

June 9, 1997

President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities
Recognition Program
1331 F Street NW
Washington, DC 20004-1107

Dear Committee:

I wish to nominate Laura Hershey in her outstanding contributions of advocating for employment of people with disabilities.

Laura is a Denver, Colorado organizer of the PASS Participants Rights Campaign (PPRC). She is concerned about problematic experiences with the Social Security Administration work incentive program known as the PASS program. Laura was a PASS consumer and experienced severe problems with poor implementation of this program. She has brought together many recipients of SSDI and SSI who have encountered similar hardships.

Laura's message is quite clear. She and members of the PPRC desire a work incentive program that will actually assist consumers to acquire economic freedom and self-sufficiency. Her bottom line motto is that people with disabilities want to work and pay taxes! Unfortunately, our Social Security system keeps people trapped in a catch 22.

Over the last several months, Laura has organized meetings and staged demonstrations at several area Social Security offices. Her dedication to changing the system for the better overshadows any concerns of arrests or retaliation from the Administration. Laura is an outstanding spokesperson on behalf of the PPRC and a wonderful role model for people with disabilities. Laura is a person making a difference in the lives of all people with disabilities. I am sure in time, she will be the person credited with challenging a cold and callused system and making it work on behalf of its consumers.

Laura Hershey deserves your recognition for her efforts to gain real employment options for people with disabilities. I personally have great admiration for this woman.

Sincerely,



Tym Bary, Disability Rights Activist
Boulder, CO

Kevin W. Williams, Esq.
General Counsel
Colorado Cross Disability Coalition
P.O. Box 18874
Denver, Colorado 80218
(303) 839-1775
E-mail KWW1997@aol.com

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
Recognition Program
1331 F Street NW
Washington DC 20004-1107

Committee Members:

I am writing this letter in support of the nomination of Laura Hershey for the President's Committee on Employment of Persons with Disabilities award. I have been a Denver, Colorado resident for seven years, and throughout that time, Laura has been unrelenting in her efforts to expand opportunities for persons with disabilities in the area of employment and beyond.

Most recently, Laura's efforts have been focused on the PASS Participants Rights Campaign. Laura has been instrumental in organizing this coalition of persons with disabilities who recognize that if persons with severe disabilities are ever to engage in meaningful employment, work incentive programs like PASS must not ignore the diverse abilities and needs of individuals who have all kinds of disabilities. Laura is both an essential organizer and an experienced leader in the area of creating real employment opportunities for those of us who are quite capable of working, but whose disabilities often impact our opportunities to transcend existing employment-related obstacles.

I feel safe in saying no American recognizes the complexity of the existing benefits-driven disability system and its relationship to the employment potential of persons with disabilities better than Laura Hershey. And no person has worked as hard as Laura to ensure that opportunities for persons with disabilities to be meaningfully employed remain available.

I respectfully request that the Committee seriously consider rewarding Laura Hershey's efforts, knowledge, and commitment by presenting her with the President's Committee on Employment of Persons with Disabilities award.

Sincerely,

COLORADO CROSS-DISABILITY COALITION
P.O. Box 18874, Denver, Colorado 80218 —(303) 839-1775 VOICE, (303) 839-1782 FAX & TDD

6/4/97

TO: Nominations Committee
President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
FROM: Julie Reiskin
Executive Director of Colorado Cross Disability Coalition

RE: President's Award 1997:

I hope you will accept this nomination. While we do have a Governor's Council in Colorado there is no process to nominate a person through that entity.

I am nominating Ms. Laura Hershey, of Denver Colorado for her efforts in starting and leading the PASS Participants Rights Campaign. Ms. Hershey was a self employed writer and consultant when the Social Security Administration, through it's revision of the PASS Program stopped her career dead in it's tracks leaving her destined to a life of poverty. This has happened to many disabled workers around the country and rather than falling into a sea of depression Ms. Hershey has organized other disabled citizens and our allies in Colorado and around the country to change the system and to challenge the rules which impede the progress of disabled workers. Since having her business yanked out from under her Ms. Hershey has been a leader in the PASS Participants Rights Campaign. This is an essential coalition and has chapters around the country as well as a toll free number. Without the efforts of this coalition not only would the PASS Program be destroyed, but millions of tax dollars would be wasted on other "work incentive" programs that do not good to social security beneficiaries with severe disabilities.

The PASS Program is a program developed by congress and implemented by SSA. PASS stands for Plan to Achieve Self Support and it is basically a program whereby a beneficiary is allowed to save their own money while receiving benefits until they can purchase what they need to become self supporting. These purchases were items such as voice activated computers, lift equipped vans or other adapted vehicles, job coaches, or other adaptations or assistive technology. Following a GAO report criticizing the PASS program the SSA, despite a congressional directive to interpret the law with maximal flexibility, imposed a moratorium on all new plans and plans in progress. This caused many people to go into bankruptcy, lose their equipment and ruin their credit for life. Their abrupt halting of their employment or business makes many of them now permanently unemployable. Ms. Hershey was among those victims of the SSA actions. Yet despite this she not on carried out all of the activities promised to clients of her business she threw herself into organizing the campaign and did some other volunteer work.

Activism and meeting challenges is not new to Ms. Hershey. Born in 1962 with a

severe form of muscular dystrophy Ms. Hershey graduates Cum Laude from Colorado College in 1983. In 1992 she was awarded an honorary doctorate being recognized for her writing and advocacy. Ms. Hershey has furthered her education with numerous conferences and seminars.

Ms. Hershey has maintained employment since 1980 where she tutored at Colorado College. She has held a number of positions in the advocacy arena including the Directorship of the Denver Commission for People with Disabilities. For the past seven years she has been the owner and CEO of Access Plus Con

Ms. Hershey is the author of numerous publications including Ms Magazine, New Mobility and had a column on disability in the Denver Post. She has had over 20 articles and editorials published in the past five years. Other recent accomplishments include ~~but are not limited to~~, participation in the International Womens NGO Conference in Beijing China representing Disabled women; a leader in the "Tune Jerry Out" movement, and the development of the largest community needs research project to ever be conducted in the Denver area. The work of Laura Hershey is a mainstay of Denver's disability community. The services provided by her business Access Plus Consulting not only enabled greater access and opportunity for others with disabilities, but proved the fact that no disability is so severe as to prevent success in employment. Ms. Hershey is a role model for many of us in the Denver community.

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market*

Many persons with disabilities can achieve self support through employment only through having the time and resources allotted to them to create and follow through with a plan. This is especially true for persons with very severe levels of disability. For many such persons the only work they are able to do is self employment at a professional level. One of the new provisions of the PASS is that they may now be used only for entry level positions. Ms. Hershey is challenging this rule as it would exclude many with severe disabilities from any kind of employment. For example under the new rules not only could Ms. Hershey have not formed her business but the two most active disability law attorneys in Denver would not have gone to law school.

Ms. Hershey and the PASS Participants Rights Campaign are fighting for the future of employment of people with disabilities. From demanding that SSA employees are accountable to their customers to challenging arbitrary denials and overpayment decisions Ms. Hershey has led the campaigns focus of Accountability, Protection, Recourse and Restitution. This advocacy which will hopefully lead to a restoration of the PASS Program will have far reaching impact on people with disabilities nationally. So many former PASS users have been driven into bankruptcy, had their special equipment repossessed, lost medical insurance and worst of all have been forced back into dependency after having that taste of independence that most advocates cannot in good conscience advocate that severely disabled individuals attempt to work. The stakes are too high and the damages too great. The SSA's proposed

return to work programs are not workable for most people with severe disabilities.

Awarding this award to Ms. Hershey would also show that the President does hold to the administration's effort to re-invent government. While Federal Agencies around the country are improving, doing more with less, and having a customer centered approach the actions of the SSA are reminiscent of the SSA during the Reagan Administration when millions of disabled persons were severely injured by SSA actions. It takes incredible fortitude to challenge the SSA and risk the retaliation that lies in wait...it also takes incredible intellectual ability to sift through all of the laws and regulations and translate that into information understandable to most PASS users. Ms Hershey not only possess these traits but has given hope to individuals with severe disabilities in Colorado and around the country.

I know I speak for many people when I urge you to please accept this nomination of this outstanding woman. I am happy to provide additional information or answer questions.



Consultant

Trainer

Speaker

Writer

Poet

EMPLOYMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- 9/90-Present Consultant/Owner, AccessPlus Consulting. Provide training, research, writing/editing services to businesses, agencies, and individuals. Projects/clients include: Denver Foundation Disability Community Survey; ADA transition plans for cities of Lakewood CO and Arvada CO; accessibility brochures for Norwest Bank, Elitch Gardens, and Arvada Center for the Arts; independent living courses for Personal Assistance Services of Colorado and Boulder Center for People with Disabilities.
- 4/89-7/90 Director, Denver Commission for People with Disabilities. Advised the Mayor on disability issues; did community education and advocacy; gave technical assistance; administered programs and projects.
- 1/89-4/89 Accessible Housing Specialist, Denver Commission for People with Disabilities. Designed, implemented programs to locate, assess, and upgrade accessible rental housing.
- 2/88-10/89 Consultant/Owner, AssisTeam Consultants. Provided expert support to human service agencies.
- 9/85-10/87 Home Health Program Coordinator, H.A.I.L., Inc. Developed programs to support disabled individuals in managing services; supervised contract workers.
- 9/80-5/83 Tutor, Writing Assistance Program, Colorado College. Taught expository writing skills.

ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

- 4/95-1/96 IDEAS 2000 Grant, Mobility International USA and World Institute on Disability. Awarded grant to research leadership strategies for women with disabilities at NGO '95 Forum on Women in Beijing, China.
- 1/90-Present Activist, American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today; Tune Jerry Out; Not Dead Yet.
- 2/95-Present Member, Nationwide Women's Program, American Friends Service Committee.
- 8/93 & 5/96 Peer reviewer, US Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services.
- 5/89-10/91 Board of Directors, Denver Center for Independent Living. Served one term as board president.
- 7/85 Participant, NGO Forum '85, Nairobi, Kenya.
- 7/84-8/85 Co-Founder, Domestic Violence Initiative for Women with Disabilities.
- 9/84-1/85 Tutor, Adult Education Tutorial Program. Volunteered to teach literacy, GED, and writing skills.
- 7/83-4/84 Thomas J. Watson Fellowship. Awarded grant to research England's disability rights movement.

PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS

- 11/96 *Sojourner*, "ADAPT or Perish" (article profiling several participants in a disability-rights demonstration.)
- 7/96 *Women's Studies Quarterly*, "Beyond Barriers" (article about disabled women at NGO Forum on Women.)
- 1/96 *New Mobility* magazine, "China Diary" (article chronicling trip to Beijing for NGO Forum on Women.)
- 3/95 *Ms.* magazine, "False Advertising" (article critiquing charity advertisers' portrayal of disabled women.)
- 7/94 *Ms.* magazine, "Choosing Disability" (article relating reproductive rights to disability rights.)
- 12/91-3/95 *Denver Post*, monthly opinion/editorial column focusing on disability-rights issues.
- 5/94-12/95 Contributing Editor, *One Step Ahead*. Wrote and edited for national, monthly newsletter.
- 4/94 *Women and Therapy*, "Coming Out in Voices" (journal article illuminating personal growth process.)
- 8/92 *Progressive*, "Exit the Nursing Home" (article about the growing movement against institutional "care".)

EDUCATION AND AWARDS

- 11/96 EDI Award in Print Journalism from National Easter Seals Society for article "China Diary" (see above).
- 6/95 Other Voices seminar. Selected for two-week-long workshop to create a full-length playscript.
- 6/95, 6/93, 7/92 Flight of the Mind. Selected to study poetry, journalism, & memoir at week-long workshops.
- 5/93 Women on the Move award from the League of Women Voters of Denver.
- 9/92 Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Colorado College. Recognized for writing and advocacy.
- 5/89 Outstanding Disabled Professional Woman national runner-up, Pilot Club International.
- 5/83 Bachelor of Arts in History, Colorado College. Graduated cum laude, Colorado College. Named Phi Beta Kappa and Outstanding History graduate. Extracurricular activities included editing campus newspaper.

*** References and writing samples available upon request ***

1998 Nomination Form

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

* * * MUST BE TYPED * * *

NOMINEE INFORMATION

Name of
Nominee CLICK JAMES H. JR.
Last First Initial

Address PO Box 12399

City Tucson State AZ Zip 85732

Telephone (520) 747-2000 FAX (520) 747-9965

NOMINATING SPONSOR

Name of
Sponsor Perez Jennifer LINKAGES
Last First Initial

Address 5055 East Broadway Boulevard, Suite C-214

City Tucson State AZ Zip 85711

Telephone (520) 571-8600 FAX (520) 571-8700

Governor's Committee Verification

State of (Not Applicable) Date _____

Signature of Governor's Committee Representative

Name Title



JOHN MCCAIN
UNITED STATES SENATOR
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
June 4, 1998

Tony Coelho
President's Committee on Employment
of People with Disabilities
1331 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004-1101

Dear Tony:

It is with tremendous pride that I write today to nominate Jim Click, Jr. for the President's Award 1998, from the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

I have personally known Jim for nearly twenty years and can tell you that it is difficult to think of a person that has done more to assist individuals with disabilities in Southern Arizona. Jim's foresight, energy and capability has enabled him to pave the way for the employment of people with disabilities in both his own companies and throughout the Tucson community.

Through Jim's vision and his financial support, "Linkages" was created as the Tucson agency to serve as the liaison between businesses with employment openings and participating rehabilitation providers with qualified people ready to work. Jim was able to bring together this wonderful match-making which has been an incredible success for everyone involved.

Jim's integrity and reputation is unparalleled. He is totally committed to hiring people with disabilities and encouraging others to do likewise. Every community should be so fortunate as to have a "Jim Click" in their corner.

We are all deeply appreciative of Jim's positive impact in our state. It is with the greatest enthusiasm that I recommend Mr. Click for the President's Award 1998. He is never one to seek out praise, but I feel it our obligation to honor him.

Sincerely,

John McCain
United States Senator

JM:kt

SENATOR BOB DOLE
901 15TH STREET, N.W.
SUITE 410
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

June 16, 1998

Mr. Tony Coelho
Chairman
President's Committee on Employment
of People with Disabilities
Suite 300
1331 F Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004-1107

Dear Tony:

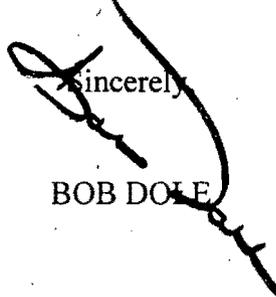
It is a pleasure to recommend Jim Click, President of Linkages, Inc. in Tucson, Arizona for the 1998 President's Award.

Like countless other cities across the nation, Tucson has a substantial population of people with disabilities. Many of these individuals want to work but are unable to find appropriate employment opportunities. And, unfortunately, business communities often do not possess a great understanding of the abilities and qualifications of the disabled.

Under the leadership of Jim Click, concerned business leaders and agency executives united with members of the disability community in Tucson to find an effective solution. Through Linkages, Inc., Jim has successfully partnered more than twenty Tucson employers and twenty-seven rehabilitation agencies over the past year and a half, creating a process to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to find employment opportunities.

