

FEATURES

YEAR OF THE DISABLED

Lloyd Wasser

This is the International Year of Disabled Persons. It's a special year, for it's the first time in history that the physically and mentally disabled of our world have been recognized as an important social group.

Oh, sure, we've all watched the Special Olympics on television and sent in our contributions to Jerry's Kids each Labor Day weekend; we've always been quick to applaud the construction of ramp-ways and special washrooms; the technologists among us have worked diligently to create and update motorized wheelchairs, special telephones and other apparatus, and our politicians have fought for new by-laws to assist disabled persons.

But all this didn't come about by magic. Someone didn't jump up one day and say "hey, let's help the handicapped!". It took the disabled themselves to bring about such changes; changes that took many years to implement and still have many years of revision ahead of them before things are acceptable. If it wasn't for the will and the determination of handicapped people around the world, they'd all still be exiled to special hospitals or convalescent homes.

In Canada, we've all seen the remarkable changes that have come about. Our own campus is a fine example of wheelchair accessibility, and creation of special tape libraries for the blind, new methods of teaching

and education, and improved technology have made our country one of the leaders in this handicapped revolution.

But for all our good deeds, these people have still been forgotten. We can concentrate on correcting the problem but we miss the whole point of the issue: acceptance. Until we learn to accept and care about the handicapped, nothing will ever really change; they will still be considered second-class citizens.

So in this, the latter part of the International Year of Disabled Persons, let's all take a closer look at the problem, not its solutions. For until these people are accepted into our hearts and our homes a solution will never really exist.



Check out your Options!

Mike Guy

"Options has so much to offer," says Karen Swartz, a York Sociology undergraduate. "Our principle objective this year is to recruit new people. We haven't had one dissatisfied volunteer so far."

With the advent of a new school year, Karen Swartz and the staff of Options are searching for individuals from North York and surrounding regions to fill their volunteer positions. Florella Cribari and Lori Visconti (both York psychology majors) work as coordinators of Options' daily operations; They agreed on its value.

"If you enjoy meeting interesting individuals of all denominations, Options is the club for you. You maybe a shy person but you can overcome that shyness by joining Options," says Cribari.

"There are many openings for new members," Visconti states. "We need photographers, artists, students studying Law and even interior decorators."

Options provides several programmes which help the volunteer to help himself, and, at the same time, also assist the

community. They include a Referral Centre, financial assistance, and research.

The Referral Centre is well established according to Swartz. "It assigns various volunteers to different organizations throughout the community. Over the last few years, Options has referred 200 students to a diverse number of community projects."

Options has also assisted in fund raising activities for projects in need of financial aid. "For two years we have raised over \$500 in Christmas funds which went towards supplying Christmas baskets for 60 families in the Jane/Finch area," Swartz says.

"We've supplied more than 30 students with summer employment."

Their most prestigious projects have been in the area of research, specifically with the handicapped. "We've supplied more than thirty students with summer employment to research topics such as the needs of the handicapped," Cribari says. Options applied for a govern-

ment grant and obtained \$65,000 which they spend on the research and the co-ordination of two booklets: *World of the Handicapped* and *New Frontiers for the Disabled*.

World of the Handicapped examines the needs of individuals who are crippled, deaf and afflicted with Multiple Sclerosis. The booklet details different household aids, transportation, and recreation facilities for such people. *New Frontiers for the Disabled* (the second booklet) examines family needs, higher education for the deaf and sports programmes for Cerebral Palsy victims (areas which the previous booklet didn't examine). As a spin-off of the booklets, *Spectrum*, Canada's National magazine on the Disabilities, was created.

Options needs you; they even offer credit courses to attract a large number of students. For two academic terms, students can do primary research on predetermined topics. Courses are available for the 1980/81 semester. For those interested in joining Options, there will be a meeting held in Vanier Senior Common Room on Oct. 7, from 4-6 pm.

Budget cuts deep

Howard Shulman

Peter Guimond knows what his goals in life are. He feels that the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services should help him achieve those goals, not put obstacles in his way. The major obstacle is that Guimond has lost half of his service funding, due to provincial budget cuts.

Guimond, 30, has been a paraplegic since an automobile accident ten years ago. Since that time he has needed daily support services. But with these cuts Guimond fears that his health will be jeopardized. Peter is authorized to pay for help, but he cannot employ professional help due to fluctuating class hours.

