

COMMISSION ON DISABILITY 2002 Annual Report

Introduction and Overview

In the year 2002, the Commission on Disability continued to be pro-active on behalf of Fort Collins citizens with disabilities. Our work plan was created at our annual retreat work session in November 2001, and concentrated our efforts in the areas of housing, transportation, employment, safety, and the Mayor's Awards in recognition of Disability Awareness Month.

In May, the Commission honored past members, Nancy Baker, Kathryn Johnson and Steve Seefeld, with an appreciation luncheon. It provided an opportunity to catch up on the activities of present and past volunteers.

Our new staff liaisons, Tracy Ochsner and Rachael Palmer, helped coordinate our meetings, provided information about city departments, and facilitated the necessary contacts to accomplish our goals. We missed Steve Seefeld's help and insights after he stepped out of this role as staff liaison at the end of last year. Nancy Baker, last year's chair, completed her term on the COD at the end of 2001. Nancy provided great leadership and we thank her and wish her well in her new life pursuits. Kathryn Johnson resigned from the Commission at the beginning of 2002. Rob and Ramola Fritz completed their term at the end of 2002 and will be leaving the Commission at the end of the year. Their involvement will be missed as they combined in a two for one position during their term and provided great insight, wonderful input, and committed participation in the Commission. Rob was the driving force in the Downtown Parking improvement and the Heavy Doors project and Ramola was his terrific support and was the Secretary for the Commission in 2000 and 2001.

We welcomed two Commission members to fill vacancies left by Nancy Baker and Kathryn Johnson. They are Joan Cook and Jerry Patterson. Community member Steve Sutter continued to assist the Commission and this year was the Chair of the Mayor's Awards Committee. His talent and expertise are greatly appreciated.

Membership

COD members during 2002 are: Alan Apt, Mark Beck (Chair), Laura Burnet (Vice Chair), Joan Cook (New), Diane Dittus, Robert and Romola Fritz, Jill Lancaster (Secretary), Paul Ostrof, Jerry Patterson (New), Ruth Scogerboe, Susan Williams (Historian). Staff Liaisons are Tracy Ochsner and Rachael Palmer. Council Liaison is Marty Tharp.

Employment

Commission member Alan Apt continued to lead the Employment Subcommittee in 2002. After reviewing the results of the Disability Employment Survey that was done in 2000, the subcommittee recommended that a training workshop for city department and division managers be held to address the primary needs expressed in the survey. The results of the survey were reported to the Mayor and City Council through the City Manager's office, and permission was received and money was budgeted to conduct the workshop. Contact with the Center for Community Participation determined that Kathy Shelley of that agency would be willing to deliver the training program based on the needs expressed. The subcommittee was unable to schedule the workshop in 2001, but was able to coordinate this event in 2002. The training was held at the Lincoln Center, Columbine Room, October 29, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM. Around 200 city managers and department heads as well as HR directors from other businesses were invited. About 50 participants from the city and outside businesses took part.

The subcommittee also agreed to help focus on employment as the theme for the Mayor's Awards again in 2002. Community members, Steve Sutter and Roger Van Lieshout assisted the committee in its work.

Housing

The Practical Housing subcommittee of the COD continued regular monthly meetings on the second Thursday of the month, just prior to the COD meeting throughout the year. The committee is comprised of members of the COD; Mark Beck, Paul Ostrof, Michelle Jacobs of NCHBA, Felix Lee of the F. C. Building Dept. and Dana McBride and other occasional members from the building and realtor community. The primary goal of the group is to encourage builders and developers to voluntarily and routinely offer routine accessibility in building designs to their consumers. Routine accessibility prescribes a barrier free entry into a home with accessibility into all areas on the ground floor. The five design features are:

- A wheel-chair accessible exterior route to a no-step accessible entrance and entry door;
- Minimum 32-inch wide interior passage doors;
- A 36 inch wide level route, except at the doors, throughout the first floor or main floor;
- A usable first floor bathroom: Includes a minimum 32" door, a 36" clear passage and reinforcement in bathroom walls utilizing lateral two-inch by eight inch nominal wood blocking installed flush with stud edges of walls (centerline of blocking must be 34 inches from and parallel to the floor) around the toilet and tub/shower for future installation of assist bars;
- Electrical switches, thermostats, receptacles and electrical panels between 15 and 48 inches above the floor.

The name of the committee was changed at the June meeting to the Practical Housing for All Project to better reflect the goals of the group.

To promote the idea the committee has created an educational program that includes brochures, a Power Point presentation, a 15-minute video with a short lecture and discussion. The presentation was given HBA Brown Bag, Mar 27, 02, HBA After Hours, May, 15, Building Review Board, May, 30, Affordable Housing Board, June 6, and a City Council Work Session on August 13. Response from those in attendance was very favorable to the concepts with reservations as to how to implement the program. Plans are being formulated for future presentations to realtors, developers and other builder groups in the area.

The committee is also developing strategies to create incentives from the city building departments that would encourage builders to offer design options. The committee prepared and presented a resolution to the City Council that was adopted by the City Council at their October 15th meeting.

Parking and Transportation

In response to the Parking Study done in 2001, Randy Hensley from the City planning and parking department informed the COD that \$45,000 was allocated to accessible parking space program. Later in the year, he reported that 15 new spaces and 10 improved spaces had been added in the downtown area. Signage was also updated to enforce the \$75. fine for violators.