This past April, I was present at the grand opening of Linkages, Inc., in Tucson and witnessed the great mission of building a bridge between businesses and people with disabilities. Jim's enthusiasm, commitment, and vision have made a big difference to increasing the awareness of the disability community in the workforce.

Sincerely,


BOB DOLE



JANE DEE HULL
GOVERNOR
STATE OF ARIZONA

June 12, 1998

The Honorable Tony Coelho
Chairman, President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
1331 - FSTNW
Washington, D.C. 20004-1107

Dear Chairman Coelho:

I am pleased to recommend Jim Click Jr. as a recipient of the 1998 President's Award for his outstanding work with disabled people. I do not know anyone with his passion and commitment to hiring people with disabilities. He motivates other business leaders to follow his lead and draw upon the skills, determination and dependability of disabled workers.

Jim was the first major employer to hire people with disabilities and saw to it personally that the managers in his other companies proceeded to do the same. His dream of creating a close and productive partnership between the private sector and rehabilitation agencies, linking them together to expand training and employment opportunities for the disabled, is now a reality. In 1996, Jim formed "Linkages", a non-profit organization designed for this purpose. Currently, over 155 disabled people have been hired by various employers, including positions in health care, retail, banking and landscaping.

Many business leaders talk about improving access and opportunity for the disabled, but few actually initiate successful programs to accomplish those goals. With the proven success of "Linkages", an official kickoff for the program was held April 4, 1998 with Senator Bob Dole as the keynote speaker. I was proud to have a role in the opening ceremonies, along with over 400 of our state's business leaders. There was a tremendous response. Many business leaders pledged their cooperation to expand the placement of people with disabilities into the workforce.

It is not only Jim Click's leadership, but his ability to inspire others that make opportunities for the disabled available. I believe that other communities, following Jim's vision, will form their own programs throughout Arizona and the United States. We would be honored to have Jim Click Jr. receive the 1998 President's Award as an outstanding leader.

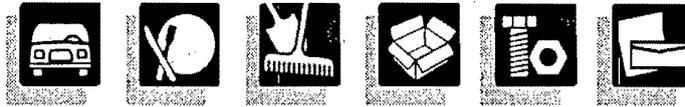
Sincerely,

JANE DEE HULL
Governor

JDH:SJ

John L
we need to
respond

BEACON FOUNDATION



BEACON WORKS...

FOR INDUSTRY, BUSINESS, THE COMMUNITY AND ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

June 10, 1998

Tony Coelho
President's Committee on
Employment of People with Disabilities
1331 F Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20004-1107

Dear Mr. Coelho:

When I arrived in Tucson in March of 1995 to assume my position of Executive Director of the Beacon Foundation, I had no idea what the employment opportunities were like for persons with disabilities. In Illinois, my colleagues and I advocated for 18 years for the right to employment for persons with disabilities with very few results.

I was surprised to see that Mr. Jim Click, Jr. not only employed over 40 of our clients with disabilities, but that his heart, his devotion and his influence became a spring board for all rehabilitation providers in Tucson to emulate his own devotion. He created Linkages, the Bridge between business and persons with disabilities, so that everyone with a disability who wants to work would have that opportunity. Turf issues collapsed as we, under his guidance, all became of one mind, one goal. That goal is to serve others, together. We have even reached the point where we want to spread this message all over the world. Linkages is a model of cooperation and collaboration in service to persons with disabilities for our business members and rehabilitation providers. It is truly something to behold.

I have worked with Jim now for over 3 years. I am constantly astounded by this man's capacity to extend himself to any of us when we are in need. Speaking as a person with a disability, and as a provider for over 22 years, I can think of no one more deserving than Jim Click, Jr. to receive the 1998 President's Award.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul N. Wagler".

Paul N. Wagler, M.S.
Executive Director
Senior Disability Analyst and Diplomate
American Board of Disability Analysts

Paul N. Wagler, Executive Director
25 EAST DRACHMAN STREET • TUCSON, ARIZONA 85705
(520) 623-3454 • FAX (520) 623-3494

Beacon Foundation is accredited by Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.



May 29, 1998

Tony Coeoho, Chair
President's Committee
1331 F Street NW
Washington, DC 20004-1107

Dear Mr. Coeoho,

I wish to encourage you to consider Mr. James H. Click, Jr. for the President's Award 1998, awarded by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. Mr. Click has devoted his time, energy and monetary resources to the employment of Americans with disabilities. His commitment is demonstrated in all aspects of his life; employment of people with disabilities in companies he is affiliated with and increasing public awareness throughout the community.

Mr. Click is a major employer in our community. In each of his companies, management is encouraged and expected to recruit, employ, and participate in the success of individuals with disabilities. He mentors his employees with disabilities and personally monitors their career progression. His compassion and commitment extend to staff at all level and types of disability. He knows there is a place for everyone and expects the management of his companies to share this commitment and responsibility.

About two years ago, Mr. Click identified a need in our community for improved communication between agencies representing people with disabilities and employers seeking qualified staff members. In a whirlwind of activity he organized a group of dynamic, interested business people and founded an organization now known as Linkages. This organization's mission is to connect employers with the numerous agencies representing people with disabilities, thus encouraging businesses to take advantage of a segment of our workforce that is frequently overlooked. A Board of Directors was formed and a program manager hired. Mr. Click and his companies underwrote the expenses incurred during this start up process. In April of this year Jim and our keynote speaker, Bob Dole, introduced 400 business leaders in our community to "Linkages". At the time of the kick-off breakfast, 150 people with disabilities had been employed through the efforts of this outstanding unit. The impact this organization will have on our community and the workforce will be felt for years. All this because one man saw a need and knew that he could make a difference.

Mr. Click has made significant contributions to increase public awareness of Americans with disabilities in the workforce, and has linked businesses and qualified applicants to create a winning situation for all. Jim Click, through his energy, work and commitment, honors our community, our country and our people. We wish to honor him by recommending he be presented with the President's Award 1998. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David T.C. Wright
President
Arizona Bank
120 N. Stone Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85701
520-620-3204



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF TUCSON**

Administrative Office
P.O. Box 11188, Tucson, AZ 85734
(520) 573-3533 • FAX (520) 573-3569

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Jim Beach
Jim Click
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Hon. Norman Fanton
Hon. Norman Green
Sandi Harting
Senator Douglas Hotelclaw*
Al Lothrop
Pamela McNair-Wingata
Bill Merodias
Frank X. Morton*
Jim Robertson
Louise and Walter Rude*
Mike Wattis
* - deceased

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Kahyn T. Stith
Mary Swiergol
Steven Thu
Richard H. Torney
Debbie Wagner
DeeDee Walden
Laune Watterschneider
Judy Wood
James B. Zaring

William J. Dawson,
Executive Director
Maria Lopez - Henderson
Associate Director for Development

May 26, 1998

Jennifer Perez, Program Manager
Linkages
5055 E. Broadway Blvd., C-214
Tucson, AZ 85711

Dear Jennifer:

This letter is to support your nomination of Jim Click, Jr. for a 1998 President's Award.

I have known Jim Click since 1980 when he came to the rescue of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson. With his help we have grown from a small youth service agency to one with three full clubhouses servicing over 3,000 youngsters and their families.

Since 1980 I could not help notice Jim's involvement in almost every social service agency that needs help. It seems that we all knock on his door. As much as Jim does in the community, he seems to have a special place in his heart for people with disabilities. For example, his work with Beacon Foundation, Guardianships of Southern Arizona and Linkages is well known.

What is amazing about Jim is the number of community agencies that he is able to significantly affect year in and year out. He not only helps to bring financial stability but also much needed vision.

His work and support of Linkages alone should qualify Jim for the President's Award. In addition, he has led by example in hiring people with disabilities in his businesses and has opened the doors for others to do the same.

The amazing part that I keep coming back to is — he does it over time — year after year. Thank you for nominating Jim. I believe the award was designed to honor people just like him.

Sincerely,

William J. Dawson
Executive Director

WJD/las

United Way "1997 Agency of the Year"



United Way
Tucson

President's Committee on the
Employment of People with Disabilities

PRESIDENT'S AWARD NOMINATION

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF JIM CLICK, JR.

When you first meet Jim Click, you are greeted by a tall, lanky man whose speech and mannerisms ring with the honest purity of his Oklahoma roots. Immediately you recognize in Jim a dynamic personality with energy and enthusiasm in great abundance and a willingness to share this energy and enthusiasm with everyone in his presence. Friendliness is the quality that initially defines Jim Click.

Quickly you realize there is much more to this man who always remembers your name and expresses genuine concern for your family. You then begin to appreciate the leadership skills, team-building qualities and business acumen that has earned Jim Click great success in the highly competitive automotive sales industry in Tucson and Southern California. From others you come to know that Jim Click has contributed a great deal of his wealth, and even more of his time and energy, toward creating and supporting opportunities to benefit others – particularly those with disabilities and in need.

Jim Click attributes his success to the communities that have supported him. At age 54, Jim has already established a distinguished legacy of generosity, lending his influence and leadership effort to further the interests and fund-raising capabilities of voluntary organizations within the community. Indeed, the character of Jim Click stands as tall as his physical stature.

The *LINKAGES* program serving the greater Tucson area is the realization of a long-time dream for Jim Click. Several years ago, Jim was the first Tucson employer to establish a Beacon Foundation work station for the developmentally disabled, and this program is an integral part of his business yet today. It was through this program that Jim Click conceived the creation of an umbrella organization to facilitate the "linkage" of employers offering jobs to individuals with disabilities seeking them -- a one-step, partnership process whereby multiple businesses could simultaneously be linked to multiple job placement resources. Thus was the vision that gave birth to *LINKAGES*. Its mission is simple and straightforward: Facilitate employment for all job-seeking Tucsonans with disabilities.

In 1996, Jim Click forged a small team of business leaders, individuals with disabilities and rehabilitation agencies. Its task was to move *LINKAGES* from a fledging concept to an exciting reality. Early on the decision was made to implement the mission in phases. The initial phase focused on securing participation commitments from major employers and agreements from rehabilitation agencies to work cooperatively through this new *LINKAGES* resource. Led, encouraged and supported by Jim Click, the team prepared and filed incorporation papers, established bylaws creating a 12-member Board of Directors (4 members each representing the business, agency and disabled communities), hired initial staff and set up office facilities, and achieved non-profit status for the proposed organization. In less than two years with the infrastructure in place, the operational and relational "bugs" worked out, and over 150 job placements made during the development process, *LINKAGES* was ready to go public (see attached *LINKAGES* brochure.)

LINKAGES was officially launched on April 4, 1998. Former Senator and Presidential candidate Robert Dole enthusiastically responded to Jim Click's invitation to deliver keynote remarks at the kick-off celebration, bringing with him an unexpected but much appreciated \$10,000 donation from the Dole Foundation. Arizona's Governor Jane Hull, Senator John McCain and over 400 of Tucson's most influential business and community leaders attended the celebration and continental breakfast held at one of Tucson's most posh resorts. Local television coverage was extensive, and Tucson's two major newspapers followed with supportive features. (See attached articles.) The official *LINKAGES* unveiling was a well deserved success. Jim Click is *LINKAGES* principal funding source; no fees are charged for its service. In Jim's words, "all we want from Tucson business people is jobs."

Now with 61 employers having joined the partnership and Jim Click installed as the President of its Board, *LINKAGES* has embarked upon planning the next phase of its service to fulfill its commitment to "all job-seeking Tucsonans with disabilities": Facilitating direct job placements for those who are not serviced by rehabilitation agencies. Concurrent with this effort is the development of alternatives for transporting employees with disabilities to businesses having jobs, but who are not effectively served by accessible public transportation. Under Jim Click's leadership, *LINKAGES* remains mindful of the challenge set forth by Senator Dole at the kick-off event, "What's important is not what I do today, but what you do when you return to your offices on Monday morning."

Many homeless people have emotional and mental disabilities. The Primavera Foundation provides an array of comprehensive services for the homeless people of Tucson. Services include job searching and referrals. One of its programs offers homeless people job training and transitional employment refurbishing/reconstructing houses which are then made available as homes and

temporary shelters for these same people. Recently, Jim Click and his wife, Vickie, headed a fund-raising effort that raised one million dollars in support of the Primavera Foundation's programs.

Recognizing Jim Click with the "President's Award," underscores the significance and power embodied in the private initiatives of grassroots Americans and their resolve to implement local solutions to benefit fellow citizens with disabilities. What Jim Click has begun with *LINKAGES* in Tucson represents a highly transferable model of community action and teamwork. It's a model of grassroots action and leadership not dependent on outside resources, but at the same time unifying and molding the efforts of rehabilitation agencies supported by federal and state government grants into a more efficient, cohesive force. It's business leaders encouraging and challenging other business leaders to get involved not with their pocketbooks, but with job opportunities and to recognize there is a real "bottom-line" to these efforts: productive employees who just happen to have disabilities. It's the people most affected – those with disabilities – participating in and guiding the process that determines their access to employment opportunity within their community and direct involvement with the business forces driving it. What Jim Click has begun is what communities can do for themselves to benefit themselves everywhere – the thousands of communities throughout America need to be encouraged and reinforced in their efforts to do likewise.

EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND

Attending and graduating elementary and high schools in Altus, Oklahoma, Jim Click went on to Oklahoma State University from which he graduated with a Bachelors of Science degree in 1966. While at Oklahoma State, Jim made the Deans Honor Roll every semester and was elected president of the Junior class. Captain of the football team in 1965, Jim is a former academic All-American and academic All-Big Eight football player.

After graduating Oklahoma State University, Jim moved to the Los Angeles-Beverly Hills area to join family car dealerships, first as salesman for Holmes Tuttle Ford in 1966. Exercising leadership skills at an early age, by 1970 he was promoted from Sales Manager to General Manager of Beverly Hills Lincoln-Mercury. From 1971 to the present, Jim Click set up and became the Dealer/Partner for nine car dealerships in Southern California and Tucson, Arizona for Ford (1971 and 1980), Dodge (1982 and 1983), Nissan (two in 1983), Jeep-Eagle (1983 and 1985), Audi (1985), Hyundai (1985), Subaru (1985), Suzuki (1985), Mitsubishi (1990) and Lincoln-Mercury (1991) nameplates, firmly establishing undisputed leadership in the Southwest car dealer industry and earning national recognition. From 1978 through the

present, Jim Click has been Chairman of the Board/Partner of Arizona Bank (formerly InterWest/Union Bank) of Tucson.

PRESENT ACTIVITIES AND HONORS

A list of Jim Click's present community activities, and the year he began each involvement, include Greater Tucson Economic Council Board Member (from 1990), Arizona Coalition for Tomorrow Member, University of Arizona Foundation Board of Directors and Chairman of the Capital Campaign, Salpointe Catholic High School, Tucson (from 1989), Alcoholism Council of Tucson Honorary Board Member (from 1983), Extra Point Club Member (from 1980), Beacon Foundation – as employer offering a work station for individuals with mental disabilities (from 1975), Wildcat Club, University of Arizona, Advisory Board Member, Honorary Letterman (from 1972), Tucson Conquistadors Member (from 1972) and 1984 Tournament Committee Celebrities Chairman, and major sponsor of community sports activities including Little League, soccer, golf and softball (from 1971).