"Being a student is not a nine-to-five job," Guimond says. "It is very hard to look for other help because of the budget cuts and the salary offered is very low. Most of the people that have helped him in the past Guimond had to personally train. This means time and energy is wasted on finding people and training them, not on studying."

Guimond is an independent,

dedicated student and has attained twelve credits at York over the past two years. "The Vocational Rehabilitation Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services has sponsored my schooling over the past two years. As long as I maintain a vocational goal, the province must supply me with attendant care," Guimond explained.

But Guimond finds it difficult to continue if the assistance is not forthcoming. His whole livelihood depends on maintaining his education for future employment possibilities. "If the degree of my disability had improved the reduction in funding would have been appropriate. As it stands, this reduction has made it impossible to employ help."

Guimond hopes that more people, especially the handicapped, voice their opinions against the establishment, and those who cannot speak up should contact their M.P.'s.

"After all," says Guimond, "this is the Year of the Handicapped."

Tape library

For the disabled, books can be a luxury

Elliott Lefko

Thanks to a simple solution to a very great problem, a whole group of people will now have access to a post secondary education, where none existed before.

The tragedy was that many handicapped people could not get through the reading required by their courses, even though they had the intelligence to understand them.

The solution, previously, was to privately hire someone to read the text books. However, that was costly, and accessibility was a big hassle.

Now, from Trent University, comes the Audio Library program; veritable key to the world of college and university.

The program tapes post-secondary and college level materials onto master tapes which are then available to handicapped students upon request. Cassettes are then made and borrowed for up to a year. After that the student returns it, or keeps it and pays just for the cost of the cassette.

The library works under a request system. Students ask for a certain text and, if it isn't on tape, one will be made.

Volunteers are used to record the material onto cassettes. Many are general readers who come in for an hour or two a week and read course materials. However, there is also a great need for specialized

readers to record the more advanced material.

This year the program was expanded, when it was given three rooms at York.

"The Trent program was begun a few years ago, says acting York Audio Library Co-ordinator, Leo Murphy. "The York Program will be an extension of the Trent Program. Lorna Hilborn is the co-ordinator at Trent. Last year her program serviced 120 students. This year we won't know the numbers until the year's end. But it's gone up. We're now swamped."

The good idea was recognized by people such as York's Ellen Hoffman from the Scott Library. Murphy, a second-year Psychology major credits Hoffman with the acquisition of the three York rooms, in Scott, Steacie, and Osgoode Libraries.

Murphy, an Atkinson resident who travels around the campus in a wheelchair, says that the majority of the students in the program are visually impaired. Others suffer from a learning disability; their brains don't get the proper signals from the objects they're trying to digest.

At present the centre's main concern is finding volunteers to record the requests that have been flying in. "There are students in courses at Universities in Ontario who are now waiting for texts. Many of them needed them yesterday," Murphy deadpans.

Murphy estimates that Trent has 2000 books on master tapes. He says he's hoping to reach 3000 by the end of the year.

Volunteers, such as students, faculty, and staff, are required at York for at least an hour or two a week in a schedule format. The Centre offers orientation in the form of a couple of quick lessons. As mentioned, both general and specialized



Leo Murphy, of the Library

readers are needed. Ideally, someone who's in a certain field (such as Computer Science, English, Chemistry or Law) would read texts from their particular subject.

"It's rewarding," says Murphy, who plans on doing a lot more reading now that he is stepping down as York Co-ordinator to concentrate on his studies, and train volunteers, and do a lot of

taping himself. Suzanne Lawson will be the new full-time York Co-ordinator.

"You'll have immediate results," he says. "You have the satisfaction of knowing that the text you're recording will be used by a student the following week."

The York programme is funded by the Trent Audio Library Programme which is funded by private and public agencies. York has donated the three rooms which will be used as separate reading units

Murphy is presently working on the security aspect of the program. His plan thus far is to have someone at the libraries with a key. Volunteers will then come in, sign out a key, use the room for an hour, and return the key.

Anyone who is interested in participating in the program can call 665-3204 (Murphy's home phone) or 667-3312 and 667-3317 the number of York's Centre for Specialized Services For Handicapped Students. Applications are being left at the Handicapped Centre, 135 Behavioural Sciences.

Murphy, a strong, optimistic young man, views the program as one battle that he's definitely winning. "It makes me feel good watching someone who has the desire and ability let loose finally to pursue their interests and ambitions. My personal dream is to see every book in the Scott Library on tape."