A letter of commendation was sent from the Commission the Director of Transportation Services to recognize and thank Randy Hensley and his staff for the attention they paid to this project.

It was brought to the attention of the Commission that Dial-A-Ride (DAR) does not have any connection or way to provide service to Loveland. Further investigation found a possibility for very poor and costly connections at a point between cities where riders could transfer from DAR to COLT.

Riders must transfer from one service to the other at the Schrader's Country Store at CO Rd. #32 and pay fees for both services. Further investigations and possible solutions were put on hold when it was discovered that Trans Fort was going to be taking over management of the Loveland Transportation system. The Commission will continue to monitor the situation. The COD would like to see both cities' Para transit systems work together to provide dependable, quality service between Loveland and Ft Collins for the disabled.

KA Associates of Kansas City was hired by the City to review the public transportation and make recommendations for improvement. KA made a presentation to and heard recommendations from the COD in March and later provided an executive summary to the City Council and managers office. Council identified their preferences and instructed staff to return to boards and commissions for further recommendations. The COD supported Council's recommendations, but had a question about DAR's "door to door" policy, especially if a rider needed assistance out of the house or facility. Tom Frazier, Director of Transportation, attended and explained reasons for the policy including liability risks and the time involved and how that limits the number of people served.

Heavy Doors Project

At the end of 2001, Rob Fritz suggested the Commission begin a project to assess heavy entrance doors to businesses in Fort Collins. Rob Fritz chaired a sub-committee to develop a project to help assess and encourage adjustment of hard to open doors to businesses in Ft. Collins. A pamphlet was created with a plan to recruit volunteers to canvas establishments, provide them with a pamphlet and offer to check the amount of force it takes to open entry and bathroom doors and provide suggestions for adjusting them so that they meet ADA guidelines. Since Rob is retiring from the Commission at the end of 2002, Joan Cook will assume the over sight of the project.

Creative Abilities Art Show

At the suggestion of COD member, Susan Williams, the Commission voted to sponsor an art show to provide the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to display their art. A sub-committee was formed, a location found and a date set. Beginning in October 02, the sub-committee began regular meetings to plan and conduct the first Creative Abilities Art Show, Saturday & Sunday, October 11 & 12, 2003 at the Foothills Mall.

Smoking Ordinance

Janna West Kowalski from the Larimer County Dept. of Health and the Alliance of Smoke-free kids and Communities gave a presentation on the proposed Smoke-free work places and public places ordinance. The Commission unanimously approved to support the proposal and wrote a letter to City Council to state its support.

Mayor's Awards

October 25, 2002 marked the twenty-second annual Mayor's Awards. This year, the COD and Roger Van Lieshout of the Fort Collins Business Leadership Network agreed to do a one year collaboration to put on the Mayor's Awards. The focus of the awards this year was employment of people with disabilities. Roger and the BLN organized a Career Fair to precede the awards and created a mailing list of around 1500 businesses to invite to the awards. The BLN also provided the speaker, Meg O'Connell, for the event. We had the most successful Mayor's Award's ever from the standpoint of encouraging employment. The primary reason was partnering with the BLN. The association with the career fair was a huge success with very positive feedback from employers, potential employees, and service providers. We also had unprecedented publicity leading up to and following the awards; with excellent media and business community connections and support for the first time. The Coloradoan ran three weekly features in the

Sunday Business section on employing people with disabilities preceding the Awards and an article on the front page of the Business section following the Awards.

The Commission thanks Mayor Martinez, the Mayor's and City Manager's offices for support and participation in this important public recognition of volunteerism in Fort Collins. Donations were received this year for the Mayor's Awards from Wal Mart (\$450.), CreateAbilities (\$290) and Norlarco (\$250.). Money was put towards expenses. Winners of this year's awards are: Business of the Year – At Home Senior Care, John McGuire; Service Provider of the Year – Marilee Boylan, ACE Program, Poudre School District; Volunteer of the Year – Rob Fritz, COD; Dorothy Lasley Award – Katie Kirkham.

Accessible Technology

Jerry Patterson brought attention to the Commission that according to standards, the City and Library web sites are not easily accessible. He will head up a project along with the city web master to improve the situation by examining the sites, making recommendations and updating the sites,

Accessible America 2001

At the end 2001, the Commission drafted a grant application on behalf of Fort Collins for entry into the "Accessible America 2001" contest sponsored by the National Organization on Disability. The prize is \$25,000. The Commission members felt strongly that Fort Collins has made exceptional efforts to accommodate persons with disabilities and improve their quality of life. The prize was awarded in February and the winner was Venice, FL.

Planning Session

A planning session for 2003 was held on November 14, 2002. The resulting work plan is attached.

2003 COD Board

Officers for 2003 were chosen by acclamation to be the same as the 2002 officers: Chair - Mark Beck; Vice chair – Laura Burnett; Secretary – Jill Lancaster; Historian – Susan Williams.

The Commission on Disability completed an active and involved year. The concern for persons with disabilities that is present in the Fort Collins community is remarkable, and the Commission takes pride in contributing to the example that the City administration has set.

Respectfully submitted
Mark Beck, COD Chairman
December 2002