

REPORT



TEXAS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
4800 North Lamar, Austin, Texas 78756 512/459-2500

Vol. V, No. 1 March 1988



Pictured are (left to right) Elaine Moses, Austin; Frankie Sawyer, Austin; and Jack Earwood, Fort Worth, who were appointed to the Council by the Commission.

COUNCIL HOLDS INITIAL MEETING

The Texas Commission for the Blind hosted the initial meeting of the State Independent Living Council, January 25-26 in Austin. The fifteen member advisory group will provide guidance for the development and expansion of independent living programs and concepts on a statewide basis and will advise both the Texas Rehabilitation Commission and the Texas Commission for the Blind on issues specifically related to the independent living services.

A primary challenge for the new Council will be the development of a five year state plan addressing long-term goals and recommendations for expanding independent living programs and services in Texas. During the January meeting, Council members had an opportunity to hear from Commission Executive Director Pat Westbrook and TRC Commissioner Max Arrell. The Council also elected Dr. Thomas D. Carter of El Paso as Chairman.

"We are wholeheartedly committed to the mission of this new Council, and we look forward to working together towards the enhancement of independent living programs and services for all Texans who are disabled," said Westbrook. He stressed the importance of identifying the special independent living needs of populations such as the state's elderly blind so as to ensure that the needs of all disabled citizens in this area are fully identified and addressed.

CONGRESS WILL LOOK AT AIRLINE POLICIES

A bill to amend the Federal Aviation Act of 1958 to prohibit discrimination against blind individuals in establishing restrictions on seating in aircraft has been filed in Congress by U.S. Representative James A. Traficant, Jr. of Ohio.

Titled as the "Air Travel Rights for Blind Individuals Act," H.R. 3883 would prohibit an air carrier from using a passenger's visual acuity or use of a white cane or dog guide as the basis for establishing any restriction on seating in aircraft.

The Bill has been referred to the Committee on Public Works and Transportation.

INSIDE

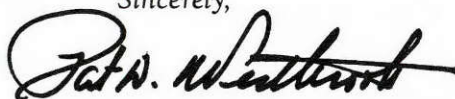
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A Word from the Director

It seems like only last week we were talking with many of you about the 1987 session of the Texas Legislature and the legislative budget process. With the beginning of 1988, we are once again beginning the process of developing our legislative budget request, this time for state fiscal year 1990 and 1991. Even though it will be nearly ten months before the legislature returns to Austin we have just received the initial instructions from the legislative and governor's budget offices. First submission of the agency's budget request will be due by early July. Again, your input is important to us in developing the funding request priorities. In my last correspondence to you I mentioned the consumer forums which are being held in various parts of the state during this year. We look forward to receiving your input at these forums so that it can be considered during the development of our request.

Based on current economic information we receive from various sources we expect the 1990-91 budget to be one in which funds may be as limited as during the last biennium. Not only will funding be an issue but I also expect a significant amount of activity surrounding the reports and recommendations of the numerous committees studying various segments of state government and its structure. Just like your vote is important, your input to this agency is important in determining the direction we will proceed in providing future services to Texans who are blind and visually impaired.

Sincerely,



Pat D. Westbrook
Executive Director

MUSICALLY SPEAKING

Music-Makers is an organization established to locate blind and visually impaired individuals in Texas who are interested in pursuing a career in the music industry. The group plans to actively promote talented musicians who are blind and help them advance their career goals. Anyone interested in this venture should contact Commission member Walter Musler by writing 722 Inspiration Drive, San Antonio, Texas 78228, or calling (512) 435-2650. Musler encourages interested parties to submit a short biographical sketch along with a

description of their musical talents as well as a short cassette tape with samples of the person's musical work.



DESCRIPTIVE TV HITS THE AIRWAVES

A 1976 study conducted by the American Foundation for the Blind revealed that blind people watched up to six hours of television every day. Recognizing the powerful role the medium plays in the lives of most Americans, it is safe to assume that television viewing has not decreased for persons who are blind during the last twelve years.

Descriptive Video Service (DVS) is a new concept that is based on audio descriptions of action, settings, costumes and other details which are transmitted over a channel available on the stereo television sets. The descriptions can be heard during pauses in the dialogue.

The first national test of this new service began in January. Nine public television stations, including KERA in Dallas, are now testing DVS which is airing on PBS's "American Playhouse" series. The test will run through July.

"The eye complications associated with AIDS are so new, many doctors don't consider the possibility of AIDS in their diagnosis. But an eye disorder may be the first sign that AIDS has begun in a person infected with the human immunodeficiency virus. Diagnosis is further complicated by the fact that the eye disease symptoms may mimic those caused by other diseases."

