

Workstream

Texas Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons



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Texas School for the Deaf students share the new sign for echolocation. The sign shows a sound that shoots out, hits an object and then bounces back.
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Sea World reaches out

Sea World of Texas is a 250 acre accessible zoological park located in San Antonio. The park offers a unique and creative educational program designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities in Texas.

Sea World has a management staff that cares and is attuned to the needs of people with disabilities. The driving force behind the educational program is Mary Alice Ramirez, director of education. She feels very strongly that students with disabilities must not be left out.

Why? Because as an educator for eleven years with an emphasis in special education Mary Alice knew that adapting curriculums to meet the needs of special education students was all too common. She says, "As special education teachers we had to adapt programs and figure things out on our own." Her determination created a program with special education as the foundation.

She enthusiastically described the educational program which serves 2,000 to 3,000 students daily. Sea World averages one or two special needs tours each Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Each tour is limited to 20 students and accommodates individual needs. Students with disabilities include those with hearing, visual, emotional, language and learning disabilities are easily accommodated. Most students with physical disabilities are mainstreamed.

And to top it all off Sea World of Texas has adopted Texas School for the Deaf (TSD) in Austin because their management team felt very strongly that they could meet the special needs of these students. As a result of this partnership a special video called "Signs of the Sea" was produced. The video is voiced and signed and provides information about sea animals found at Sea World.

TSD also researched and shared signs for marine life terminology for Sea World. The signs researched and developed are ones that can be easily understood in Texas. One sign developed by Cathy Blasingame, an interpreter at the Texas School for the

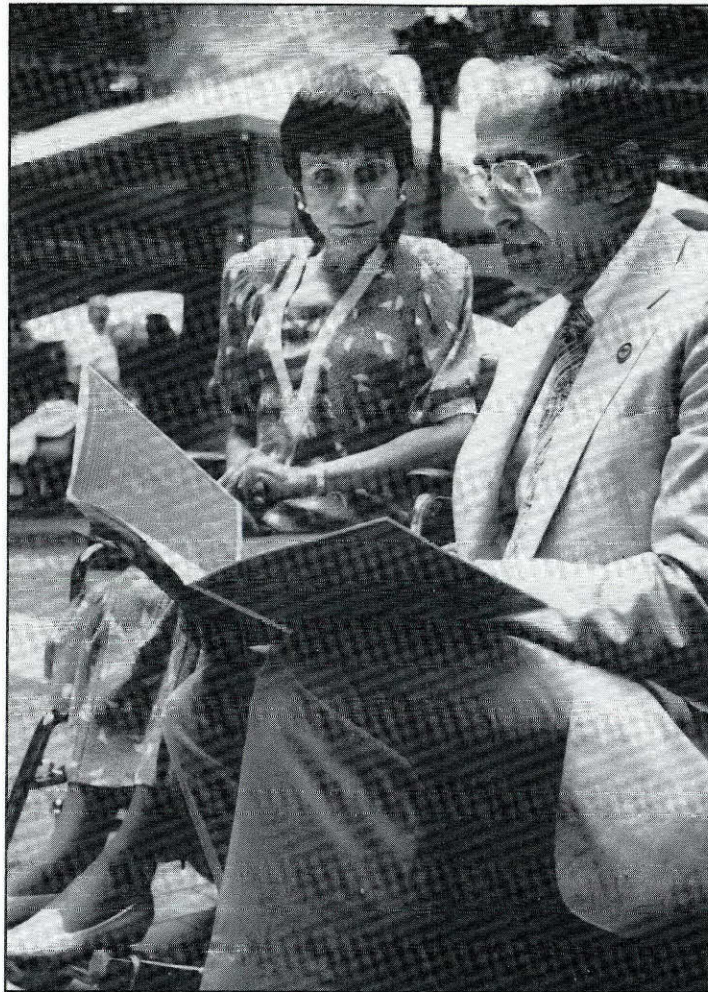
Continued on page 2

Work: The Key to Opportunity

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Conference programming and site accessibility at Dallas' Loews Anatole Hotel are reviewed by Virginia Roberts, executive director of the Governor's Committee and Jay Rochlin, former executive director of the President's Committee.

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May 22 - 24, 1991, Dallas, Texas is your chance to have it all. The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities will look at the future of people with disabilities. Where? At the largest disability related meeting ever held in Texas.

Historically, this is the third time in the forty year history of the President's Committee that this annual meeting has been held outside of Washington, D.C.

Recently President Bush said, "I'm going to do whatever it takes to make sure the disabled are included in the mainstream... They are not going to be left out any more." With this

thought in mind, the President signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This law has provided energy. New opportunities are opening up for people with disabilities.

As the President's Committee annual meeting occurs the nation will begin to grapple with implementing this new commitment to people with disabilities.

The conference program tackles a variety of ADA issues and will emphasize work as the key to opportunity. This training conference focuses on ways

for business and rehabilitation communities to team up with people with disabilities under ADA.

The President's Committee meeting has a substantial economic impact for Texas. Based on the International Association of Convention and Visitors' Bureaus adopted formulas, the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities annual meeting which attracts 4,000 - 5,000 people will have an estimated economic impact of \$3,829,406.64.