Throughout his career Jim Click has received many honors including election to Pima County Sports Hall of Fame (1990), Goodwill of Orange County Employer of the Year for employment of the disabled (1989), Man of the Year, National Jewish Hospital (1985), Distinguished Alumni Award (1985), Distinguished Achievement Award, Ford Motor Company (1971-84 every year since eligible), Dealer Quality Award Finalist/Time Quality Dealer Award, Time Magazine (1984 -- one of 21 finalists nationally), Gold Lay Leadership Award, Junior Achievement (1984 -- one of six presented nationally each year), Honorary Baseball Letterman, University of Arizona (1984), President's Award, Tucson Chapter of the Air Force Association (1984), Medallion Award, Boys Club of America (1983), Employer of the Year, Goodwill of Tucson (1982), Silver Leadership Award, Junior Achievement (1982), Tucsonan of the Year, Sales & Marketing Executives of Tucson (1982), Employer of the Year, Association for Retarded Citizens and President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (formerly, the Handicapped) (1981), Bronze Leadership Award, Junior Achievement (1981), Man of the Year, Tucson Advertising Club (1981), and Man of the Year, City of Hope (1979).

RESUME OF JAMES H. CLICK, JR.

One of the Southwest's leading car dealers, Jim Click is deeply committed to bettering life in his own community of Tucson, Arizona, and throughout the nation as a whole. Mr. Click is a founder and President of the Board of Directors for *LINKAGES*, a non-profit organization dedicated to linking employers with individuals with disabilities seeking jobs, a Board member of the Primavera Foundation that provides employment opportunities, housing and other services for the homeless people of Tucson, a member of Greater Tucson Economic Council Board of Directors, a member of Arizona Coalition for Tomorrow, and has been an active board member of Tucson's Wellness Council, Boys Club of Tucson, Boys Club of America, Tucson Economic Development Corporation, and board member and Past President of Junior Achievement. He played a pivotal role in the establishment of Casa de las Ninos, a crisis nursery for battered children, and he provides employment for adults with mental disabilities, on whose benefit he and his wife organized a forum to encourage other employers to hire people with disabilities. Mr. Click has served as fund drive chairman for the Pima County Health Association, the Handi-Dogs Training Center, and the American Cancer Society.

An Oklahoma State University graduate and former academic All-American football player, Mr. Click is an enthusiastic supporter of the University of Arizona to which he annually supplies automobiles, gives scholarships to deserving students and supports fund-raising efforts for the University's Center for Students and Faculty with Disabilities. Mr. Click serves on the National Board of Advisors to the University's College of Business and Administration, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the University of Arizona Foundation.

Named 1985 Man of the Year by the National Jewish Hospital and recipient of the 1985 Oklahoma State Distinguished Alumni Award, Mr. Click's many other civic honors include being named Employer of the year by the Association for Retarded Citizens, the President's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities and Goodwill Industries, and Man of the Year by the City of Hope and the Tucson Advertising Club. His dealership has received the Ford Distinguished Achievement Award every year since 1971, and was one of the 21 dealers in the nation to be selected as a 1985 Time Magazine Quality Award finalist.

In addition to the great amount of time and energy he devotes to every project in which he is involved, Jim Click remains an avid athlete and still finds the time to run daily. He lives in Tucson with his wife Vicki, and their two children.

Expanding Tucson's Employee Resources

Since April of 1996, **LINKAGES** has been working to join Tucson employers and local rehabilitation agencies in an exciting partnership. The mission: to create a hassle-free process that links businesses with qualified, well-trained individuals with disabilities.

This extraordinary non-profit organization grew from a unique idea proposed by Tucson business leader Jim Click. His vision was to gather the often-overlooked resources of the city's "disabled" workers into a central location, then make their wealth of skills—and often extraordinary initiative—readily available to the business community.

He shared his dream with Dr. Ruth Mondschein, a pioneer in employment, training, and arts for people with disabilities, and together they began the process of unifying the efforts of Tucson's employers and rehabilitation agencies into the exciting resource that **LINKAGES** is today.

Knowing that employment makes life meaningful, **LINKAGES** seeks to ensure that all people are given the opportunity to perform and be valued. Our participating service agencies are ultimately committed to this philosophy. They provide job training at all levels, and extend continuing support not just to workers but also to the businesses who employ them, ensuring successful experiences for all involved.

LINKAGES Service Agencies

Arizona School for the Blind (ASDB)
Beacon Foundation
Chicano Por La Causa
Christina May, Independent Rehabilitation Consultant
Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD)
Community Psychology & Education Services (CPES)
Crawford
Desert Survivors
Direct
Disability Management, Incorporated
Dorothy Kret & Associates (DKA)
Goodwill Industries of Southern Arizona
Labor Market Consulting Services
La Frontera Center
Muscular Dystrophy Association
Our Place Clubhouse
Pima Prevention Partnership (PPP)
Primavera Services
Sage (The Blake Foundation)
Southwest Rehabilitation Associates
TETRA Corporation
The ARC
The Handlers
Tucson Association for the Blind (TAB)
Tucson Initiative Placement Services
University of Arizona Rehabilitation
WEDCO
Wesley Rehabilitation Services, Inc.

Employers Currently Using LINKAGES Resources

American Red Cross
Arizona Bank
Arizona Mail Order Company, Inc. (AMO)
Bombardier-Learjet
Carondelet Health Network
Davis Monthan Air Force Base (AAFES)
Doubletree Guest Suites
Greyhound Lines
ITT Technical Institute
Frontier Asset Protection
Intergroup Health Group
Jim Click Automotive
J.P. Industries, Inc.
Keane
Marriot University Park
Mr. Janitor
Pima County
Raytheon Missile Systems Company
TMC HealthCare
Teletech
Tucson Airport Authority
Tucson Newspapers (TNI)
University of Arizona
Westin La Paloma

Building a
Bridge
of
Opportunity,
One Link
at a
Time



Jennifer Perez
Program Manager
5055 East Broadway Boulevard
Suite C-214
Tucson, Arizona 85711
PHONE: (520) 571-8600
Fax: (520) 571-8700
E-mail: enable@AZStarnet



Tucson Arizona

Friday, May 1, 1998

Tucson Citizen

CITY EDITOR

Program helps disabled find work

• 'Linkages' refers Tucsonans to agencies that will train them and firms that will hire them.

By PAUL L. ALLEN
Citizen Staff Writer

Two-thirds of people with developmental disabilities are unemployed nationwide, but a new local non-profit group is linking Tucsonans with disabilities with agencies that can provide job skills and businesses that have job opportunities.

"Linkages," developed under the guidance and sponsorship of auto dealer-banker Jim Click, has 45 employer "members" thus far, hooking them up with more than two dozen agencies dealing with vocational rehabilitation.

There is no charge for the services - to employers or employees or the agencies.

"We were trying to be real silent about it until now," said Click, "because we wanted to be sure it worked before we went public."

More than 100 disabled individuals have been employed through Linkages during the past year.

"What employers have told us is that they want a 'one-stop shop' where they can just call and ask," Click said.

Jennifer Perez, the program's manager and only paid employee,

said the program works with people with skills ranging from custodial to professional, such as accounting. Some jobs are part time, some are full time.

Some of the participating agencies provide subcontracting services - such as landscaping, packaging, collating, printing, mailing, assembly, shrink wrapping, secretarial and clerical support and other skills.

In addition, some of the agencies also offer a variety of products, including low water-use plants, shrubs, trees, herbs, air filters and braille overlays.

The rate of unemployment for people with disabilities is 65 per-

cent and has stayed that way since the Americans With Disabilities Act took effect eight years ago, said Thomas H. Bush, an official for the Muscular Dystrophy Association's national headquarters here.

"It beckons for some strong action, and nothing gets institutionalized in this country unless it gets good private sector support, such as this," Bush said.

In the mid-1980s, Click said he started a program at his auto dealerships here and in California to hire disabled workers. He now employs as many as 50, who range from those who wash cars to a chief financial officer at Auto Mall.

"Tucson is very competitive in



'What employers have told us is that they want a "one-stop shop" where they can just call and ask.'

- Jim Click (left), auto dealer-banker

behavioral health and competitive in vocational rehabilitation," said Daniel J. Ranieri, executive director of La Frontera Inc. "Sometimes it feels like a war zone."

With the establishment of Linkages, he said member agencies such as La Frontera have reached a new level of cooperation - some

FACTS:

What: Linkages, an organization that matches developmentally disabled individuals with training agencies and job opportunities.

Where: 5055 E. Broadway, Suite C-214.

Inquiries to: Jennifer Perez, program manager; 571-8600 (voice); 571-8700 (fax); enable@azstamet (e-mail)

Charge: None.

eliminating portions of their own programs.

"Even though we've done a good job of training people, we have done a lousy job of interfacing with businesses - letting them know that this (hiring individuals with disabilities) could be something to their advantage," Ranieri said.

Linkages helps disabled connect with jobs

Dream becomes reality for Jim Click

By Sara Hammond
The Arizona Daily Star

A fledgling organization with some celebrity support is helping to put disabled people to work in the community.

Linkages went public earlier this month at a breakfast meeting featuring former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, who happened to bring along a \$10,000 check from the Dole Foundation to support the agency.

But long before local employers were introduced to the organization - whose mission statement is "the bridge between businesses and people with disabilities" - Linkages was working with rehabilitation agencies and employers to make sure its model would work.

In less than a year, more than 100 people have been placed in jobs with a variety of skill levels, from automotive detailing to practicing law.

One of the employers providing jobs is Jim Click, who has 35 to 40 disabled people working in his car dealerships in Arizona and California. Click is president of the Linkages board and its major support of funding.

Click said he began hiring people with disabilities in 1975.

Click said yesterday that he'd dreamed of helping employers interested in hiring

the disabled to make one phone call to get the process started.

Two years ago, he invited local agencies that work with disabled clients to meet with him to get the ball rolling.

Click said he found agencies staffed with people who "do a fantastic job of getting people ready" for jobs and who run their organizations well.

Daniel Ranieri, executive director of La Frontera Inc., said what was needed was one-stop shopping for employers, "to make it as easy as possible to hire people and purchase our services."

That was not an easy task, given years of competition and fighting among agencies.

Part of the missing link was reaching local employers who, especially in the current economic climate, are looking for skilled workers.

"There are lots of jobs for physically and developmentally disabled people to perform every day in the workplace," Click said.

What evolved was a board of directors with four representatives from the agencies, employers and disabled people.

Because they wanted to make sure their ideas would work, the Linkages board decided to try out their system and iron out the bugs before a full-scale launch, he said.

"Our whole concept was pilot-tested," said John Marques, human resources director at Arizona Mail Order.

"A wide range of people have been put

To get involved

Employers interested in finding out about hiring a person with disabilities can contact Jennifer Perez at Linkages, 571-8600.

Only clients of rehabilitation agencies are being served through the program at this time.

to work in a very low-key way through the human resources community," he said.

Linkages now is connecting clients of 21 agencies with employers throughout the community. Representatives of more than 75 Tucson-area companies attended the kickoff breakfast with Dole, and the board hopes many of them will have jobs to offer disabled people, and tell other employers about the program.

Marques said Linkages offers a "hassle-free" process for employers.

A company can contact Linkages' sole employee, program manager Jennifer Perez, who will notify the agencies of the job available and visit the company.

Employers can then work through Perez or directly with the agency's job developers to set up an interview with the client. When the person is hired, a job coach can help train the new employee, if necessary, and the agency and Linkages will offer other support if necessary.

Thomas Bush, associate director of program services for the Muscular Dystrophy Association and a Linkages board member,

said 65 percent to 67 percent of disabled people are unemployed.

He said that because many businesses may not have experience working with disabled people, Linkages can offer support and assistance.

"The distinguishing thing about Linkages is that it has good business backing," Bush said.

Right now, Linkages is working with disabled people who are clients of agencies, but eventually, those involved would like to see the organization be able to connect individuals with employers, Marques said.

"We want to create what is an equal opportunity process for everybody," he said.

Marques said the board will make sure that it doesn't grow too quickly and be unable to offer the support to employers.

Click said it makes good business sense for companies to diversify their workplaces, hiring people with various skills and abilities.

"It is not charity. It is the bottom line," he said.

Ranieri said Linkages could easily place 500 people, if the jobs were available.

The organization hopes to link 200 people with jobs this year, he said.

The organizers hope Linkages can become a national model to be adopted by other cities and have the type of recognition gained by DARE, the nationwide drug awareness program found in many school systems, Marques said.

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

(This form and the nomination instructions may be photocopied.)

*** MUST BE TYPED ***

NOMINEE INFORMATION

Name of Nominee Bender Joyce A.
Last First Middle

Address Penn Center West III, Suite 223

City Pittsburgh State PA Zip 15276

Telephone 412-787-8567 FAX 412-787-7178

NOMINATING SPONSOR

Name of Sponsor Tarr Connie
Last First Middle

Address P6(b)(6)

City P6(b)(6) State P6(b)(6) Zip P6(b)(6)

Telephone P6(b)(6) FAX P6(b)(6)

Governor's Committee Verification

State of Pennsylvania Date March 30, 1999

Signature of Governor's Committee Representative

Johnny J. Butler, Chairperson
Name Secretary of the Department Title
of Labor and Industry

Handwritten signature of Johnny J. Butler

DEADLINE: APRIL 1, 1999

I highly endorse Joyce Bender's nomination for the President's Award. Joyce has been involved in the employment and placement of people with disabilities since she began her career in 1979 as a search consultant. She founded Bender and Associates International, Inc., an executive search firm specializing in permanent placement of technology professionals in 1988.

Ms. Bender also became a member of the Business Advisory Committee for the Institute of Advanced Technology in 1988, a twelve month training program designed to train individuals with severe disabilities to become computer programmers. It was at that time she began placing graduates of the Institute into employment as Computer Programmers. Joyce, then began to vision how else she might be able to help persons with disabilities to become more visible in employment situations. She saw how one's life improved by being employed and working in the community. Joyce, herself, knew the struggles one goes through as she sustained a life threatening accident in 1984. Against all odds, Joyce recovered from this accident which left her with a 40% hearing loss in one ear and a seizure disorder. Through this personal experience she developed a passion for helping persons with disabilities.

In September, 1995 Joyce established Bender Consulting Services, a subsidiary of Bender and Associates International, Inc. to employ people with disabilities as full time consultants in the Information Technology field. The consultants hired are permanent employees with benefits. B.C.S. provides Information Technology consulting services to companies throughout the Pittsburgh area and has expanded in 1998 to Wilmington, Delaware.

This company (B.C.S.) was selected as the 1996 Small Employer of the Year by the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and received the 1997 Power of Work Award from Goodwill Industries.

Joyce is an Executive Board member on the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and the CO-chairperson of "First Hired", a task force whose mission is to determine the future of employment of people with disabilities.

She is also a member of the Governor's Council of the Epilepsy Foundation of America, the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and a national board member of the Epilepsy Foundation.

Joyce's most recent accomplishment is as the President of the Pittsburgh Disability Employment Project for Freedom (PDEPF). This is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to train and provide employment opportunities for people with

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disabilities in the information technology networking industry. She is presently the president of this organization and has been very instrumental in placing 14 persons with disabilities into competitive employment with benefits.

Joyce also chairs the Employment Sector of the Disability Agenda 2000. This task force is a blueprint to enhance the quality of community life through full participation by people with disabilities. The Employment Sector's mission is to focus on the abilities of all individuals and appreciate the uniqueness of each person contribution in helping to break down barriers and in their place build bridges.

