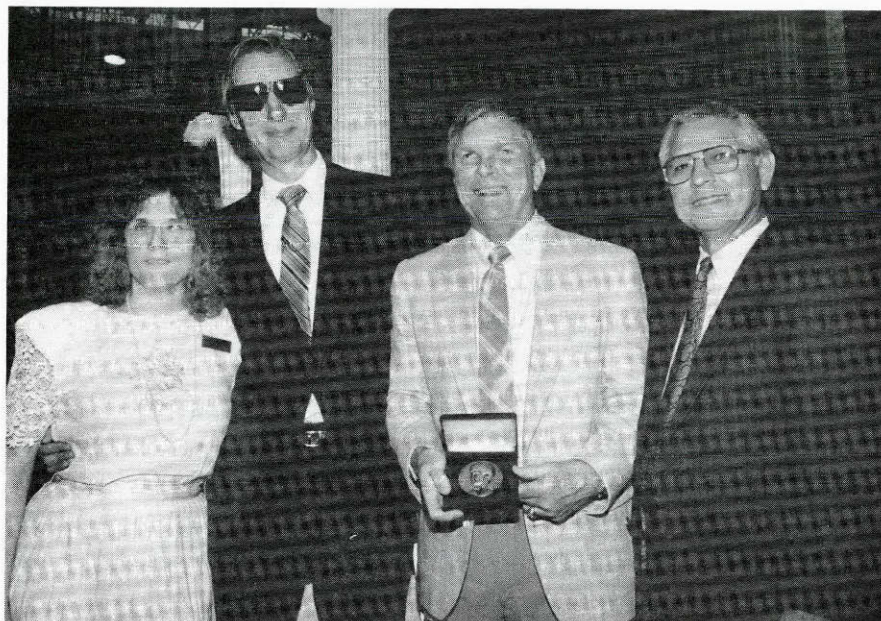


# REPORT



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

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A festive mood predominated the evening reception held in San Antonio for the announcement of the 1990 Barbara Jordan Award winners. On hand to receive the medallion on behalf of the Commission was Dallas Board member John Turner, who noted that the booklet has been of great benefit to him personally as a dog guide user and lauded the Committee for recognizing a public awareness project that contributes to the daily independence of persons who are blind. Pictured are (l-r) Claire Barlow Roffino, GCDP member from Dallas who also serves on the Commission's Consumer Advisory Committee; Larry Johnson of San Antonio who is the current chairman of the agency's Consumer Advisory Committee; Turner and Arnoldo Vera, Commission regional supervisor in San Antonio, as they enjoy some of the evening's festivities.

## COMMISSION GARNERS BARBARA JORDAN AWARD

The Texas Commission for the Blind was recently honored by the Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons as a recipient of a Barbara Jordan Award for work on a booklet entitled "In Texas, Any Place You Take Your Eyes, I Can Take My Dog Guide — It's The Law." This publication is a pocket-size booklet that outlines the rights and responsibilities of dog guide users in Texas. It was produced in response to an expressed consumer need for concise and clear information focused on dog guide usage. Response to the booklet has been phenomenal, with requests coming in from various businesses, organizations, and groups throughout the nation. One restaurant chain has sent information regarding the booklet to its outlets in Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Virginia. Another organization has included information on the use of dog guides in their training for all new managers.

"Denying a person who is blind access to a public facility simply because they have a dog guide violates not only state law, but also human dignity," says Pat Westbrook, Executive Director. He adds that this publication has "opened the public's eyes to the fact that citizens who are blind are an integral part of society whether at a restaurant, department store, or any other public place."

## Focusing on Employment

October marks the annual observation of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This year's theme, "Employment: Investing in America's Future," calls upon employers to consider qualified applicants with disabilities for jobs which they may have available. Bolstered by the recent passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act, the annual NDEAM observation will be celebrated with various events at the national, state, and local level.

# A Word From the Director

This is our first issue of "Report" since I had the privilege of witnessing the signing of the Americans With Disabilities Act in July. That was quite a day, and I recognized many other Texans in the crowd of celebrants from every state in the nation.

Even though most of the requirements under this important act don't become effective until 1992, its immediate effects are being felt and written about. Hopefully, every one of the approximately 198,000 people in our own state who are blind or visually impaired will personally benefit from this strong piece of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination in employment, public accommodations, transportation and telecommunications.

Because the primary role of the Texas Commission for the Blind is to provide Texans who are blind or visually disabled with the skills to be independent, working, taxpaying citizens, the Americans With Disabilities Act will facilitate our own rewarding tasks by expanding the job opportunities for qualified Texans who are blind.

We celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, which is, another occasion to focus on what President Bush said when he appealed directly to businesses during the signing of the ADA. In his words, "You have in your hands the key to the success of this act, for you can unlock a splendid resource of untapped human potential."

Here in Texas there are approximately 81,000 blind and visually impaired Texans between the ages of 18 and 64 who want to work to support themselves and maintain their independence. Some are already successfully employed; others are still waiting for the opportunity. I'd like to echo President Bush's words and encourage businesses to welcome the added strength of Texans with disabilities into the total work force. It's good for Texas.

