination and cooperation among existing federal and state programs to provide technology-related assistance. The grant-to-states program is competitive. Ten states are scheduled to enter the program during its first year (FY 89), with 20 states joining the second year and the remainder in year three.

States can apply for the grants program following the designation by the governor of a state agency or organization to be the applicant. The Texas Rehabilitation Commission has been selected by Governor Clements as the lead agency to submit the application for the grant in Texas. Each state would receive grants of \$500,000 - \$1 million during years one and two of the program with grants of \$500,000 - \$1.5 million during year three.

States receiving grants would be allowed to use the funds to identify and evaluate needs; provide assistive technology devices and services; disseminate information on access to assistive technology devices and services; provide training and technical assistance on the use of these devices; develop public awareness programs and develop community organizations

partnerships and initiatives to provide technical assistance. Title II of the new law creates programs of national significance. The discretionary activities are to be performed by the federal government in order to assist the states in the development of their own service delivery systems. The activities authorized under Title II of the bill include: a study on financing assistive technology devices and services; a national information and program referral network; a training and public awareness project; and demonstration and innovation projects, including model projects for delivering technology, model research and development projects and income contingent direct loan demonstration projects. The model service delivery project is funded at \$1.5 million for FY 89 with the remainder of the national projects to receive a total of \$5 million for FY89.

It may be an oversimplification, but it's not without a measure of truth, that for some people with severe disabilities achieving greater independence, productivity and community integration can be as easy as pushing a button or flipping a switch. With the help of the assistive technology law the necessary equipment and services should become accessible to people who can use them.

ITSD Project (cont'd)

And, one young man who lives in a nursing home in the Dallas area uses his computer as his link to the outside world; it has become his means for socializing and conversing with others.

Hoover says that electronic networking is just beginning to come into its own for the ITSD project. "There's a certain critical point you have to reach in electronic networking. Until you have about 200 people you don't have enough good information to share. You have to reach that critical point before you take off, but once you do it booms," she says.

The project's log-ins tripled in 1988. Currently the network has between 700-800 members and added 400 new members this summer alone.

The project has a number of other

components. Each year project staff presents a series of workshops that introduce special education teachers, rehabilitation counselors, consumers, parents and others to the latest advances in rehabilitation technology. The project has also developed an evaluation of functional abilities through the Center for Advanced Rehabilitation Engineering (Human Performance Profile), as well as public domain software, which gives advice and information about an individual's ability to deal with his or her environment through assistive devices.

For Michelle, the computer she now uses to practice a spelling lesson at home may eventually become part of a series of assistive devices that will better enable her to participate fully in a

regular classroom. Computers can help her practice and improve language skills. They will enable her to copy material from the board without assistance at school and to print out her own homework at home. They can help her improve her memory and her music skills.

The assistive devices she's beginning to use now will enable her to become more independent, more productive and more integrated into her community. Put more simply, through the use of an assistive devices, Michelle will be better able to do what all the other kids do.

For more information about the ITSD project, contact Betts Hoover, ITSD, University of Texas at Arlington, Box 19129, Arlington, TX 76019, (817) 794-5030.

Public Forum (cont'd)

detailed for Council members the cycle of constant care in which they are involved and the importance of having a break from that.

Better understanding of disabilities was a subject addressed by three people who testified at the forum. Issues mentioned included the lack of knowledge that physicians, educators, case workers and other professionals have about specific disabilities, the fact that attitudinal barriers can be the greatest handicap people with disabilities face, and the problems a person who has a hidden disability has in relating to employers.

In addition to the attitudinal barriers that result from lack of understanding of disability, speakers also noted that they had experienced discrimination as a result of disability in the areas of employment, education, and transportation. One speaker had experienced job loss and difficulty in job hunting as a result of her disability and also expressed concern that questions on job applications such as, "Do you have AIDS?", or "Do you have epilepsy?" were a means by which companies screen out applicants they feel might be a drain on their insurance. Two consumers who are deaf expressed concern that the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET), administered by the Texas Education Agency, may unintentionally discriminate against people who are deaf. Finally,

speakers who raised the issue of the lack of accessible transportation noted that requirements that people with disabilities give 24-hour advance notice of the need for paratransit transportation, amounts to discrimination.

Coordination among agencies was viewed by several speakers as essential to the development of an effective and comprehensive service delivery system. One speaker said that "real integration will never be achieved without coordinated planning between agencies, service providers and municipalities." Another speaker called on the Council and other disability groups to look upon their common goals and to encourage better coordination among state agencies in order to develop "a cohesive, comprehensive program for all disabilities."