Her main focus since she started the BCS has been on bridging the gaps between people with disabilities and providing trained, qualified individuals to employers.

Joyce has had many accomplishments since seeing her vision come to fruition:

Joyce was selected as a 1995/96 Carlow College Women of Spirit, and was also named one of Pennsylvania's 50 Best Women in Business for 1998.

She is a Past President of the Association for Systems Management, a Past President of the Pittsburgh CASE USERS Group, and a member of the Association for Information Technology Professionals.

Joyce was the 1994-1997 Chairperson and is currently a board member of TECH-LINK, an organization that introduces students in middle school and high school with disabilities, to the technologies. TECH-LINK provides mentoring and shadowing programs, technology-related industry tours, and summer internships. Their philosophy is, with technology today, people with disabilities can compete "on a level playing field" with people who do not have disabilities.

Joyce firmly believes that work in the most important aspect to enable a person to become totally independent. She hires individuals on their abilities and sees the abilities that one possesses to become employed, while others may look at the disabilities of individuals to not become employed. By focusing on one's abilities she has provided many people with opportunities that would have not been possible. Many individuals she has hired had been on numerous interviews and passed over by employers. However, Joyce gave individuals the opportunity to blossom in the workplace and enjoy all the niceties that many of us take for granted.

She has made an outstanding contribution to the work force of America by her passion, dedication, hard work, expertise and persistence in obtaining full time employment for persons with disabilities. Employers have greatly benefited by her vision and passion by hiring qualified, dependable and appreciative employees.



Providing consulting in information technology and creating employment opportunities for all people with abilities.

COMPREHENSIVE BIO - JOYCE A. BENDER

February 26, 1999

Joyce A. Bender is the President of Bender and Associates International, Inc. She has 19 years of experience specializing in the information technology (IT) executive search industry. Joyce is also the President of Bender Consulting Services, Inc. (BCS), a firm that provides permanent employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities who are trained in the IT field.

Professional Experience

Joyce began her career in 1979 as a search consultant and founded Bender and Associates International, Inc., an executive search firm specializing in permanent placement of technology professionals, in 1988. Bender and Associates International, Inc. works with Big Five Firms, Fortune 500, and High Technology companies throughout the Pittsburgh area and nationally. We work largely on a retained basis for senior-level management openings, as well as staffing projects that require recruiting people for multiple positions. We also provide external human resources consulting services to companies; in this capacity, we handle all of a company's IT recruitment needs, including college campus recruitment through the senior management level.

In 1984, Joyce had a life-threatening accident that caused a cerebral hemorrhage and subsequent brain surgery. Against all odds, Joyce recovered from this accident that left her with a 40 percent hearing loss in one ear and a seizure disorder. As a result of her personal experience, she developed a passion for helping people with disabilities.

BCS, a subsidiary of Bender and Associates International, Inc., was established in September 1995, and has grown considerably since its inception. The mission of BCS is to employ people with disabilities as full-time consultants in the IT field. Our consultants are permanent employees with benefits. BCS provides information technology consulting services to companies throughout the Pittsburgh area and has expanded in 1998 to Wilmington, DE.

BCS was selected as the 1996 Small Employer of the Year by the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and received the 1997 Power of Work Award from Goodwill Industries.

Affiliations

Joyce is an Executive Board member of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and the co-chairperson of "First Hire", a task force whose mission is to determine the future for employment of people with disabilities. She is also a member of the Governor's Council of the Epilepsy Foundation of America, the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and a national board member of the Epilepsy Foundation.



COMPREHENSIVE BIO - JOYCE A. BENDER

Page 2

Joyce is the President of the Pittsburgh Disability Employment Project for Freedom (PDEPF). Founded in 1998, PDEPF is a non-profit organization whose mission is to train and provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the information technology networking industry.

Joyce was the 1994-1997 Chairperson and is currently a board member of TECH-LINK, an organization that introduces students in middle school and high school with disabilities, to the technologies. TECH-LINK provides mentoring and shadowing programs, technology-related industry tours, and summer internships. Their philosophy is, with technology today, people with disabilities can compete "on a level playing field" with people who do not have disabilities.

She is also a member of the Business Advisory Committee for The Institute of Advanced Technology (IAT) and has been since 1988. The IAT is a 12 month training program, designed to train individuals with disabilities to be computer programmers. Joyce has been active in marketing the IAT to companies in Pittsburgh, and has placed individuals for no fee in permanent positions with companies throughout the Pittsburgh area.

Joyce is a member of the Business Advisory Council for the Eberly College of Business at Indiana University of PA. This council assists the faculty and students in preparing for the future in IT and business. Joyce is also a Board Member of the Central Blood Bank in Pittsburgh, PA.

Joyce has also been very active in information technology networking organizations. She is a Past President of the Association for Systems Management, a Past President of the Pittsburgh CASE USERS Group, and a member of the Association for Information Technology Professionals.

Joyce was selected as a 1995/1996 Carlow College Woman of Spirit, and was also named one of Pennsylvania's 50 Best Women in Business for 1998. She has been featured in various periodicals including "Executive Report", "Pittsburgh Business Times", "Pittsburgh Post-Gazette", "Computerworld", and "Reader's Digest". She is also a public speaker on various topics related to career issues for community groups and IT organizations in Pittsburgh.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Geneva College.



**OFFICE OF
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

217 State Office Building • 300 Liberty Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412/392-4950 • 582-5936 TTY • 800/442-6571 • 412/565-7587 FAX

March 28, 1999

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
Recognition Program
1331 F Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004-1107

Dear Committee:

I highly recommend Joyce Bender's nomination for the President's Award. Joyce is passionately committed to improving the total life of all individuals with a disabilities. Her vision is to have a job for every person who has a disability.

Working with Joyce for the past ten years, I have seen her have a dream and have witnessed that dream come true. She started Bender Consulting Services and has been successful in having persons with disabilities employed, not only in Pittsburgh but in Delaware and shortly in Colorado. So this dream is not just local for the Pittsburgh area but nationwide and I would not be surprised if she took it internationally in the near future.

Nothing is impossible with Joyce. She lives that dream and provides guidance and vision to all her employees and everyone she meets.

Presently, we are involved in a project called Disability Agenda 2000. Joyce chairs the employment sector and is looking to improve all facets of one's life in order to make a better community for everyone. Our mission statement in the employer sector is:

**TO FOCUS ON THE ABILITIES OF ALL INDIVIDUALS BY
APPRECIATING THE UNIQUENESS OF EACH PERSON'S
CONTRIBUTION IN HELPING TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS
TO EMPLOYMENT AND IN THEIR PLACE BUILD BRIDGES
THAT ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR EVERYONE.**

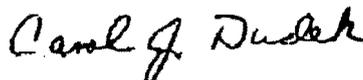
Page 2

March 28, 1999

In closing, I can only add that Joyce's commitment and contribution to the world of work deserves this recognition. She is driven to make this a better place to live for all individuals.

Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any further information or answer any questions you may have regarding this endorsement.

Sincerely,



Carol J. Dudek,
Southwest Region
Divisional Administrator
(412) 392-4952

D i c k e r s o n & M a n g u s , I n k .

March 30, 1999

President's Committee on
Employment of People with Disabilities
Recognition Program
1331 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004-1107

To Whom It May Concern:

I wholeheartedly endorse Joyce Bender's nomination for the "President's Award" recognizing the individual who has done the most to enhance the employment and empowerment of people with disabilities. Ms. Bender has invested most of her professional life in developing strategies to open opportunities for people with disabilities. She is clearly Pennsylvania's staunchest advocate for people with disabilities.

Through Bender Consulting Services, Inc., a company she formed two years ago, Joyce Bender employs people with disabilities at competitive salaries. She realized that the largest impediment to employees was the employers' concerns about making long-term employment commitments to people with disabilities. To address these concerns, she created BCS which acts as a subcontractor. Through BCS, employers can mitigate any perceived difficulties in employing persons with disabilities since BCS is effectively the employer.

By creating an employment arm that focuses exclusively on hiring people with disabilities, Joyce removed a significant barrier to employment, but another barrier remained. When BCS encountered problems in locating a sufficient number of individuals with disabilities with the skill sets requisite to the needs of high-tech employment investments, Joyce once again solved the problem by helping to create training opportunities designed exclusively to meet the specialized needs of people with disabilities. The Demonstration Project for Freedom, a Joyce Bender brainstorm, resulted from Joyce's desire to fill the pipeline with individuals who have the skills to enable them to be competitive in today's information-based economy.

Joyce Bender dedicates much of her personal as well as professional life to enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities. She volunteers and serves in a leadership capacity for several community-based organizations that meet the needs of people with disabilities. Because of her tenacity and ingenuity, she has removed numerous barriers confronting individuals with disabilities in this community and beyond.

Joyce believes vehemently that employment is independence for people with disabilities. All of her fine work is a testament to this belief. She is an extraordinary individual who represents cutting edge thinking in how to open doors for people with disabilities, and she meets every challenge by creating an opportunity. Because of this, I highly recommend Joyce Bender to you as a recipient of this year's "President's Award."

Sincerely,

Linda A. Dickerson
Principal

LAD:cap



COMMUNITY COLLEGE
OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

ALLEGHENY CAMPUS

808 RIDGE AVENUE
PITTSBURGH, PA 15212-6097
(412) 237-2925

March 30, 1999

President's Committee on Employment
of People with Disabilities
1331 F Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20004-1107

Dear Esteemed Judges:

It gives me great pleasure to nominate Joyce Bender, President of Bender and Associates and Bender Consulting Services, Inc. (BCS) for the Evan Kemp Entrepreneurship Award. Both are a for-profit, private sector business enterprise.

Joyce is the founder and owner of Bender and Associates. She has been in business for over nineteen years, matching individuals with jobs in information technology careers. Because of her entrepreneurial spirit and sincere commitment to helping individuals with disabilities, she started Bender Consulting Services, Inc. The focus of the business is to hire individuals with disabilities who have computer programming skills. These individuals are placed on projects in Fortune 500 companies in the Greater Pittsburgh area. The positions are considered professional and have a starting salary in the mid \$30,000 range, with a benefit package.

Several years ago, as a result of a seizure, Joyce sustained a head injury, but she does not allow her disability to get in the way of her drive to get the job done.

BCS, a subsidiary of Bender and Associates, was incorporated in 1995. It was designed to employ people with disabilities in computer systems technology. BCS provides information technology consulting services to Pittsburgh-based companies. Their consultants work either at a customer site or in their offices and develop computer applications to support the customer's information technology initiatives. BCS is also equipped to provide networking services and support to their customers.

Joyce Bender, principal owner of BCS, established the company in a concerted effort to give back to the community that gave her so much. Ms. Bender knows firsthand, the effects a disability can have on an individual and, as a result, felt compelled to employ people with disabilities. Using the connections she established within the computer industry from Bender and Associates, she began a framework for disability employment.

BCS consultants are fully employed by the company, including benefits – permanently. This is what separates BCS from other computer industry consulting firms which frequently stop salary and benefits soon after the completion of a project. While BCS consultants are located at various

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**Presidents Committee on Employment
of People with Disabilities – pg. 2**

companies in and around Pittsburgh for short-term or long-term projects, never are they without benefits or income. The BCS staff conducts continuous research into job placement opportunities for each consultant to remain employed.

Currently BCS employs sixteen individuals as full-time staff and consultants; all sixteen employees have some type of physical disability.

Joyce Bender has invested a considerable amount of time and money to start and develop BCS. She is the owner of Bender and Associates, a successful, well-established executive search firm that specializes in placing information technology professionals in permanent positions. Bender and Associates works with customers on a national basis, although the emphasis is on placing people in the Pittsburgh area.

For years, Joyce Bender has placed graduates of the Institute of Advanced Technology (IAT) with Pittsburgh-based companies free of charge. IAT is a program within Community College of Allegheny County, which trains people with physical disabilities to become computer programmers. Because of her passion for helping people with disabilities, Joyce decided to start a new business, BCS, that would create employment opportunities and as a result, help to change the false beliefs that some people have about people with disabilities and their ability to be productive employees. She and her staff have contributed countless hours, without compensation, to develop and promote the growth of the company. Joyce has also contributed savings and profits from Bender and Associates to establish BCS.

Joyce has clearly defined a business plan identifying continued sustained growth for the next several years. She has communicated this plan to all individuals and companies who can support the BCS business. She has emphasized the importance of her venture to promoting economic development by creating jobs.

BCS has developed a strong partnership with the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation(OVR). This is an effort that includes seven western Pennsylvania OVR offices. In addition, she has worked with a couple of key companies to provide long-term consulting engagements for her employees. Joyce has also established a committee of information technology professionals who are willing to provide additional knowledge or training related to specific advanced technologies.

BCS is an excellent example of the positive benefits realized when combining efforts from both the public and private sectors. BCS has strong support from Bender and Associates, the Pennsylvania OVR, the IAT, and the Pittsburgh business community. Her refreshing "can do" attitude provides a perfect setting for the trial and error environment that many people with physical disabilities need to have to accomplish a task.

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Presidents Committee on Employment
of People with Disabilities - pg. 2

Plans are underway to involve the Internet into the daily lives of BCS employees. By exposing people with disabilities to the Internet, BCS can better position itself to employ individuals who can not drive or find it difficult to leave their homes to go to work.

BCS is also developing strategic partnerships with other consulting firms to augment its staff on projects that require more resources than those available from the its own current resource pool. This will support the continued growth of the business, as well as allow them to develop more creative ways to employ people with disabilities.

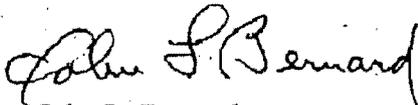
Joyce's individual efforts, as well as those of BCS are benefiting the community in many ways. Bender and Associates and BCS support the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, McGuire Home, Vocational Rehabilitation Center, Health Education Center, TECH-LINK, Institute of Advanced Technology, Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Carlow College organizations.

BCS also creates employment opportunities for people with physical disabilities in the computer industry, as well as administrative and operational support positions. Their business also provides information technology consulting services which are highly in demand at this time.

Joyce Bender has, and has instilled in her employees, the idea that BCS is driven by a strong desire to be the best in the information technology consulting market. Her employees strongly support her crusade and mission to promote individuals with physical disabilities.

I strongly recommend Joyce Bender for the Evan Kemp Entrepreneurship Award.

Sincerely,



John L. Bernard
Coordinator, IAT

JLB/mcc

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
 OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
 FOR DISABILITY AND INCOME SECURITY PROGRAMS
 TELEPHONE NUMBER (410) 965-0100
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ADDRESSEE

FROM

NAME:

Cynthia Rice

NAME:

Marie

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TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES:

COVER + 22

COMMENTS:

DATE:

6/3/99

6 documents RE: Laura Hershey

- 1. Fact Sheet on PASS - Current 1 page
 (recent changes have reversed original tightening of rules in 4/96)
- 2. Briefing Materials July 97
 "Actions Being Taken" 5 pages
- 3. March 3, 1997 Press Release
 PASS Participants Rights Campaign 4 pages
- 4. Aug 7, 1997 Letter to L. Hershey 4 pages
- 5. PASS Provision & Its Evolution 4 pages
- 6. 4/19/99 Letter from L. Hershey 4 pages
 - > <<A E-mails

Most recent complaint *

6/99

FACT SHEET**Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)**

On 12/1/97, SSA introduced a number of positive changes to the PASS program. Some affect policy:

- The full price of a major purchase, such as a car or van, is now an allowable expense.
- What used to be called an entry-level limit on occupational goals has been clarified to point out that it does not limit the work aspirations of PASS applicants to fast-food jobs.
- Occupational goals that require a different degree than the one an individual already has, including an advanced degree, can be allowed in most cases.