For the latest conference information contact Kathy Gallagher at 214-464-6507 or Virginia Roberts at 512-483-4380. And, next May, plan on being in Dallas at the annual meeting of the President's Committee. You are part of . . . what it takes to make sure people with disabilities are in the mainstream.

Sea World

Continued from page 1

Deaf, is the sign for echolocation. Echolocation might be described as a natural form of navigation or radar for sea animals.

Other partnership opportunities include TSD receiving 100 free tickets to Sea World during Deaf Awareness Day and also receiving a valentine's day gift from Sea World of a show at TSD in Austin. At the same time, Sea World visitors benefited from performances by the TSD choir and drama club.

Ellen Cherry a TSD speech pathologist added that, "TSD provides certified interpreters for teachers workshops held by Sea World throughout the year."

Let's hear it for Sea World and Texas School for the Deaf. What a great team!

Valuing Differences . . .

Disability and Employment

Americans are realizing that a disability is only one part of a person. The fact that someone may be a little different doesn't make his or her life less valuable, and doesn't make him or her a second-class citizen. People with disabilities simply have a disability that affects how they might do some things.

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"The hardest thing about being a woman with CP is plucking my eyebrows. That is how I originally got pierced ears."

Geri Jewell

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Several weeks ago in Austin, I met the actress and comedian Geri Jewell. She was born with cerebral palsy, which affects her walking. She said, "People think I'm on drugs because of the way I walk." "Some people think I'm drunk," she told me. "It's not my



Dawn Bosley, left, and Geri Jewell, right, discuss the value of self-directed laughter and use of humor as a key to putting others at ease and valuing the differences.

cerebral palsy that causes me problems, it's the way that society looks at me and regards me -- that causes problems." This story gets to the heart of the problem -- society's perceptions about disability. Society has been putting disability first and people second. That's backwards.

Jewell described CP as a condition that affects the motor part of the brain. She says, "It can happen before birth, after birth, or in trauma. In other words - anytime. I have had CP for 34 years and it's been an absolute blessing."

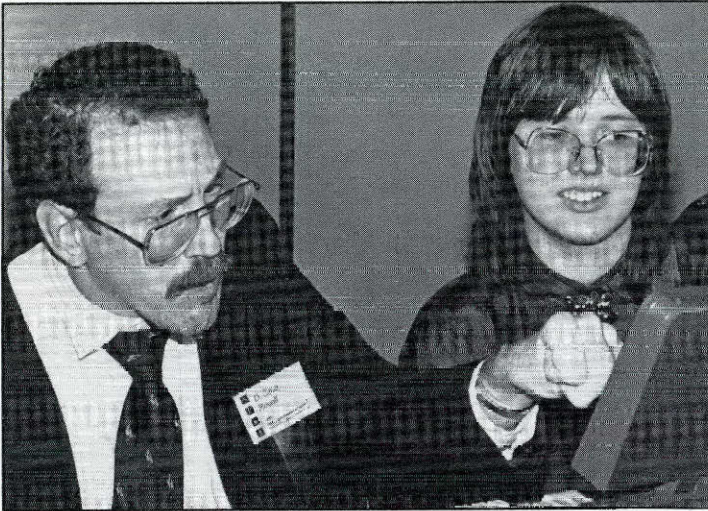
When I asked Geri Jewell how she thought society's views could change she responded, "training and education in valuing differences is vital -- it shifts your perceptions."

She also suggested that we not take ourselves too seriously. Primarily because she feels humor can help us change the way we look at our lives. For instance, she said laughingly that the hardest thing about being a woman with CP is plucking her eyebrows -- that, she says, is how she originally got pierced ears.

Geri Jewell went on to say that it's time to look for what we might learn from someone who sees things differently and value those differences. "We've all got to slow down and look for the beauty -- we don't all have to agree," she said in closing.

1990 Employment Award Winners

for outstanding contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities



D. Scott Royall who works for Shell Oil communicated his acceptance speech to the luncheon crowd through a voice-activated computer as he was named Disabled Person of the Year. Royall, who is a wheelchair user, has cerebral palsy and cannot speak.

Martha Arbuckle Award
Waco Mayor's Committee for Disabled Persons

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Service
Doug Nicholson, Director Lufkin Workshop and Opportunity Center

Healthcare Professional of the Year
Dr. Mary Bubliss, Plainview

Public Employee of the Year
Larry Blowers, Wichita Falls

Governmental Agency of the Year
Major General Jeffrey D. Kahila, Commander Army and Air Force Exchange Service

Small Employer of the Year
Scarlett Rabalais Hot Diggity Dogs, Inc.

Large Employer of the Year
Gene McDavid, President The Houston Chronicle

Disabled Person of the Year
D. Scott Royall, Houston Shell Oil

Workstream

Workstream focuses on the employment of persons with disabilities and promotes mainstream participation and total accessibility in all aspects of life. Workstream is published quarterly by the Texas Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons.

Communications may be addressed to Cindy Counts, editor, Workstream, 4900 North Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78751-2316. You may also call 512-483-4384 (voice) or 512-483-4387 (tdd).

Taped copies of the newsletter are provided upon request.

Virginia Roberts Executive Director
Cindy Counts Editor
Becky Nieto Illustrator
TRC Printing Services Printing

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Texas Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons
4900 North Lamar Blvd.
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