— Dr. Gary Cowan, Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology, The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

NOTES OF APPRECIATION

I would like to take this opportunity to let you know that Mr. C.A. King was very instrumental in my educational pursuits and accomplishments with his support, assistance, understanding, patience, and professionalism, for which I am very grateful and appreciative. In today's world it is difficult enough to achieve your goals without a handicap, and with one, only the aid of such a dedicated employee continues to bolster both your determination and self esteem..."

(Excerpts from a letter to Executive Director Pat Westbrook regarding Wichita Falls VR Counselor C.A. King.)

COMMISSION AWARDS THREE CONTRACTS

The Commission has awarded contracts to the Texas School for the Blind, Goodwill Industries in San Antonio, and the Lighthouse of Houston for supported employment services. The purpose of each contract is to expand employment options for severely disabled clients for whom competitive employment has not been a viable option. Under the contract agreements, job coaches will be available at job sites to help clients participating in this program to learn how to adequately perform their jobs. Job coaches will also provide on-going support to ensure that the clients have every opportunity to keep their jobs.

**TOLL-FREE
TELEPHONE
NUMBER**

1-800-252-5204

IN BRIEF

- "From School to Work: A Weekend Seminar for High School Visually Impaired Students and Their Parents" will be held May 27-29 at the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center in Austin. Sponsored by the Texas Education Agency, Education Service Center - Region XIII and the Commission, the workshop gives participants an opportunity to explore various issues that impact the lives of young persons who are blind or visually impaired as they make the transition from high school to higher education or employment. For more information, contact Elaine Moses, 5701 Springdale Road, Austin, Texas 78723 or the Commission.
- The Texas Energy Extension Service (EES), a program of the Governor's Energy Management Center, offers information about conserving energy in homes, offices and small businesses. The printed materials, which cover such areas as heating and air conditioning systems, insulation, windows, water heating and fans and appliances are being made available on audio cassettes for the benefit of individuals with visual and physical impairments. The tapes are available through the Texas State Library's Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. (1-800-252-9605, or in Austin, 463-5458). The tapes are also available through most of the lighthouses for the blind across the state.
- "Working It Out: A Conference on Supported Employment" will be held May 4-6 in Austin. Sponsored by the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, the conference will feature presentations on issues and practices of supported employment by

nationally recognized practitioners. For more information contact the Council at 512/445-8867 (voice or TDD).

- **Community Integration: Here to Stay**" will be held June 8-10 in Austin. The conference will explore various issues that impact on total integration into communities by persons who are disabled. The gathering will be sponsored by Advocacy, Incorporated and the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities. For more information, call 512/477-4562.
- The Lighthouse of Houston has broken ground on a \$1.8 million Community Services Center. The new building (slated for completion in June) will house the therapeutic recreation department, volunteer services, low vision clinic, social services and counseling, library and day activity program for older adults and a new day care for children. The 28,000 square foot facility will feature an indoor swimming pool, an exercise room, auditorium and a rehabilitation training area.

REPORT is an official publication of the Texas Commission for the Blind. It is available free of charge to any individual requesting to be placed on the mailing list. News articles should be forwarded to the Public Information Office, P.O. Box 12866, Austin, Texas 78711 or call 512/459-2612. This newsletter is available on tape upon request. Toll-free number is **1-800-252-5204**.

Lewis R. Timberlake, Chairman
Pat D. Westbrook, Executive Director
Rolando Garza, Editor
Jean Wakefield, Editorial Assistant





Lamar University in Beaumont has been honored with an Employer of the Year Award by the Commission. "This is an award that all of us at Lamar University-Beaumont take great pride in accepting," said Dr. Billy J. Franklin, President of the University. Pictured above (left to right) are Commission member C.R. Keeney of Houston and Franklin during the award presentation.

"The American people are becoming more and more aware of the great potential of citizens with disabilities. We are also realizing that providing equal employment opportunities to handicapped individuals is both the right thing to do and a matter of economic common sense and necessity."

—President Ronald Reagan

"TIPS" FROM HELOISE

For years, Heloise has been internationally recognized for the valuable household hints she offers readers in her newspaper columns. Soon she'll also be known for a national campaign designed to teach people how to help persons who are blind.

The new endeavor will start in San Antonio, the columnist's hometown. She plans to later expand it to a national scale. Commenting on her impressions from touring the San Antonio Association for the Blind recently, Heloise noted "The people there are self-sufficient and very capable." In an interview with the *San Antonio Light*, Heloise noted that her interest in the lives of blind persons stems from her childhood when she underwent several operations to correct her crossed eyes.

"I think many people just don't know how to react to a blind person. The best thing to do is just ask if they would like any help," she points out.

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