Equally important are the changes SSA has made to its PASS processes and procedures:

- The role of the PASS Specialists has been expanded to encompass all aspects of the PASS program. Field offices will continue to accept initial PASS applications, but will forward them to the PASS Specialists within 1 working day of their receipt.
- PASS applicants and participants and the PASS Specialists will communicate directly with each other. To facilitate this communication, toll-free numbers have already been installed at 18 of the 20 PASS Specialist sites around the country.

These changes alone eliminate the primary causes of the months-long processing delays that have occurred in the past.

- The PASS Specialists also are being given tools that they previously lacked to assist them in evaluating a PASS, such as vocational evaluation software and Internet access. These tools will be particularly helpful as the PASS Specialists work with certain applicants to maximize the potential for successful PASS outcomes.
- The PASS Specialists have received additional training--training in the use of these tools, training on the changes in PASS policies and processes, and an additional week of training on VR concepts and issues that Thomas Golden of Cornell University put together and coordinated.
- One of the principal goals of this training was to make the PASS Specialists more aware--and better able to take advantage of--the expertise and resources in the field of vocational rehabilitation and employment that exist in the community.
- The PASS Specialists will be seeking to develop partnerships with agencies and organizations such as yours, and with VR agencies, both to mine these resources and to provide you with a more complete understanding of the PASS program.
- It seems to us that PASS can and should be a process in which the individual, SSA, and community resources such as you are working as a team to help ensure the success of the individual's efforts to join or rejoin the work force.

These changes appear to have begun paying dividends:

- Interest in PASS as a viable work incentive appears to have been rekindled nationwide.
- Many of the PASS Specialists report that they are being inundated with requests from VR agencies and the community for PASS training.
- They also report that, after a long decline, the number of PASS applications is now on the rise. We expect that numbers for the calendar quarter ending June 1998 will show an increase in the number of active PASSes nationwide for the first time in over 2 years. We expect continued growth in the months ahead, and we expect successful outcomes at a rate that will turn heads.

On April 30, SSA will mail a letter to about 9,000 individuals who had a PASS denied or terminated between 4/1/96 and 11/30/97. The letter will suggest that, in view of the 12/97 changes, the individual may wish to submit a new PASS. If, in any of these cases, there is an appeal pending, or there is a PASS-related overpayment on the record, or the individual makes a request, we will review the prior determination and, where possible, correct any determination that was incorrect at the time.

July 97

ACTIONS BEING TAKEN TO ADDRESS
PASS-STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

What The Concerns and Complaints Are

Many PASS stakeholders believe that:

- o Several of the new PASS policies are designed to preclude the possibility of real self-support, or are otherwise unfair.
- o The decision to use the new criteria to terminate PASSes that had been approved under the old criteria is unfair.
- o SSA employees view PASS as a device for gaming the system rather than a legitimate work incentive.
- o The current division of labor between field offices and the PASS cadre is inefficient, provides for no accountability, and hinders communication.

Stakeholders complain that these factors, and a lack of knowledge about PASS in SSA field offices, have created an environment in which, in their words:

- o Those who enter into a PASS find themselves caught in a nightmare of red tape, misinformation, disinformation, arbitrary decisions, noncommunication, and denial of rights.
- o Cadre members make determinations they are not qualified to make about whether the occupational goal specified in a PASS is feasible, often disregarding determinations made by vocational rehabilitation professionals.
- o PASSes are being denied and terminated indiscriminately, and the applicants or participants told that, if they don't like it, they can appeal.
- o SSA treats PASS applicants and participants with suspicion and disrespect, and subjects them to repeated requests for more information and documentation.

In March 1997, to bring these complaints to the attention of SSA as strongly as possible, stakeholders in the Denver, Colorado, and Cincinnati, Ohio, areas began staging protest demonstrations.

What Led to These Concerns and Complaints

- o In April 1996, SSA issued revised POMS instructions on PASS. Their focus was on preventing abuse.
- o A decision was made to apply the new guidelines to reviews of PASSes that had been approved under the old guidelines.

- o At the same time, SSA trained a "cadre" of PASS specialists and placed essentially all decision-making authority for PASS in the cadre's hands. Most cadre members are not in field offices and are not accessible to the public.
- o Following these changes, PASS denial and termination rates soared; the number of PASSes in effect fell from about 10,300 in March 1996 to about 3,700 in March 1997.

What Prompted The April 1996 Changes

(A detailed history of PASS is attached at tab A.)

- o In 1994, internal reviews by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Office of Program and Integrity Reviews (OPIR) cited problems with PASS that included:
 - a lack of consistency in PASS determinations;
 - PASS expenses that were neither necessary nor reasonable;
 - the use of PASS to maximize cash benefits and acquire Medicaid coverage without an earnest attempt to work;
 - PASS goals that were unrealistic or that required an advanced degree.
- o An intercomponent workgroup in Central Office made a series of recommendations for remedying these problems.
- o In February 1996, GAO issued a report that, for the most part, reiterated the findings of the internal reviews.

What SSA Is Doing Now

In April 1997, SSA began a multifaceted effort to look into and address concerns being expressed by PASS stakeholders.

- o The Office of Program Benefits Policy is obtaining input from a broad spectrum of PASS stakeholders around the country. This is being done by telephone, by mail, via the internet, and through meetings, forums, conferences, and hearings that OPBP has conducted, participated in, or simply attended for the purpose of listening.

The purpose of these activities is to let stakeholders know that SSA is taking their concerns seriously, and to work with them to identify ways to address their concerns without sacrificing the integrity of the PASS provisions. (A list

and description of completed and scheduled major activities, including summaries of what has been heard thus far, is at tab B.)

- o The Office of Program Benefits Policy will work with the Office of Operations to train PASS-cadre site managers and regional office staff on PASS, to facilitate better management oversight of PASS operations.
- o The Office of Operations will evaluate the PASS development process to identify the causes of and solutions to PASS processing problems, including major processing delays. (A copy of the plan for the evaluation is at tab C.)
- o The Office of Program and Integrity Reviews has completed a quality review of all decisions made by the PASS cadre in 3/97. The review showed a PASS denial rate of 82 percent, and indicated that almost all the decisions made were consistent with current POMS guidelines. (A summary of the report findings is at tab D.)
- o The Office of Program Benefits Policy developed a PC-based database in an effort to satisfy PASS data needs. If the database can be made fully operational, sufficient data should be available to permit future assessment of the effectiveness of PASS as a work incentive. (A discussion of some data, and a graph illustrating the growth and decline of PASS use, are attached at tab E.)
- o When these activities have all been completed this summer, the Office of Program Benefits Policy will incorporate what has been learned into an options paper for the Commissioner of Social Security.

What We Have Learned Thus Far

There is more cause for the concerns stakeholders have been expressing, and more truth to the complaints they have been making, than we originally thought probable.

POLICY ISSUES

Changes intended as safeguards against abuse may have gone a little too far. A work incentive that was not working because it was being administered too loosely may now be so mired in restrictions and limitations that it cannot work.

The policy-related issues that have evoked the strongest stakeholder reaction are:

- o new rules being used to terminate PASSes approved under the prior rules;

- o determinations of the feasibility of occupational goals being made by SSA staff who are not qualified to make them;
- o occupational goals being restricted to "entry-level" jobs;
- o expenses for major purchases, such as a computer or vehicle, being limited to down payments;
- o approval of expenses being deferred (the individual not being allowed to set aside funds for them) until the individual has completed certain interval steps in the plan.

PROCESS AND SERVICE ISSUES

- o Numerous stakeholders have reported that there are some SSA field offices in which the treatment of PASS applicants and participants is rude and sometimes denigrating.
- o Both stakeholders and SSA staff have reported that months-long processing delays and lost documentation are common, lost PASSES are not uncommon, and cadre requests to field offices for PASS development routinely go unanswered, despite repeated follow-up requests. This inaction often creates large overpayments that the individual cannot anticipate, but for which he or she is held accountable.
- o SSA staff have reported, and stakeholders are aware, that Administrative Law Judges have been routinely overturning PASS denials and terminations that are based on the April 1996 POMS changes, because the changes have no specific regulatory support. This helps keep us out of court, but forces people to wait for 8 months to 2 years or more for the favorable determination.

OTHER ISSUES

- o The PC-based PASS database is difficult to use, time consuming, and unreliable.

Interim Recommendations

Foremost, we recommend that SSA continue toward an orderly completion of the process it has begun to look into and address stakeholder concerns. We recommend that, in the meantime, prompt action be taken to:

1. Stop use of the new rules to terminate PASSES that were approved under the old rules, and establish a procedure for identifying and revising prior determinations.

2. Mandate timely processing of future PASS transactions and direct that immediate steps be taken to eliminate the backlog of pending PASS actions.
3. Issue a nationwide reminder to FOs concerning courteous treatment of all PASS applicants/clients.
4. Establish a PASS hotline (an 800 number in the DSU).

The hotline would permit individuals who feel they have been mistreated or misinformed in an SSA field office to report the problem to a central location. Each report would be documented and forwarded to the applicable Regional Office, and would require a written report of the investigation.

5. Proceed with planned training for cadre site managers scheduled for late June.
6. Initiate regularly scheduled conference calls between OPBP and all cadre sites. In the near term, these calls can be used to ensure that current policy instructions on such issues as "entry level," feasibility, down payments, and deferred expenses are being interpreted properly and consistently.
7. Publish POMS instructions to clarify existing policies on entry-level positions, deferred expenses, and down payments. Misunderstanding of POMS instructions on these issues by both SSA staff and stakeholders have resulted in erroneous PASS determinations and hostility towards SSA.
8.
 - a. Secure a contract to either make the PASS database more reliable and user friendly or, in the alternative,
 - b. Direct that MSSICS PASS screens be enhanced to capture the information that the database is supposed to capture.

Future Recommendations

The evaluations of the process are beginning and we are reevaluating the policy issues as we get stakeholder input. We need to complete all of these activities before considering final recommendations. Once we have recommendations, it may be appropriate to again seek stakeholder input before implementing.

PASS Participants' Rights Campaign

For Immediate Release
March 3, 1997

For more information call
Laura Hershey 733-8717
Julie Reiskin 839-1775

Protesters Demand Freedom to Work

Demonstrators with disabilities will disrupt a Social Security Administration training today, March 3, at 10:55 a.m. to 10 a.m., to protest the agency's treatment of them and others who try to transition to work.

The protesters are unhappy about the way Social Security "work incentive" programs are administered, often in violation of the agency's own policies and procedures. Work incentives give people with severe disabilities a chance to prove that they can work, if allowed sufficient time and the opportunity to purchase necessary employment-related products or services — such as special equipment, job training, education, or vehicles.

The Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) is a 20-year-old Social Security work incentive program designed to assist people with disabilities receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) to create a plan and use money they earn to implement it. Over the past two years, Social Security has steadily undercut the PASS program, making it nearly impossible to use as Congress intended. These changes have wreaked havoc on the lives of people trying to use PASS to return to work.

"We are fed up," states Laura Hershey, a former PASS user who is still appealing unresolved issues, "Social Security is ruining people's lives. These are people who want to work, pay taxes, contribute to the economy, and do something meaningful with their lives. Social Security is denying us opportunities to do that, instead treating us like leeches on the system."

Some former users of PASS have had to declare bankruptcy, sell special equipment which they bought using PASS, and lost medical insurance. More importantly, many PASS users have been forced back into dependence on Social Security, something they were trying to escape.

The protest will take place at the Denver Public Library, 13th and Broadway, at the conference center downstairs.

Statement Regarding Social Security Work Incentives:

Recipients Demand Accountability, Protection, Recourse, and Restitution

We hereby interrupt this meeting to bring you an important message from your constituents. We respectfully request that for the time being, you suspend your agenda, and follow our agenda instead. For the next hour, we expect the undivided attention of everyone on this panel.

We are here today to stage a protest. It is important to make clear exactly what we are protesting. We are *not* attacking the purpose or nature of this meeting. Nor do we object to the consideration and discussion of new proposals for "return-to-work" programs. On the contrary, we are eager to support and participate in designing creative, effective reforms in Social Security law, to enable more people with disabilities to participate in the labor force.

However much we support that goal, we can neither sit by and watch, nor participate in, a meeting which fails to address the ongoing abuses currently being committed against people with disabilities who have tried to avail themselves of existing "work incentive" rules. We believe that unless you confront these abuses, they will surely carry over into any newly-developed programs, and will cause these programs to fail the people they are designed to empower, just as the current programs have failed.

Our agenda for today is:

- 1) to make you aware of the many ways that existing work incentive rules are routinely ignored, distorted, and violated by Social Security staff, with devastating consequences for disabled individuals attempting to become employed; and
- 2) to demand that you commit to taking action to end these violations.

As you will hear today, many people have entered into return-to-work programs -- particularly the Plan to Achieve Self-Support, or PASS -- full of eagerness, hope, ambition, and determination. These individuals believed that the PASS offered them a real opportunity to become productive workers, an alternative to lifelong dependence on Social Security benefits, and a route toward self-respect and first-class citizenship.

Instead, people found themselves caught in a Kafkaesque nightmare of red tape, misinformation, contradictory statements, arbitrary decisions, lack of communication, and denial of rights. People are treated with suspicion and disrespect. Mistakes by SSA almost never admitted, and it's almost always the PASS participant who pays the price for the ignorance, carelessness, and apathy of caseworkers.

To be more specific, typical violations committed by SSA staff include the following:

- Inaccurately informing individuals that they are not eligible to apply for a PASS; that their occupational goal is unacceptable; or that they have no appeal rights.
- Failing to inform individuals of changes in their PASS status.
- Basing decisions on subjective criteria, related to staff person's personal attitudes.
- Refusing to provide information about the reasons or bases for negative decisions.
- Failing or refusing to return phone calls from PASS participants.

All of the above experiences are extremely common for people participating in the PASS

program. These actions constitute barriers to employment for people with disabilities -- barriers no less harmful than the most blatant acts of discrimination committed by employers. The PASS program has been, and is, implemented in a thoroughly discriminatory manner -- yet we have no recourse to the ADA to fight this type of discrimination! The only recourse we do have is to appeal and request a hearing by an Administrative Law Judge -- a process which typically takes eight to twelve months. By then, it's often too late.

Quite often, these barriers have concrete, devastating, and sometimes irreversible consequences. Rather than finding steady work and economic self-sufficiency, many PASS participants have been rewarded by, for example--

- losing essential medical benefits, leading to neglect and aggravation of health problems;
- starting a business only to lose it before it can become stabilized;
- being forced to declare bankruptcy;
- becoming more disabled due to the stress and exhaustion of fighting unfair decisions;
- having to resume dependence on government benefits;
- having to give up on dreams of employment, productivity, and independence.

These are critical problems which must be addressed! In presenting them to you, we are not asking for your sympathy or understanding, nor for empty promises to "look into it." Rather, we are initiating what we hope will become a national **PASS Participants' Rights Campaign**, calling for **accountability, protection, recourse, and restitution**. Today, we are inviting you to join us as allies in this campaign. You can begin by making a formal commitment, as individuals or as a group, to promoting the following demands to the Social Security Administration, to the U.S. Congress, and to the President.