The unavailability of day care was mentioned by three speakers as important. They noted that the lack of day care frequently begins a cycle of unemployment and poverty for families with children who have developmental disabilities.

A variety of training issues were raised by speakers at the forum, including individual advocacy training, training for parents and training for staff and personnel who work with people who have developmental disabilities. One consumer noted, "I don't think anyone can be more powerful or as effective as people with disabilities to advocate for

coordinating, planning and access into society." Another speaker told the Council that parents need "your help in how to change the system — how to influence school boards and MHMR." She encouraged the Council to move "more in the direction of systems change and teaching us to do the same." Two speakers noted that as more people with developmental disabilities become integrated into the community, there is a need to provide training to the personnel, including regular classroom teachers, who will work with them.

In addition to these topics, which were discussed most often and in greatest detail, other topics mentioned less frequently by individual speakers included the need for guardianship for people with developmental disabilities, the need for more community living options and the general unavailability of many services for people with developmental disabilities who live in rural areas. "The Council very much appreciates the time people took to share their experiences and suggestions with us," said Council Chairman Lee Veenker. "We were pleased to learn that some of our current planning efforts have resulted in the Council moving in the direction suggested by the forum participants. We also recognize that there are a number of other topics which will require further review and consideration by the Council."

ADA (Cont'd)

The bill delineates the forms of discrimination that would be made unlawful and gives clear requirements for the removal of architectural, transportation and communications barriers to people with disabilities. It also outlines requirements for making reasonable accommodations to permit the participation of an individual who has a disability and provides for the elimination of standards, qualifications or eligibility criteria that screen out people with disabilities.

The bill would establish procedural and enforcement mechanisms similar to those available under the 1964 Civil Rights Act and would include administrative remedies, private right of action in federal court, monetary damages, injunctive relief, attorney's fees and cut-off of federal funds.

Consumers and other advocates expect a re-introduction of the bill early in the next session of Congress.

November/December, 1988



News You Can Use

Summary of Legislation

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) has released a Summary of Existing Legislation Affecting Persons with Disabilities. The publication summarizes federal laws which contain explicit provisions related to people with physical or mental disabilities. Each entry includes an overview of the law, major programs affecting people with disabilities, and the legislative history of the bill. Entries are grouped by topic. Limited copies are available free of charge. Request Publication No. E-88-22014, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 20202-2524.

Request for Proposals

The Texas Commission for the Blind (TCB) has announced a request for proposals for services leading to supported employment. The intent of TCB is to establish a statewide system of supported employment which provides the option of integrated, community-based employment for individuals who are visually impaired and who require ongoing support to maintain employment. The Commission anticipates awarding grants to approximately seven organizations that wish to begin supported employment projects. For more information and an application packet, contact Keith Kitchens, TCB, P.O. 12866, Austin, Texas 78711, (512) 459-2669. Proposals must be postmarked by December 15, 1988.

Information Clearinghouse

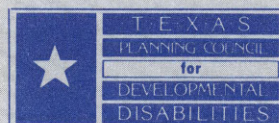
The National Support Center for Persons with Disabilities was established by IBM to demonstrate and provide information about equipment (both IBM and non-IBM) and about services available to people who have disabilities. The center operates a toll-free hotline that provides information about products and agencies. Call 1-800-IBM-2133, voice or TDD.

Information and Referral Guide

The Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons has completed an information and referral guide for assisting people with disabilities in Texas. The directory lists more than forty organizations that offer services to Texans with disabilities. To obtain a copy, contact, Cindy Counts, GCDP, 118 E. Riverside, Austin, TX 78704, (512) 445-8275 (Voice or TDD).

Vocational Special Needs Conference

Transition: A Shared Responsibility is theme of the Vocational Special Needs Conference sponsored by the College of Education at Texas A & M University. The conference will be held February 19 - 21, 1989 at the Austin Marriott Hotel at the Capitol and is directed to consumers, parents, professionals and employers. For information and registration, contact Kathy Vansickle, Texas A & M, Educational Psychology, College Station, TX 77843-4225, (409) 845-2444.



Highlights

Highlights is produced by the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities for distribution to Council members, grantees and other interested persons throughout the state. Organizations that serve persons who have developmental disabilities are encouraged to submit news items for publication. Inquiries may be addressed to Mary Jo Magruder, editor, Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, 118 E. Riverside Dr., Austin, Texas 78704; or telephone (512) 445-8852, voice or TDD. Taped copies are available upon request. Phototypesetting and printing by Texas Rehabilitation Commission Reproduction Services.

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