

**2006-2007 Annual Report
Dearborn Commission on Disability Concerns
August 1, 2006 - July 31, 2007**

COMMISSIONER ROSTER and TERM OF OFFICE

M. Catherine McAdam, Chair
6-1-2000 to 6-30-2009

Dr. Cheryl Kreger, Vice Chair 3-15-2005 – 6/30/07,
Public Awareness and Education Chair 6-1-2001 to 6-30-2007

Dale Swanson, Communication and Awards Committee
Chair 6-1-2002 to 6-30-2008

Nancy Bower, Education Committee
4-1-2003 to 6-30-2009
Appointed Education Committee Chair 3-01-07

Gary B. Filiak, Access and Visitability Committees
6-1-2001 to 6-30-2008

Mary Hodak, Education Committee
6-1-2001 to 6-30-2007

Mona Ramouni, Communication and Awards Committee
4-1-2003 to 6-30-2007

Linda Swagler
10-15-2006 - 6-30-2008

Sonya Tishler, Access Committee Chair
5-1-2003 to 6-30-2009

John B. McFarlin, Access Committee
6-1-2005 to 5-31-2007

William Tenant, Education Committee
6-1-2005 to 5-31-2007

Christian L. Mageli, Commissioner Emeritus

CITY STAFF

Susan Fitzmaurice, ADA Coordinator and Liaison to the Commission

Kurt A. Giberson, Director, Dearborn, DPW

Nancy Neubacher, Administrative Assistant, DPW

EVENTS

Homecoming 2006

From our September minutes of 2006 Commissioner Filiak noted that "Homecoming had good participation. Parking seemed to go well. There was no TTY. We recommended developing a check list of things we need to act on each year."

The ADA coordinator also initiated concerns about an accessible path at the bridge which was implemented for Homecoming August 2007, and accessible seating at evening events. A new strategy was implemented for 2007 and a follow up report will be made at the September 2007 meeting.

Pathway to Possibilities 2006

The Commission's Fourth Pathway to Possibilities, Dearborn's Disability Awareness Day was held on October 19, 2006. We appreciated the hard work by all commissioners and especially the communication committee chaired by commissioner Swanson.

We offered a vendor fair of products and services across disabilities with 51 vendors attending. There were approximately 400 attendees from community schools, seniors, Ford employees, and the general public.

Cheryl Angelelli, a national swimming champion was warmly received by children and adults alike telling of her "Untold Dreams" and her

Paralympian medal. <http://untolddreams.net/>

Our keynote by Nadine Vogel “Parenting a Child with a Disability Balancing Today and Tomorrow” was well received.
<http://www.consultspringboard.com/>

The workshops were arranged by the education committee chaired by Vice-Chair Cheryl Kreger. The school children enjoyed adaptive sports and the dance ability workshops. Lt. Smith’s presentation on emergency preparedness prompted good questions and discussion regarding disability concerns.

Thank you to our Sponsors

Kiwanis International
Rotary International
Wright & Filippis
Blue Cross Blue Shield Blue Care Network of Michigan
Dearborn Community Arts Council
Ford Community & Performing Arts Center
Detroit Medical Center
Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan
Ford Employees
Dealing with Disabilities
Ford Parenting Network
Shields Center Court Café
Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation

Awards 2006

Special recognition to Kelly Featherston for bringing public awareness of disability concerns. Kelly was the first place winner for the United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan’s Youth Essay Contest.

Special recognition to Tameka Citchon for her achievements as an individual with a disability. Tameka is a twenty-one year old student at Henry Ford Community College and Oakland University. She is an inspiration to others because she follows her dreams, no matter what obstacles get in her way.

Special recognition to Kathy Mackie for bringing public awareness of

disability concerns. We recognized Kathy Mackie for caring and considering the total and lifelong needs of persons with disabilities, participating in fundraisers for Special Olympics, working with students and their families to provide the most optimal services available, training employees with disabilities to work in the family business, and placing students in the least restrictive environments while introducing them to career and vocational centers.

UPDATES AND NEW PROJECTS

City Compliance

The commission was consulted for input on language and policy for accessible documents and captioning issues for CD TV.

Commissioner McFarlin and former Commissioner Claudia Damian continued to monitor the reliability of our TTYS.

Commissioners Hodak, and Filiak completed CERT training for emergency preparedness, offering perspectives relevant to disability concerns.

We continued ongoing monitoring and recommendations to the City Clerk relevant to accessible voting concerns. It was a significant year for voting issues as full federal compliance was mandated to be completed in 2006. Chair McAdam facilitated a statewide forum on disability voting issues hosted at the performing Arts Center.