To correct the problems discussed above, and to begin to solve the crisis of mega-unemployment afflicting the disability community, we demand the following:

★**Accountability** -- to the public, and particularly to Social Security recipients and participants -- of SSA employees *at all levels*. This means:

- ▶New regulations must be drafted to reflect both the letter and the intent of the legislation which created the PASS and other work incentive programs.
- ▶These new regulations must be subject to public hearings and a public comment period.
- ▶All SSA staff, especially field staff, must receive thorough training in implementing work incentive programs. Trainings should be developed and conducted with the participation of people with disabilities; and should emphasize the goals of work incentive programs; understanding of policies and procedures; customer service; and clients' rights.

★**Protection** from rules violations, arbitrary decisions, punitive actions, and other abuses by Social Security workers. This means:

- ▶An independent advocacy/ombudsman program should be created to serve individuals who apply for, and/or participate in, Social Security work incentive programs. This program, which should be available in every state, could be modeled on the Client Assistance Program (CAP) of the Vocational Rehabilitation system.
- ▶This CAP-type program should be able to provide immediate intervention, accurate information, and individual advocacy in any dispute or complaint involving work

incentive programs or rules.

- ▶ Pending resolution of disputes regarding work incentive rules, participants' benefits and work plans should be allowed to continue uninterrupted.

★ **Recourse** when policies or procedures are violated, when individual participants' rights are abridged, and/or when decisions are negative. This means:

- ▶ The individual advocacy/ombudsman program should have the power to correct and/or overturn actions made by caseworkers when there has been a clear violation of policies or procedures.
- ▶ The appeals process should be streamlined, so that a hearing with an Administrative Law Judge can be scheduled within at least 60 days.

★ **Restitution** for losses suffered by individuals as a consequence of violations of Social Security work incentive rules. This means:

- ▶ When there has been a clear violation of policies or procedures, which results in direct economic or personal harm to an individual, that individual should have the right to sue the Social Security Administration for damages (including lawyers' fees) in a civil court of law.

We, the PASS Participants' Rights Campaign, demand a meeting with Shirley Chater, Commissioner of SSA and Susan Daniels, Associate Commissioner, within 60 days to discuss these changes.

People with disabilities will no longer submit to the involuntary poverty, idleness, and dependence forced upon us by the Social Security Administration. We demand the right to work without punishment or penalty, and the necessary support in making the transition to employment. Please join us.

Thank you for your time and attention.

WE WANT TO WORK!!!

For more information about the PASS Participants' Rights Campaign, call 839-1775, or write to P.O. Box 9004, Denver, CO 80209.



SOCIAL SECURITY

August 7, 1997

Ms. Laura Hershey
P.O. Box 9004
Denver, Colorado 80209

Dear Ms. Hershey:

The purpose of this letter is to reaffirm the Social Security Administration's (SSA) plans with respect to the comprehensive review now underway of the policies and implementing procedures for the Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) provision of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.

The review began this past spring in keeping with commitments we had made to study the first year impact of changes in the way PASS requests are processed. Those changes, as you are aware, followed evaluations by the Agency and by the General Accounting Office revealing some weaknesses in SSA's administration of PASS as well as some aspects of PASS which were vulnerable to misuse.

We take most seriously our public charge to administer the PASS provision effectively. To that end, our goals in the review now underway are to ensure that PASS continues to be available to highly motivated disabled SSI recipients while minimizing opportunities for misuse.

We recognize the important role PASS plays in helping disabled individuals (our customers) move from dependency to independence. We have heard the concern of our PASS customers that prior evaluations did not include any public dialog to learn first hand about the impact of the provision on the lives of those it touches. We made a commitment to pursue such a dialog, and our efforts to listen closely to the concerns of disabled individuals and advocates through our PASS Forums and the many other meetings we have attended demonstrate that commitment.

You have asked me to make a further commitment that any recommendations flowing from our review will emphasize putting the customer first. I do this gladly. As evidence of this commitment, I enclose the Agency's service pledge which, as you will see, makes this commitment for all of SSA to all of our customers.

I cannot at this point specify the precise nature of any future proposals for PASS changes. We are not through analyzing all the comments we have received, and there are case review activities underway within the Agency to learn more about the quality, equity, and consistency of SSA decisions. Once this broad review is completed, the Agency will need to evaluate the findings derived from it before deciding on a strategy for enhancements. However, I can assure you that we are looking very closely at the concerns that have been expressed about the effect of policy application, public information, and case handling issues such as timeliness and customer burden.

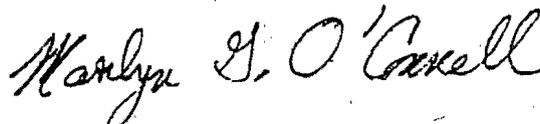
The recommendations which flow from our review will consider all issues that have been brought to us and will be consistent with the Social Security Act and legislative intent. As the Agency undertakes policy development, which is my personal charge, we will consider the needs of our customers and SSA's stewardship responsibilities. You have expressed concern about the possibility that SSA might pursue regulatory change without public comment. While we have not yet concluded whether future regulatory change might be desirable, any regulatory change advanced would follow standard public notice and comment requirements of the Administrative Procedures Act.

Further, any procedural recommendations which might be advanced will consider how best to ensure an informed public (in response to concerns about the availability of public information materials to help guide our customers through the PASS process), to maintain a well-trained workforce (in response to concerns about training/sensitivity), and to promote a supportive and efficient work process (in response to concerns about timeliness and overall service delivery). In response to your questions about the quality of our determinations, our goals will be to ensure high quality and consistent decisions in accordance with policy and procedures. In addition, we believe it important to gauge program outcomes to ensure that PASS continues to help individuals with disabilities to work while also maintaining the integrity of the SSI program.

I trust this letter serves to strengthen your appreciation for our commitment in this endeavor. In return, I would ask for your support of our efforts, without further disruption of daily operations in our field offices. We now need time to complete the remaining review activities and consider the testimony we have heard and input we have received.

Though we may not agree on all points, we have listened to the concerns you have raised in the several meetings and calls SSA has held with you, and your views, along with those of other PASS customers, and will carefully consider them as we proceed.

Sincerely,



Marilyn G. O'Connell
Acting Associate Commissioner
for Program Benefits Policy

Enclosure



**SOCIAL SECURITY
ADMINISTRATION:
PUTTING
CUSTOMERS FIRST**

WE'LL GIVE YOU ACCURATE INFORMATION AND
TREAT YOU WITH COURTESY AND RESPECT

WE'LL LET YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE
TO FILL YOUR REQUEST
IF THERE'S A DELAY, WE'LL LET YOU KNOW WHY

WE'LL EXPLAIN OUR DECISIONS SO YOU
UNDERSTAND
AND LET YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU DISAGREE

WE'LL KEEP OUR OFFICES SAFE AND PLEASANT,
AND OUR SERVICES ACCESSIBLE

WE'LL KEEP OUR APPOINTMENTS
WE'LL SERVE YOU WITHIN 10 MINUTES

WHEN YOU REQUEST A SOCIAL SECURITY CARD,
WE'LL MAIL IT TO YOU WITHIN FIVE WORKING
DAYS OF RECEIVING ALL THE INFORMATION
WE NEED.
*IF YOU NEED IT, WE'LL TELL YOU YOUR NUMBER
IN 1 DAY*

THE PASS PROVISION AND ITS EVOLUTION

1. HOW A PASS WORKS

- o If a disabled individual has a PASS and SSA approves it, income and resources devoted to pursuit of the plan are not counted in determining SSI eligibility and payment amount.
- o For someone whose income or resources otherwise exceed the SSI limits, PASS can permit eligibility for SSI and Medicaid, and can lead to eligibility for food stamps.
- o For someone otherwise eligible for SSI, PASS can result in a higher monthly payment.
- o The funds excluded under a PASS can be used for such things as tuition, training, transportation, supplies, computers, and vehicles.

2. POTENTIAL FOR PROBLEMS AT THE OUTSET

Potential for difficulty in administering the PASS provision existed at the start, in that:

- o The Social Security Act provided no direction regarding approval of a PASS. Regulations, issued in 1974, specified few requirements; the plan had to be in writing and:
 - be tailored to the individual;
 - show a specific occupational goal;
 - list the income and assets to be excluded and how they would be used; and
 - be designed for an initial period of not more than 18 months (SSA could extend to a total of 48 months).
- o PASS is unlike anything else CRS do, and they lack the training to realistically assess the vocational rehabilitation potential and goals of a person with disabilities. They don't like dealing with it.
- o As a result, almost any marginally credible PASS could be approved and, while no data are available on PASS allowance rates prior to 1996, anecdotal evidence suggests that the vast majority of PASSES submitted were approved.

For years, however, PASS was rarely used. Until the late 1980s, fewer than 1,000 PASSES were in effect nationwide at any given time. Most were plans developed by Vocational Rehabilitation. PASS-related problems thus were kept to a minimum:

3. GROWTH OF PASS AND RELATED PROBLEMS

In the mid-to-late 1980s, the ease of getting a PASS approved combined with a number of other factors to promote substantial growth in PASS use:

- o Congress passed legislation advancing work incentives.
- o SSA required FOs to actively solicit and develop PASSES.
- o Third parties began to create PASSES for the disabled, usually for a fee.

Between 1989 and 1995, the number of PASSES in effect nationwide increased to more than 10,000. Abuse and rumors of abuse spread, prompting expressions of concern from within SSA.

4. INTERNAL REVIEWS

In 1994, SSA began reviews of PASS through the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Office of Program Integrity Reviews (OPIR). Among the problems found were:

- o use of PASS to maximize cash benefits and acquire Medicaid coverage without an earnest attempt to work;
- o approval of PASS expenses that were neither necessary nor reasonable;
- o approval of occupational goals that reflected a pipe dream or required an advanced degree.

5. CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTION TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS

Effective January 1995, §203(a) of P.L. 103-296 added the following subsection to §1633 of the Act:

(d). The Commissioner of Social Security shall establish by regulation criteria for time limits and other criteria related to individuals' plans for achieving self-support, that take into account--

- (1) the length of time that the individual will need to achieve the individual's employment goal (within such reasonable period as the Commissioner of Social Security may establish); and
- (2) other factors determined by the Commissioner of Social Security to be appropriate.

6. INTERCOMPONENT WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

An intercomponent workgroup was convened in Central Office to come up with recommendations for remedying these problems. All the following workgroup recommendations were adopted:

To minimize abuse and improve cost-effectiveness:

- o Except in rare instances, limit occupational goals to entry-level positions.

- o Approve only expenses that:
 - are specifically related to the occupational goal;
 - did not pre-exist the PASS;
 - are necessary to get the person started, as opposed to necessary for ongoing costs.
- o Require a PASS applicant to consider public transportation, carpooling, or leasing, instead of buying a vehicle.
- o Disallow, as expenses, fees paid to third parties for monitoring compliance with a PASS.
- o Before approving a new PASS, confirm that the individual cannot obtain employment in the occupational goal of any prior PASS.

To improve administrative control:

- o Develop a consultative process to help CRs determine, in particular, whether a particular occupational goal is feasible or a particular expense necessary. (This became the cadre of PASS specialists.)
- o Develop a database to provide ongoing management information.
- o Defer approval of certain expenses pending completion of intermediate steps toward the goal, without which the expenses will not be necessary.
- o Develop a national PASS application form, and checklists for initial PASS applications and compliance reviews.

7. 1996 GAO REPORT

In February 1996, GAO issued a report that largely reiterated the findings of SSA's internal reviews, presenting them as its own. Among GAO's principal findings:

- o The effectiveness of PASS was unknown, because SSA lacked the basic data to measure it.
- o SSA had no criteria for assessing the appropriateness of individual plans, or for measuring their success.
- o SSA staff responsible for reviewing PASSes lacked vocational training.

8. APRIL 1996 POMS INSTRUCTIONS ON PASS

In April 1996, SSA issued revised POMS instructions on PASS. Their focus was on preventing abuse. Specifically, they:

- o emphasize that completion of a PASS must be expected to eliminate dependence on SSDI benefits and either reduce or eliminate dependence on SSI benefits;
- o provide that a PASS must specify an occupational goal, and that the goal must be feasible, taking into account the person's impairment(s), prior work history, training, and other factors;
- o limit occupational goals, except in rare instances, to entry-level employment positions;
- o limit allowable expenses to start-up costs, which must be reasonable and necessary;
- o limit allowable expenses for major purchases, such as vehicles, to down payments; and
- o exclude, from allowable expenses, any expenses that pre-existed a PASS.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CADRE OF PASS SPECIALISTS

At the same time, to facilitate uniform application of the revised instructions and improve the quality of PASS-related decisions, SSA placed all decision-making authority for PASS in the hands of a cadre of specially trained employees. An interim cadre was established in Baltimore in April 1996.

A permanent cadre of 39 members, who serve 1-year details as PASS specialists, was trained and dispersed among 16 sites throughout the country in November 1996.

Laura Hershey

P6/(b)(6)

e-mail: LauraHershey@compuserve.com

Phone

Fax

P6/(b)(6)

April 19, 1999

Ms. Francine Nordman, District Manager
 Social Security Administration
 888 West Ithaca
 Englewood, Colorado 80110

Dear Ms. Nordman:

I am in receipt of your letter dated April 14, 1999 (copy attached), and I must say that I am appalled at the information that it contains.

According to your letter, there is a "special unit" within the Social Security Administration who have been assigned to work on a "special project involving overpayments." You admit that these mysterious individuals do not have access to recipients' entire files, and so they have no way to know whether a recipient was legitimately employed under a SSA work-incentive program such as the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), or 1619(a) and (b), or the two-for-one offset. This means that these overpayment notices are triggered whenever someone reports any income, even if they earned that income under a SSA work-incentive program.

This is exactly the sort of practice which has caused advocates such as myself to protest against the Social Security Administration. Under the "special" system that you describe, any recipient who participates in a work-incentive program under SSA, and who earns an income, will almost certainly receive an overpayment notice -- perhaps five years after the fact, as was the case with the notice sent to me. And this overpayment notice is highly likely to be "incorrect due to the limitations of the system" as you put it in your letter. Not only was the information in my overpayment notice incorrect, and five years late; it was also presented in such a way as to be virtually incomprehensible. If I had had to defend myself against the accusation of overpayment, I would not even have known, from what little information was contained in the notice, how the overpayment was determined. The figures which were listed appeared to be completely arbitrary, with no explanation of how they were arrived at.

There is nothing unusual about this type of harassment by SSA. Indeed, almost everyone I know who has become employed under SSA work-incentive regulations has, eventually, received incorrect overpayment notices. Most recipients, however, do not subsequently receive prompt and polite replies to their appeal letters. The attached letter is unique for its rapid response, its courteous tone, and its candor. I suppose it helps that I am known within the SSA system for having raised these issues publicly and loudly. All along, we have accused SSA of harassing disabled individuals who attempt to work; and also of penalizing recipients for SSA's own internal mistakes. How embarrassing it must have been for SSA officials, who have continually denied protesters' allegations, to have such a blatant example put into the hands of one of the protesters!