Sincerely,



Pat D. Westbrook  
Executive Director

*"Our success with this Act proves that we are keeping faith with the spirit of our courageous forefathers who wrote in the Declaration of Independence:*

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights."*

---President George Bush

## At Issue: Usher's Syndrome

A comprehensive three-day conference, featuring three separate "tracks" for professionals, family members, and consumers, was held in Kerrville October 5-7. Joining the Commission as sponsors for this in-depth look at Usher's Syndrome were the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Deaf-Blind Outreach), the Arkansas Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program, the Southwest Center for the Hearing Impaired, Gallaudet University, the Gallaudet Regional Center in Mesquite, Texas, the Texas School for the Deaf, the Texas Commission for the Deaf, and the Helen Keller National Center. The conference featured sessions on demographics and population needs; service delivery components, including screening, genetic counseling, independent living, and cross-cultural considerations; transition planning; and the needs of siblings, adolescents, and adults with Usher's Syndrome. The conference will provide an opportunity for people to network with consumers and professionals who have practical and personal experience dealing with Usher's Syndrome. Also included in the program were exhibits and demonstrations of various products and equipment available for persons with Usher's Syndrome.





Comptroller of Public Accounts Bob Bullock (l.) receives a special award from Commission Executive Director Pat D. Westbrook during a recent staff training conference in Kerrville. Comptroller Bullock was recognized by the Commission for his personal support and involvement in a number of projects that have helped facilitate an environment of increased accessibility and opportunity for Texans who are blind and visually impaired. "The Comptroller's Office, under the stewardship of Mr. Bullock, has taken the forefront in state government to not only make information available in various formats such as braille, but also to work with the Commission in developing new and creative ways of expanding employment opportunities for citizens who are blind and visually impaired," said Westbrook. In his comments to agency staff, Comptroller Bullock lauded the Commission for its efforts and extended his support to the agency and its mission.

## Commission Boosts Transition Efforts

Transition. We hear this word almost daily in and around the agency's offices. The 71st Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 417, which states that a Memorandum of Understanding between agencies "would establish the respective responsibility of each agency for the provision of the services necessary to prepare students enrolled in special education for successful transition to life outside the public school system."

"Although the Commission has been providing limited transition services to young people for quite some time, preparing for the full implementation of Senate Bill 417 the Commission has employed a limited number of specially trained staff to better meet the needs of this segment of our clients," says Pat Westbrook, Executive Director. The Transition Program, targeting clients between the ages of 16 and 22, will offer information-sharing regarding services and resources, summer group activities for clients, and training for clients, parents, and teachers in various parts of the state.

The new Transition Coordinators are Gary Everhart, Austin; Yvonne Shelton, Houston; Vida Dash, San Antonio; Polly Sharp, Dallas; Bobby Druessedow, Fort Worth; Judy Moore, Corpus Christi; and Oscar Jimenez, El Paso. Julie Lee Kay is the Commission's Transition Program Coordinator. For more information on the agency's transition services, contact Kay at 512/459-2576.

## Workshops Slated For Classroom Teachers

Classroom teachers who may be interested in learning more about how to work with a student who is blind or visually impaired will benefit from a two-day workshop sponsored by the Commission. As a result of a grant award announced recently by the United States Department of Education, the Commission, along with personnel from The University of Texas at Austin's Department of Special Education, the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Texas State Library, and the Texas Education Agency, will conduct a series of six workshops across the state. "Based on the results of two pilot workshops we conducted last year in South Texas, we found that there is a genuine interest and need for the type of information these workshops provide," says Scott Bowman, manager of the Commission's Staff Development Unit and project coordinator for the grant. The six sites for the workshops will include Waco, Laredo, Midland, Fort Worth, Amarillo, and Tyler. For more information on the workshop dates and times, contact Bowman at 512-459-2650.

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  
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Rolando Garza, Editor  
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## ADA Signing Holds Special Memory For San Angelo Workers

It's a long way from San Angelo, Texas to Washington, D.C. But on July 26 when President Bush signed the Americans With Disabilities Act into law, somehow the distance was insignificant. The ADA signing had a special meaning for workers at the West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind who produced the pens used by the President for the historic signing. Ten dozen pens, bearing the inscription "JWOD and America's blind workers salute the Americans With Disabilities Act July 26, 1990," were sent to Washington. According to a Lighthouse official, some of the pens also came from the San Antonio Association for the Blind. "This is the first time that I know of that the President has ever signed a bill with a blind-made product," said Lighthouse Executive Director Bob Porter in an interview with the *San Angelo Standard-Times*. As for the employees who produced the pens, they were excited to know that the fruits of their labors would in some way have a symbolic impact on the lives of people with disabilities across the country. (EDITOR'S NOTE: "JWOD" stands for the Javits, Wagner, and O'Day Act which deals with the federal purchases of products made by individuals who are blind.)

### IN BRIEF

■ "Access to Mass Transit for Blind and Visually Impaired Travelers" is a new Publication of the American Foundation for the Blind. The book offers a wealth of information on safe travel on subways, buses and commuter rails for persons who are blind and visually impaired. For more information, contact AFB, 15 West 16th St., New York, NY 10011.

■ "Work \Able Texas!," a 16-minute video production that profiles several successful agency clients in diverse jobs, is now available through the Commission. Narrated by Commission member Dr. James Caldwell of Austin, the new program shows numerous clients at their jobs and includes comments from employers regarding the value of hiring qualified individuals who are blind or visually impaired. For more information, contact the Commission's Public Information Office at 512-459-2612.

## Foundation Launches National Word Search

*"The wisdom and compassion of man, with which he tries to check his crimes and folly, are couched in print. In words pressed on to paper lie man's best hopes of doing something more than merely surviving."*

—John Hersey

According to an official with the National Cristina Foundation, "The mindset of society needs a new word." So intent is the New York-based organization on finding a new word or a new combination of existing words to describe a person with a disability, that the Foundation is offering a \$50,000 prize for the top entry in the contest it is sponsoring. The purpose of the contest is to create a new, positive word to describe people with disabilities and "raise awareness of the fact that there is a group of people in our society who have not been sufficiently recognized for their abilities." Entries must be postmarked by November 30 and sent to NCF, 2301 Argonne Drive, Baltimore, MD 21218.

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