

Parents' organization finds jobs for disabled

# Group helps handicapped adjust to adult life

As a high school graduate with a severe handicap, John is lucky. Through an innovative employment program he has found a job that builds on the skills he learned in high school. He earns money on his own, has a savings account, makes new friends and is becoming more independent.

But John's situation is the exception rather than the rule. Oregon schools are

The alliance was formed a year ago by the University's College of Education Specialized Training Program, which had received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education. To enable alliance programs to continue after the grant expires, it has joined forces with the Association for Retarded Citizens of Oregon.

The parents are organized into nine regional teams

boredom can become a major problem.

"Residential programs give handicapped adults the option of leaving home and living on their own," she says. "In such circumstances, they can participate in community life and learn to interact with non-handicapped people as well."

Slovic emphasized that supported employment and appropriate residential options

both can help save money as handicapped people work toward independence and need less financial support and utilize fewer institutional resources.

So far, the PGA's success has been in educating parents about working with the mental health system and in raising their expectations about the types of services that can be available, Slovic says.

One result of efforts by individual PGA members was the 1985 Oregon Legislature's \$1.8 million allocation for vocational opportunities for those graduating or on waiting lists. An additional \$1.1 million has been budgeted for providing more residential opportunities.

"Parents have learned that the system can fit their needs," Slovic says. "They have learned they can have an impact."

**'Their high school training has prepared them for work in the community by giving them real life experiences, but the current system does not give them many options.'**

— Roz Slovic

graduating 100 young adults with mental and physical handicaps each year. Instead of the self-esteem and independence that go with appropriate jobs and housing, most will be placed on waiting lists for vocational and residential opportunities.

"Their high school training has prepared them for work in the community by giving them real life experiences, but the current system does not give them many options," says Roz Slovic, coordinator of the Parents' Graduation Alliance.

Earlier this month in Boston, Slovic appeared on a panel of parent group coordinators at the annual meeting of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps. She went there to tell the story of the PGA that is considered a model for other parts of the country.

An innovative advocacy group for parents of severely handicapped young adults, the PGA is a statewide organization that has brought together more than 400 parents interested in increasing the opportunities for their children. Many of these young adults are the product of the mainstreaming programs that placed handicapped students in regular classrooms in the nation's public schools a decade ago.

"We focus only on people with severe handicaps and on the transition from high school to adulthood," Slovic says. "No other program does this kind of work statewide nor has the strong professional support we enjoy."

throughout the state. Slovic and consultants from the Specialized Training Program provide technical assistance and organizational training to the coordinators who head each team.

The regional teams identify and try to find solutions to transition issues of local concern. Often, this means parents serve on advisory boards, contact service providers and work with legislators.


"The parents are working to create more and better opportunities," Slovic says. To do this, they are promoting integrated employment programs and innovative community residential programs that go beyond the traditional work centers and institutions.

Slovic says integrated employment programs can pay as much as \$300 a month while work centers pay an average of \$37 a month.

But with more than 200 people already on waiting lists, the employment opportunities for this year's graduates are limited. This creates an additional problem, Slovic says, because these young adults quickly lose the skills they worked so hard to develop during their school years through disuse.

"These people were involved in a program in high school where they were working in the community, but now there's nothing for them to do," Slovic says.

Many of these adults will end up at home, dependent upon their parents or other relatives, Slovic says, adding that



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**Basketball - Basketball - Basketball** - RIM is offering basketball for every kind of player winter term. Take your pick and get involved! **Basketball Intramurals** features leagues for coed, men's and women's teams. **Basketball Tune-up Tournament** will give your team a chance to play a game and give RIM officials some game experience. (Tournament limited to 8 teams). **Sunday Basketball League** - For those who can't get enough basketball and are willing to pay. **Free Throw Contest** - can you beat the record of 25 consecutive shots? Test your skill.

**Intramural Bowling** - will run on Wednesday nights winter term. There will be coed, men's, women's and a coed dorm league. Entry deadline is Monday, January 13. You will need 4 people to constitute a team. Get your team together today and pick up an entry at the RIM office.

**Bowling Doubles League** - Grab your favorite bowling partner and sign up at the RIM office for the winter bowling league. This is the bargain of the term. Only one dollar per person per night for three lines of bowling. The dollar includes ball and shoes. Games are rolled beginning at 6pm every Monday. The league will last seven weeks.

**Intramural Racquetball** - This is racquetball as a team. Each team consists of 3 singles matches. Each team has a number 1, 2 and 3 player who plays against an opponent's 1, 2, and 3 player. Leagues are available in Men's I, II and dorm and Women. Get a threesome together and be a team. Entry deadline is Friday, January 17 at 3:00pm.

**Intramural Wrestling Meet** - Enter a team (4 people) or enter as an individual. This is a two-day meet. Prelims are held on Tuesday, January 21 in Esslinger, and finals will be held in Mac Court prior to the Cal Poly-SLO varsity wrestling meet. Details available at RIM office.

WINTER SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES				
Activity	Div.	Min. # Players	Entry Deadline	Start Date
Bowling ★	M-W-C	4	1/13	1/15
Basketball Tune-up	M-W	5	1/14	1/15
Sunday Basketball League	M-W	5	1/16	1/19
Bowling Doubles League	M-W-C	2	1/16	1/20
Basketball ★	M-W-C	5	1/14	1/16
Racquetball ★	M-W-C	3	1/17	1/21
Wrestling Meet ★	M	1-4	1/20	1/21
Billiards-8 ball	M-W-C	2	1/20	1/21
Volleyball Mini League	C	6	1/20	1/22

\*M - Men, W - Women, C - Coed ★ Intramural Sport - Under IM Regulations (See Handbook)

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