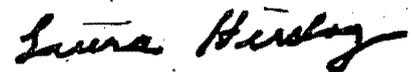
99 APR 27 PM 2:23
 SSA-DISP
 RECEIVED

In light of the information contained in your letter, I am formally requesting additional information about the "special unit" and the "special project involving overpayments." In particular, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. Where is this "special unit" located?
2. How many people staff the "special unit"? Who are they?
3. When was the "special unit" created; and what was its stated purpose and assignment?
4. What is the duration of the "special unit's" assignment? Is it ongoing, or time-limited?
5. How many overpayment notices have been sent out by the "special unit"?
6. How many of these overpayment notices went to people who were legitimately employed under SSA work-incentive programs such as the PASS, or 1619(a) and (b), or the two-for-one offset?
7. How many of these overpayment notices were appealed?
8. Of the notices which were appealed, how many were reversed?
9. What was the average length of time between the initial overpayment notice, and the reversal?
10. When you personally sign an overpayment notice (such as the notice I received), which has been generated by the "special unit," do you ever check first to see whether the targeted recipient is or was legitimately employed under an SSA work-incentive program?

I look forward to receiving the information requested above. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Laura Hershey

P.S. - Just as I was about to mail this letter to you, I received another notice from the Social Security Administration dated 4/13/99, with **DID YOU FORGET?** printed at the top. It goes on to demand that I repay my overpayment of \$815.60 by 5/1/99. This is the overpayment which you have acknowledged is incorrect! The fact that SSA sent me two repayment demands within less than two weeks is another example of harassment of disabled recipients who try to work, and another illustration of a system run amok.

cc: **Don Ketchum, SSA Region VIII**
Rich Gonzalez, SSA Region VIII
Susan M. Daniels, Associate Commissioner, Social Security Administration
Office of the Inspector General, Social Security Administration
President Bill Clinton
Jonathan Young, White House Liaison on Disability
Tony Coelho, President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
Assistant Secretary Judith Heumann, U.S. Dept. of Education
U.S. Senator Wayne Allard

Marzoli, Ray

From: Ketcham, Don
Sent: Wednesday, May 12, 1999 8:04 PM
To: GRADEL, NANCY
Cc: Marzoli, Ray
Subject: RE: STATUS OF RESPONSE TO LAURA HERSHEY'S 4/19/99 LETTER

Nancy/Ray

Laura and I had a lengthy conversation on May 3. I gave her some of the background on Denver's push on overpayment workloads (backlog/aged cases/SSI High Risk Initiatives). I told her about our processing unit at the TSC (3-4 details on a rotating basis). In terms of the workload mix, there are no stats that breakout reasons for overpayments, however most are due to double check negotiation, few Title XVI are related to earnings and only a small percentage of those are related to work incentives/PASS. We briefly discussed the o/p letter she received, which the f/o quickly reversed because we erroneously looked at projected earnings instead of actual earnings.

I also updated Laura on the O/P review we were doing on the cases the Colorado Cross Disability Coalition referred to us (alleging that the cases establish systemic problems) - unfortunately, we are having a great deal of difficulty in tracking down case files from our various depositories, so the process is very slow.

Don

Reply Separator

Subject: STATUS OF RESPONSE TO LAURA HERSHEY'S 4/19/99 LETTER
Author: Nancy Gradel at ~S2D8
Date: 5/12/99 1:50 PM

Don,

Ray Marzoli from OESP called me today to follow-up on the region's response to Laura Hershey's 4/19 letter. Please advise Ray of the status or if a response has been sent please forward the response to him. Ray's e-mail box is "Ray Marzoli @ HQ-Exchange" and his fax number is (410) 966-1278. Please also cc me a copy of the status and/or response. Thanks.

Nancy Gradel

From: Marzoll, Ray
Sent: Thursday, May 13, 1999 2:09 PM
To: Ketcham, Don
Cc: GRADEL, NANCY
Subject: RE: STATUS OF RESPONSE TO LAURA HERSHEY'S 4/19/99 LETTER

RE: STATUS OF
RESPONSE TO LAUR...

Don,

Thank you for interceding in this matter. Was your conversation with Ms. Hershey sufficient, or are we following up with a written reply? If a written response is forthcoming, please forward a copy to me.

Thanks again,

Ray

ROUTING SLIP

DATE: 4/13/99

FROM: Stephanie Streett
Assistant to the President and Director of Presidential Scheduling

SUBJECT: To present the President's Award of the President's Committee on Employment of people with Disabilities (PCEPD)
Virginia Apuzzo

Virginia Apuzzo	—	Capricia Marshall	—
Lisa Berg	—	Thurgood Marshall Jr.	—
Samuel Berger	—	Minyon Moore	—
Sidney Blumenthal	—	Bob Nash	—
Mary Beth Cahill	✓	Jennifer Palmieri	—
Phil Caplan	—	John Podesta	—
Davis/Redington	✓	Clark Ray	—
Maria Echaveste	—	Steve Ricchetti	—
Tim Emrich	✓	Bruce Reed	—
Jeff Forbes	—	Dan Rosenthal	—
George Frampton	—	Charles Ruff	—
Nancy Hemreich	—	Patti Solis-Doyle	—
Mickey Ibarra	—	Doug Sosnik	—
Ron Klain	—	Gene Sperling	—
Neal Lane	—	Larry Stein	—
Lisa Levin	—	Todd Stern	—
Ann Lewis	✓	Loretta Ucelli	✓
Bruce Lindsey	—	Melanne Verveer	—
Joe Lockhart	✓	Michael Waldman	✓
		Johnathan H. Young	✓

FILE: Pending

COMMENTS: _____

Scheduling Proposal 40:26
39 MAR 30

3/29/99

ACCEPT REGRET PENDING

TO: Stephanie Street
Assistant to the President
Director of Scheduling

FROM: Mary Beth Cahill *mec/cc*
Jonathan M. Young

REQUEST: To present the President's Award of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (PCEPD) to its 1997 and 1998 recipients, Laura Hershey and James H. Click Jr.

PURPOSE: To honor the recipients' outstanding contributions in advocating for the employment of people with disabilities.

BACKGROUND: The Honorable Tony Coelho serves as Chairman of PCEPD--a small federal agency whose mission is to communicate, coordinate, and promote public and private efforts to enhance the employment of people with disabilities. The Committee provides information, training, and technical assistance to America's business leaders, organized labor, rehabilitation and service providers, advocacy organizations, families, and individuals with disabilities. It also operates the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a toll-free information service on workplace accommodations and the employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Tony Coelho also services as Co-Chair of the President's Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities.

Laura Hershey is the interim Executive Director of Denver's Disability Center for Independent Living and a grass roots leader in the national disability community. Her achievements include the mobilization of the PASS Participants Rights Campaign. This is a national coalition to protect the rights of individuals taking part in the Social Security Administration's Plan to Achieve Self-Support. She is also a staunch supporter of women's rights, especially of women with disabilities.

James Click, Jr. is the founder and president of the LINKAGES program. This Tucson-based, non-profit program connects employers with job openings and job seekers with disabilities. As an employer he has placed 35 employees with disabilities in jobs at

his car dealerships in Arizona and California. Since 1988, 80 employers have placed more than 170 individuals.

Hershey and Click were selected from a national selection of nominees to receive these awards.

DATE AND TIME: TBD

LOCATION: Flexible: either the Oval Office or the hometown of either recipient (Tuscon or Denver, if POTUS travel coincides).

DURATION: 15 minutes

PARTICIPANTS: Tony Coelho, Chairman of PCEPD
John Lancaster, Executive Director of PCEPD
Board Members and/or Vice-Chairs of PCEPD (4)
Laura Hershey, with family (4)
James Click, Jr., with family (4)

OUTLINE OF EVENTS: TBD

MEDIA COVERAGE: TBD

STAFF CONTACT: Jonathan M. Young
x-67032



PRESIDENT'S
COMMITTEE
ON EMPLOYMENT
OF PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES

January 12, 1999

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am very pleased to inform you that the President's Committee has selected two individuals to receive the 1998 President's Award. They are Laura Hershey, a disability advocate and activist from Denver, Colorado, and James H. Click, Jr., a businessman from Tucson, Arizona, who has been instrumental in advancing the employment of people with disabilities in his own businesses and the Tucson community. The recipients were selected from a national slate of 25 individuals nominated by leaders in the disability community.

Former Director of the Denver Commission for People with Disabilities, Ms. Hershey then chose a career as a self-employed consultant and writer, providing training, research and writing services to businesses, agencies and individuals. For four years she wrote a monthly column for the Denver Post on disability rights issues. Her career was abruptly halted when the Social Security Administration revised its PASS Program, and she was no longer eligible to participate in the program. She took action, not only for herself but also for others with disabilities who seek to be self-supporting, tax-paying citizens, by organizing the PASS Participants Rights Campaign. Not only has she been recognized in Colorado for her leadership in enhancing employment for people with disabilities, but she was also recognized nationally by being selected as a representative for disabled women at the International Women's NGO conference in Beijing, China.

Mr. Click, who owns several automobile businesses in the Southwest, is a founder and President of the Board of Directors of Linkages, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to linking employers with individuals with disabilities seeking jobs. He led the way by hiring individuals with disabilities and personally ensuring that the managers of his other companies did the same. While still in a start-up phase and not publicly launched as an organization until April 1998, the partnerships developed through Linkages had already resulted in 155 persons with disabilities gaining employment in various businesses, including health care, retail, banking and landscaping. Mr. Click devotes a great deal of time and energy to numerous organizations that serve the community, including those that serve adults with developmental disabilities, homeless people and battered children.

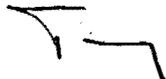
1331 F Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004-1107

202-376-6200 (Voice)
202-376-6219 (FAX)
202-376-6205 (TDD)

He is or has been a member of numerous boards and has led fund raising efforts for such organizations as the Handi-Dogs Training Center and the American Cancer Society.

I am enclosing the nomination and supporting documents for Ms. Hershey and Mr. Click. I know you will enjoy meeting both, and look forward to confirming a date and time on your schedule to present the President's Award to these deserving individuals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Coelho', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tony Coelho
Chairman

TC:DD:sm



PRESIDENT'S
COMMITTEE
ON EMPLOYMENT
OF PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES

October 28, 1998

TO: Jonathan Young
FROM: Dina Dorich *DD*
RE: President's Award

Chairman Tony Coelho has made his decision on the 1998 President's Award winner. As we discussed in our meeting, we also need to present the 1997 President's Award. This award is considered the America's highest honor in recognition of an individual's impact on the empowerment and employment of people with disabilities.

The 1997 award will go to Laura Hershey, advocate and founder of the PASS Participants Rights Campaign, of Denver, Colorado. The 1998 award will go to James H. Click, Jr., a Tucson, AZ, businessman who is also President of Linkages, Inc., which serves as a liaison between businesses with job openings and rehabilitation providers with qualified people with disabilities ready to work.

I am enclosing the nomination packets on both individuals. At this point, neither has been notified of the honor.

While we do not need to have a specific date set for the presentation, it would be valuable to at least inform the honorees of the location of the event. During our meeting, we had discussed several possibilities: (1) White House Oval Office, with the award presented by the President [as has been done with prior honorees]; (2) White House, with the award presented by the Vice President [should President's availability be very limited]; (3) the honoree's hometown/state, to be presented at a time when the President is in that area and a place that would give "local" visibility to the recipient.

Normally, Chairman Coelho sends a letter to the President, requesting that this ceremony take place. I assume we still want to follow that process. However, in order to draft the letter, I need to know whether I should ask only for Option (1) above, ask for Option (1), but be open to other scenarios, or suggest various scenarios. At this point I don't have any information from Tony to indicate his personal preference.

I would appreciate it if you could give me a call, so I know how to proceed in a way that will also make your job of getting it on the calendar as easy as possible. My number is 376-6200, Ext. 23.

Thanks.

cc: John Lancaster

1331 F Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004-1107

202-376-6200 (Voice)
202-376-6219 (FAX)
202-376-6205 (TDD)

1ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Denver Post

May 14, 1999 Friday 2D EDITION

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A-25

LENGTH: 412 words

HEADLINE: Advocate for the disabled wins national service award

BYLINE: By Curtis L. Esquibel, Special to The Denver Post

BODY:
Denver's Laura Hershey has an abundant vocabulary. The word "satisfied," however, is not in it.

Hershey recently received the 1998 President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Award. But the distinction left a bittersweet taste in her mouth.

"I was pleased and honored, but I would give up the award in a second in favor of some real change," said Hershey, executive director of Denver's Disability Center for Independent Living.

Hershey, 36, suffers from a disease called spinal muscular atrophy, which forces her to use a wheelchair. She has been a grassroots leader in the national disability community for more than a decade.

Much of Hershey's effort has been focused on reforming federal rules that make it hard for the disabled to work without disqualifying themselves from aid programs administered by the Social Security Administration.

The agency has a bewildering set of rules that apply to its Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income programs, Hershey said. And income limits in those programs make it hard to work without risking a loss of "really substantial benefits," she said.

"It's a real trap," she said. "People want to be able to return to work and support themselves, but once you reach a certain level, it stops and you lose everything."

Julie Reiskin, executive director of the Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition, nominated Hershey for the president's award.

"We can't work without Medicaid," Reiskin said. "We're not unemployed because we don't have the skills, we're unemployed because the incentive programs aren't there."

At the Denver Disability Center for Independent Living, Hershey started a peer advocacy program through which she trains and hires individual counselors. The counselors provide assistance to callers and others who have plenty of complicated questions about the federal programs.

The Denver Post, May 14, 1999 Friday

"When you have the opportunity to talk to somebody one on one for five or 10 minutes, they get it," Hershey said.

"But one person can't do that, and you don't always have the opportunity to talk to citizens one on one."

Hershey sees no end to her work.

"I think I've really been lucky to connect my professional activities with my personal experience," Hershey said.

"The issues people with disabilities face are compelling, and we believe all Americans should know about them."

Hershey will be presented with the award at the White House sometime later this year.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: Denver Post file photo Laura Hershey, executive director of Denver's Disability Center for Independent Living, shown in 1997, will receive the 1998 President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Award.

LOAD-DATE: May 14, 1999

5TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1997 The Washington Post
The Washington Post

June 19, 1997, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: STYLE; Pg. D01

LENGTH: 1349 words

HEADLINE: Ready, Willing and Disabled; Women at Global Forum Turn The
Wheelchairs of Progress

BYLINE: Elizabeth Kastor, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

When Laura Hershey wants to move, she breathes into a tube that controls her wheelchair. When she wants to speak, she shifts the tube away with her lips. This is how she painstakingly traverses the world, how she went to college, how she studied in Britain, how she traveled to China.

But she does not want to inspire you. She does not want you to think she is courageous. She does not want your sympathy.

"Disability," the woman from Denver says, "is not a tragedy. It's an exciting thing. It's really powerful."

Ask her what the power is, where it lies, and she says just this: "Look around."

Around her are other women. Women using wheelchairs. Blind women. Deaf women. Women with no arms. Women whose bodies jerk and twitch and whose words sputter out of their mouths. More than 500 people from 80 countries have come to the Bethesda Hyatt Regency for the International Leadership Forum for Women With Disabilities, which runs through tomorrow. They have been meeting all week, listening to such speakers as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, talking about political organizing and education and sexuality and employment.