Committee Work

The Access Committee chaired by Commissioner Tishler lead efforts to insure voting access. Onsite poll evaluations were done by commissioners Tishler, Hodak, McFarlin, Filiak and our ADA coordinator. Presentations were also made to Polling workers with support from Marsha Leutjen.

Certificates for compliance for 2005 were presented and helped stimulate future goals for progress. Discussions continued with the school serving as polling sites and resulted in improved interior access.

One problem area was difficulty with set up and performance of the accessible voting machines which continues to be addressed with support from the City Clerk's office. Other physical access issues have been reported and we will continue to monitor and offer support as we approach the 2008 elections.

The Education/ Public Awareness committee continued to insure our presence at the Senior Expo and Healthy Living event, initiated by commissioner Hodak and sponsored by the city. Commissioners Bower and Hodak also presented information to the Neighborhood Association presidents, maintained our local resource information directory and provided additional outreach to our local service clubs. In March, 2006, Commissioner Bower assumed the chair responsibilities.

The Communication committee also helped with PR efforts introducing closed captioning for Dearborn city council meetings (taped broadcast), In 5 and the Dearborn Journal; and audible pedestrian traffic signals located on Michigan Avenue at Monroe, Mason, Military, Oakman, Schaefer and Schlaff and Warren Street at Chase and Schaefer. An announcement written by Katie Swagler was drafted in early July to be distributed with water bills.

OUTREACH and COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Commissioner Swagler has secured a UAW contact for assistance in building ramps. Commissioner Filiak participated in a disability awareness function at the Guardian Lutheran church and Commissioner Ramouni continued individual contacts in reaching out to the Arabic community. Commissioner McAdam participated in the Dearborn schools reading program. Commissioner Tenant kept us up to date with significant mental health legislation. Chair McAdam worked closely with Dearborn Heights to build a alliance to share information and mentor their efforts. Commissioner Bower began contacts with interested persons in Romulus regarding their attempt to start up a disability commission.

The First Baptist Church proudly presented information to the commission about their fully accessible church and community public area. A special thanks to city employees who again participated in disability mentoring day

especially our police and fire departments, CD TV and DPW locksmithing.

ADA Liaison

Our thanks to Susan Fitzmaurice for another good year in supporting our work. The block grant submitted for the accessible park in memory of Peg Watson was approved as were grants for additional accessible play equipment and audible pedestrian signals. A grant for access to library service was not approved and we hope to explore other options.

The ADA coordinator collaborated with Chair McAdam to address parking issues and the Davita clinic, and also city lots and structures. She coordinated funding to address commissioner Swanson's request to add power doors at the city hall, and requested power doors at DPW public area. She continues to address individual concerns brought by Dearborn citizens.

Awards

We remain very grateful to Mayor Guido for his establishment of this commission and his commitment to and leadership for disability concerns. His determination to keep disability issues forefront has provided Dearborn recognition far and wide exemplified by receipt of the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns "Inclusive Community Award" on August 12, 2006. It has been our pleasure to serve under his leadership. We were profoundly touched by his courageous journey, and living his life to the fullest. His commitment to disability concerns will aid us in future endeavors.

Resignations

In June of 2007, there were two resignations from Commissioner Tenant and Dr. Cheryl Kreger.

Bill Tenant brought an important focus on mental health issues for the past two years, but found he was not able to continue due to work and family commitments.

Cheryl Kreger is now an Okemos superintendent for the Okemos school

district and the long commute makes her continued participation problematic. We will miss her and the dedication she brought in addressing issues for the schools and young people with disabilities.

Summary

When a law such as the ADA is in place, it is easy to think the work of community-based disability commissions would be short-term. Our experiences have shown us that even with the best of intentions, oversight and ongoing education is essential. Compliance to the ADA by the city is best observed by those needing and benefiting from those services directly. This volunteer commission brings a unique perspective, important advocacy, and strong voice to disability concerns.

We look forward to serving Mayor John B. O'Reilly, Jr. who we know is likewise committed to disability concerns. Dearborn has always been known as the city that not only recognizes the importance of the ADA as law, but also the spirit that put that law into place.

Dearborn is well-deserved of praise for its ongoing and unparalleled commitment to its residents, employees, and visitors with disabilities.

SPECIAL THANKS

There are so many people who help the Dearborn Commission on Disability Concerns do the work we do. Kurt Giberson, the Director of the Department of Public Works and his Administrative Assistant Nancy Neubacher support the day to day tasks so important to what we accomplish. The Recreation Department provides essential help to make our Dearborn's Disability Awareness Days activities successful. We sincerely thank our numerous steadfast volunteers who work on committees, who man the table at homecoming, and are at the registration desk during Disability Awareness Day. And we must again thank our sponsors who made that event possible.