To an able-bodied observer (a term many here would find objectionable, but more about that later), it is astonishing: A self-contained world in which wheelchairs are the norm, in which no one nervously averts eyes from faces without chins and arms without hands.

While Barbara Walters and TV viewers across the country cheer and weep for Christopher Reeve, men and women who use wheelchairs grimace at the paralyzed actor's talk about a cure through medical research that they long ago accepted will not come in their lifetimes -- and that some say they do not even want. They are not a problem for doctors, or anyone else, to solve. Like Laura Hershey, who spent years insisting her disability didn't matter and said nothing about her, the disability rights movement has changed and radicalized, demanding not only curb cuts and jobs, but a shift in attitude as well. "I hate when people say, 'Oh, you're so competent, I forget you're disabled!'" says Ellen Rubin, an educator from New York. That she is blind is not a fact she strives to overcome, to minimize. "It's part of who I am."

The Washington Post, June 19, 1997

"What we're doing is not just challenging assumptions about disability, but assumptions about life in general," Hershey says. "There's a real pressure to conform, to try to fit a mold, to adhere to a certain standard of beauty and success. We can challenge the standard that says you have to be perfect or you're no good."

The women here wear conference buttons declaring themselves "Loud, Proud and Passionate." They are the activists, the advocates, the ones who talk back. Whenever Rubin hears a parent nervously shush a child who has commented on her electronic cane, she addresses the adult directly: "Don't worry," she says. "I know I'm blind."

Help is not a simple idea. Jenny Kern, a lawyer from San Francisco, has too often felt strangers' hands on her wheelchair, moving her without even asking if she needs assistance. She throws the brake defiantly. Rubin is frequently asked, "Do you know where you're going?" by pedestrians apparently assuming she is lost without their guidance.

And along the roads of Africa and South America, state-of-the-art wheelchairs sent by First World philanthropists rot and rust. The chairs, meant to help, are too delicate for the rough roads. Spare parts are impossibly expensive. The help becomes junk.

But Peninah Mutinda's wheelchair was never meant to be elegant. Glance at it, and she immediately offers this: "I made it myself."

The thing was built to get her through the rutted streets of Nairobi, to save her money and to match her petite body and crowded life. It is low to the ground so she can mop the floor of her apartment and look her 6-year-old daughter in the eye. The oversize front wheels do not sink in sand. Metal shields on both sides protect her clothes from spattering mud -- "skirt guards" she calls them.

"I made it to fit me, to suit me," says the ebullient 29-year-old woman, who woke up one morning 12 years ago and could not walk.

Today, Mutinda and half a dozen other members of Whirlwind Women will demonstrate how they bend metal and spoke wheels and concoct inexpensive ball bearings out of nails and washers and metal tubing, skills they learned in a month-long workshop earlier this year in Kenya. The Whirlwind I, Africa Model chairs are sold for \$ 100 to \$ 300. In the United States, chairs cost \$ 1,000 to \$ 2,000.

A project of the Wheeled Mobility Center at San Francisco State University, Whirlwind Women is still in its infancy. Ralf Hotchkiss, a professor at San Francisco State and co-founder of the Whirlwind Wheelchair Network, has worked with disabled people in the developing world for 15 years, designing and building appropriate chairs. Mechanics trained by the program have made more than 10,000 wheelchairs, but Hotchkiss estimates 20 million people around the world still don't have needed mobility devices.

The chairs are both practical and symbolic. "Disabled women, for many reasons, are infantilized," says Barbara Duncan, director of communications for Rehabilitation International, one of the sponsors of the forum. "People reach by to pat them on the head. They do not look at them as women who have a future. They don't look at them as women. They look at them as old children."

The Washington Post, June 19, 1997

But if women can make a living in a wheelchair workshop, much can change. "The whole texture of their lives is defined by dependency," Duncan says. "And then it gets redesigned by this avenue to independence."

"People say, 'Peninah, why do you want to bend metal?' " Mutinda says. "In fact, I like doing these jobs people tend to say are meant for men. I just like it. I want to teach other women who think they can't do it."

Mutinda takes her tools with her wherever she goes, and delights in being able to make emergency repairs to her chair.

"People take you for what you look to be," she says. "If they see you are strong enough to do what you are doing -- they don't have a bad idea about you."

Irene Woodell wears silver nail polish on the two fingers that she has, and above her face with its deformed mouth and jaw her hair gleams rusty red with silver bangs.

She refuses to be invisible.

As she walks down the street, Woodell greets each stranger. "If I say 'Hi!' they have to say 'Hi!' back," says the university administrator from Detroit. "They feel uncomfortable but they respond."

Look at me, these women are saying. Listen to me. When you call yourself able-bodied, what are you saying about my abilities? When you tell your child not to stare, what fears are you teaching? When you talk about curing my condition, what are you saying about my right to exist?

Hotchkiss spent years designing super-wheelchairs. He wanted a chair that could climb stairs, that could crouch down, that would make him more like he was before the accident that paralyzed him. Looking back, he sees those chairs as signs that he was still attempting to defy his condition.

"It's just part of a process," says Jenny Kern, the process of adjusting to new realities. And in Christopher Reeve's talk about a cure for spinal cord injuries, she hears that he is just beginning a journey, the one she traveled in her teens and that others are traveling now.

"There are kids who are putting off their lives today because they're misled by Christopher Reeve's doctors that a cure is around the corner," Hotchkiss says.

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The Washington Post, June 19, 1997

"It's survival," Kern says.

GRAPHIC: Photo, robert a. reeder, Florence Nayiga, Kadimala Fatuma and Florence Dorcas Adong Ewoo watch Peninah Mutinda in her Whirlwind Wheelchair.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 19, 1997

5TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Washington Post

June 19, 1997, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: STYLE; Pg. D01

LENGTH: 1349 words

HEADLINE: Ready, Willing and Disabled; Women at Global Forum Turn The
Wheelchairs of Progress

BYLINE: Elizabeth Kastor, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

When Laura Hershey wants to move, she breathes into a tube that controls her wheelchair. When she wants to speak, she shifts the tube away with her lips. This is how she painstakingly traverses the world, how she went to college, how she studied in Britain, how she traveled to China.

But she does not want to inspire you. She does not want you to think she is courageous. She does not want your sympathy.

"Disability," the woman from Denver says, "is not a tragedy. It's an exciting thing. It's really powerful."

Ask her what the power is, where it lies, and she says just this: "Look around."

Around her are other women. Women using wheelchairs. Blind women. Deaf women. Women with no arms. Women whose bodies jerk and twitch and whose words sputter out of their mouths. More than 500 people from 80 countries have come to the Bethesda Hyatt Regency for the International Leadership Forum for Women With Disabilities, which runs through tomorrow. They have been meeting all week, listening to such speakers as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, talking about political organizing and education and sexuality and employment.

To an able-bodied observer (a term many here would find objectionable, but more about that later), it is astonishing: A self-contained world in which wheelchairs are the norm, in which no one nervously averts eyes from faces without chins and arms without hands.

While Barbara Walters and TV viewers across the country cheer and weep for Christopher Reeve, men and women who use wheelchairs grimace at the paralyzed actor's talk about a cure through medical research that they long ago accepted will not come in their lifetimes -- and that some say they do not even want. They are not a problem for doctors, or anyone else, to solve. Like Laura Hershey, who spent years insisting her disability didn't matter and said nothing about her, the disability rights movement has changed and radicalized, demanding not only curb cuts and jobs, but a shift in attitude as well. "I hate when people say, 'Oh, you're so competent, I forget you're disabled!'" says Ellen Rubin, an educator from New York. That she is blind is not a fact she strives to overcome, to minimize. "It's part of who I am."

The Washington Post, June 19, 1997

"What we're doing is not just challenging assumptions about disability, but assumptions about life in general," Hershey says. "There's a real pressure to conform, to try to fit a mold, to adhere to a certain standard of beauty and success. We can challenge the standard that says you have to be perfect or you're no good."

The women here wear conference buttons declaring themselves "Loud, Proud and Passionate." They are the activists, the advocates, the ones who talk back. Whenever Rubin hears a parent nervously shush a child who has commented on her electronic cane, she addresses the adult directly: "Don't worry," she says. "I know I'm blind."

Help is not a simple idea. Jenny Kern, a lawyer from San Francisco, has too often felt strangers' hands on her wheelchair, moving her without even asking if she needs assistance. She throws the brake defiantly. Rubin is frequently asked, "Do you know where you're going?" by pedestrians, apparently assuming she is lost without their guidance.

And along the roads of Africa and South America, state-of-the-art wheelchairs sent by First World philanthropists rot and rust. The chairs, meant to help, are too delicate for the rough roads. Spare parts are impossibly expensive. The help becomes junk.

But Peninah Mutinda's wheelchair was never meant to be elegant. Glance at it, and she immediately offers this: "I made it myself."

The thing was built to get her through the rutted streets of Nairobi, to save her money and to match her petite body and crowded life. It is low to the ground so she can mop the floor of her apartment and look her 6-year-old daughter in the eye. The oversize front wheels do not sink in sand. Metal shields on both sides protect her clothes from spattering mud -- "skirt guards" she calls them.

"I made it to fit me, to suit me," says the ebullient 29-year-old woman, who woke up one morning 12 years ago and could not walk.

Today, Mutinda and half a dozen other members of Whirlwind Women will demonstrate how they bend metal and spoke wheels and concoct inexpensive ball bearings out of nails and washers and metal tubing, skills they learned in a month-long workshop earlier this year in Kenya. The Whirlwind I, Africa Model chairs are sold for \$ 100 to \$ 300. In the United States, chairs cost \$ 1,000 to \$ 2,000.

A project of the Wheeled Mobility Center at San Francisco State University, Whirlwind Women is still in its infancy. Ralf Hotchkiss, a professor at San Francisco State and co-founder of the Whirlwind Wheelchair Network, has worked with disabled people in the developing world for 15 years, designing and building appropriate chairs. Mechanics trained by the program have made more than 10,000 wheelchairs, but Hotchkiss estimates 20 million people around the world still don't have needed mobility devices.

The chairs are both practical and symbolic. "Disabled women, for many reasons, are infantilized," says Barbara Duncan, director of communications for Rehabilitation International, one of the sponsors of the forum. "People reach by to pat them on the head. They do not look at them as women who have a future. They don't look at them as women. They look at them as old children."

The Washington Post, June 19, 1997

But if women can make a living in a wheelchair workshop, much can change. "The whole texture of their lives is defined by dependency," Duncan says. "And then it gets redesigned by this avenue to independence."

"People say, 'Peninah, why do you want to bend metal?' " Mutinda says. "In fact, I like doing these jobs people tend to say are meant for men. I just like it. I want to teach other women who think they can't do it."

Mutinda takes her tools with her wherever she goes, and delights in being able to make emergency repairs to her chair.

"People take you for what you look to be," she says. "If they see you are strong enough to do what you are doing -- they don't have a bad idea about you."

Irene Woodell wears silver nail polish on the two fingers that she has, and above her face with its deformed mouth and jaw her hair gleams rusty red with silver bangs.

She refuses to be invisible.

As she walks down the street, Woodell greets each stranger. "If I say 'Hi!' they have to say 'Hi!' back," says the university administrator from Detroit. "They feel uncomfortable but they respond."

Look at me, these women are saying. Listen to me. When you call yourself able-bodied, what are you saying about my abilities? When you tell your child not to stare, what fears are you teaching? When you talk about curing my condition, what are you saying about my right to exist?

Hotchkiss spent years designing super-wheelchairs. He wanted a chair that could climb stairs, that could crouch down, that would make him more like he was before the accident that paralyzed him. Looking back, he sees those chairs as signs that he was still attempting to defy his condition.

"It's just part of a process," says Jenny Kern, the process of adjusting to new realities. And in Christopher Reeve's talk about a cure for spinal cord injuries, she hears that he is just beginning a journey, the one she traveled in her teens and that others are traveling now.

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GRAPHIC: Photo, robert a. reeder, Florence Nayiga, Kadimala Fatuma and Florence Dorcas Adong Ewoo watch Peninah Mutinda in her Whirlwind Wheelchair.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 19, 1997

6TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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Denver Rocky Mountain News

May 31, 1997, Saturday

SECTION: LOCAL; Ed. M; Pg. 40A

LENGTH: 240 words

HEADLINE: Disabled protest over changes in Social Security program

BYLINE: Tillie Fong; Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

BODY:

Twenty disabled people protested for four hours Friday at Denver's Social Security office to draw attention to what they say are deficiencies in a self-sufficiency program.

"We have hundreds of people in the Region 8 area (Denver) who have tried to access this program and were prevented from fulfilling those dreams by the Social Security Administration," said protester Laura Hershey, 34, of Denver.

The Plan to Achieve Self-Support program allows people with disabilities to set aside money from Social Security, earnings or inheritance to pay for equipment or classes to become self-sufficient while remaining eligible for medical and other benefits.

But changes in the program since February 1996 have made it nearly impossible for PASS participants to succeed, the protesters said.

After a meeting with officials Friday, the group decided to stay outside the office until someone would fax their list of demands to acting Social Security Commissioner John Callahan.

Shortly before 6 p.m., the group's request was granted.

"We met with the group for a couple of hours, and we heard their concerns," said Donald Ketcham, executive officer in the Denver regional office.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: June 4, 1997

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Marie Stahan

Laura Hershhey

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Her complaints

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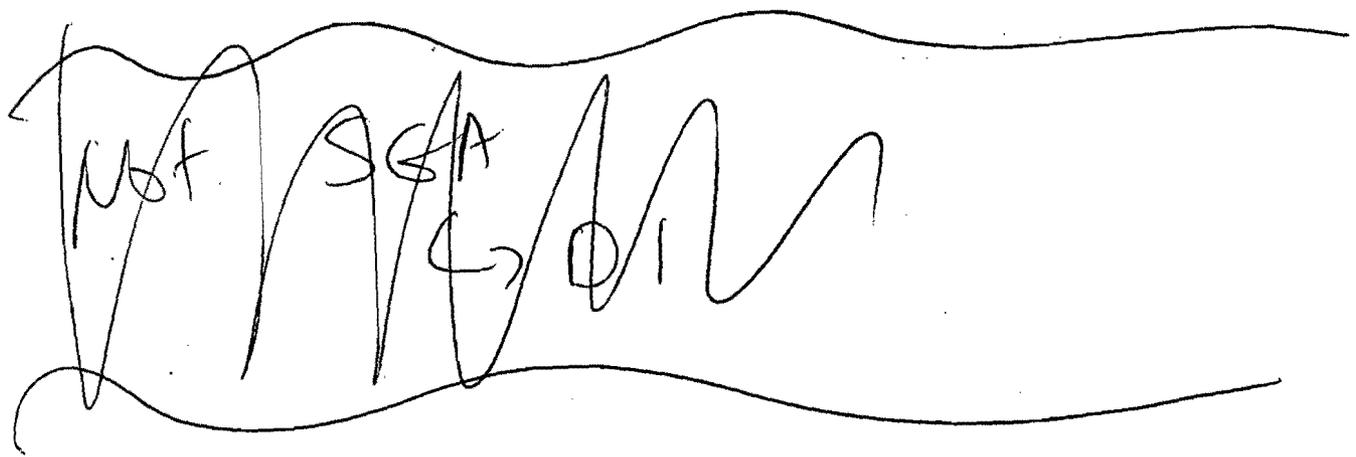
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