

Late last October, dozens of people

gathered at the Rutgers Student Center on the College Avenue campus for a conference on sex and disability. The day's offerings included an instructional film, a panel discussion on dating and relationships, display tables promoting products and information, and workshops on such topics as male infertility and gay and lesbian issues. At one workshop, a handful of students with mobility

impairments listened in sympathy to a young woman with cerebral palsy. With tears of anger and frustration running down her cheeks, she revealed that she had never participated in a public discussion of sex. "I'm 18 years old," she said, struggling to get the words out. "Why has the world shut me out from something so essential to human existence?"

The young woman's plea—to learn about an experience that most people take for granted—lay at the very core of the conference. Moreover, it drives the struggle of the disabled to overcome the barriers that keep them from fully participating in life.

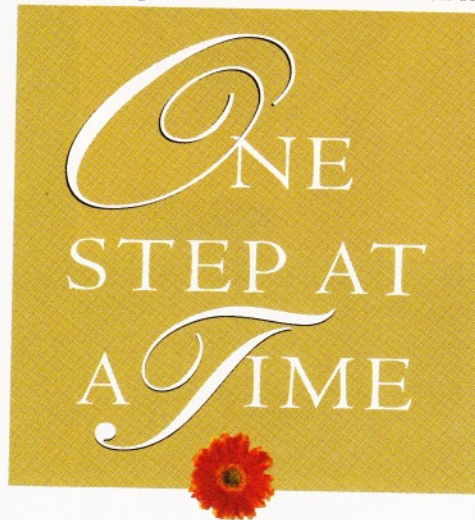
Cheryl Clarke, director of Rutgers' Office of Diverse Community Affairs and Lesbian-Gay Concerns, called the conference "Rutgers' most important event for students with disabilities in the last decade." But she also added

that it was "the kind of day that should occur more often."

Perhaps it will; changes in societal attitudes and federal regulations are making the disabled a more active and visible presence on college campuses throughout the country. At Rutgers, administrators, alumni, and students agree that the community of disabled students is a growing but relatively silent minority group. About 350 to 400 students have identified themselves, either on their application for admission or to their school or college of affiliation,

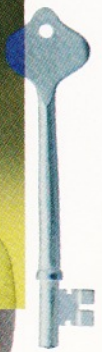
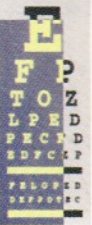
as disabled. The actual number of disabled students at Rutgers is considerably higher because many prefer to keep their disability to themselves. More often than not, says Will Edwards, assistant dean of students at Rutgers-Camden and the campus's coordinator for students with disabilities, the world views "disabled" as meaning physically handicapped, although students with learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder constitute the largest and fastest-growing segment of the disabled population.

According to the New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council, some 1.1 million New Jerseyans—one in about seven—have some form of disability. The enrollment of disabled students in colleges and universities



by Bill Glovin

In the wake of new federal regulations and greater public awareness, Rutgers has worked with disabled students to clear the path to higher education. What barriers remain to block their progress?

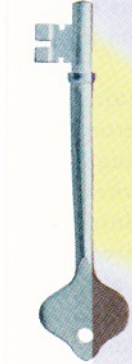


...to a while at the
 ...on the sofa over the period of a novel; Eliza was one
 ...of religion she was a rigid formalist; no weather ever pre-
 ...vent the punctual discharge of what she considered her
 ...Sunday, and as often on week-days as there were prayers.
 ...I betought myself to go upstairs and see how the dying
 ...woman sped, who lay there almost unheeded; the very servants
 ...waiter, would slip out of the room whenever she could,
 ...was faithful; but she had her own family to mind, and
 ...only came occasionally to the hall. I found the sick-room
 ...unwatched, as I had expected; no nurse was there; the pa-
 ...rent by still, and seemingly lethargic; her livid face sunk in
 ...the pillows; the fire was dying in the grate. I renewed the fuel,
 ...rearranged the bed-clothes, gasped a while on her who could
 ...the most kind, and then I turned away to the window.
 ...the panes, the wind blew
 ...with the force of a gale; "who will soon be
 ...the great world to come. Whether will that spirit-
 ...fit when at
 ...of Helen Burns:
 ...the doctrine of the equal-
 ...in thought to her
 ...her pale and spiritual
 ...gaze, as she lay on her
 ...being to be restored to
 ...a feeble voice murmured
 ..."Who is that?"
 ...days was the reviv-
 ..."It is I, your friend."
 ..."Who—?"
 ..."Who are you?" looking at me
 ...with surprise and a sort of alarm, but still not wildly. "You
 ...are quite a stranger to me—where is Bessie?"

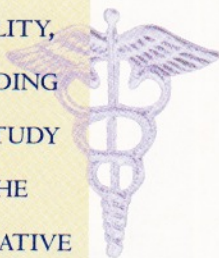
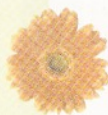
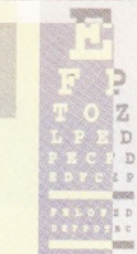
have had no other company, conversation, your
 forbearance; you have been, as an individual, what
 ought to do. Take this advice: the first and last I shall
 you; then you will not want me or any one else, beyond what
 may. Neglect to go on as heretofore, craving, whining, and
 idling—and suffer the results of your idleness, however
 insufferable they may be. I tell you this plainly; and hence-
 forth I shall no more repeat what I am now about to say,
 though I shall no more repeat what I am now about to say,
 I shall steadily act on it. Another's death, I shall
 hands of you: from the day her coffin is carried to
 Gateshead Church, you and I will be as separate as if we had
 never known each other. You need not think that because we
 chanced to be born of the same parents, I shall suffer you to
 fasten me down by even the feeblest claim; I can tell you that
 —if the whole human race, ourselves excepted, were swept
 away, and we two stood alone on the earth, I would leave you
 in the old world, and betake me to my journey in the new.

She closed her lips.
 "You might have guessed my mind," she said, "from
 that tirade," answered Eliza, "but I am not so easily
 the most selfish hearted creature that ever lived, and
 your spiteful hatred to me, which you have shown
 before in the trick you played on me, and which you
 could not bear to see me receive into circles which you
 acted the spy and informer, and ruined my
 ever." Georgiana took out her handkerchief and
 nose for an hour afterwards. Eliza sat cold, impassive,
 assiduously industrious.
 True, generous feelings were not her forte; but
 but here were two persons, one of whom was
 the other despicably savourless for the want of
 out judgment is a wash draught indeed; but judg-
 mented by feeling is too bitter and husky a moral for
 man degeneration.
 It was a windy afternoon: Georgiana had fallen

They are now
 made to blow in
 so to steam the
 be on hand witho



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IN 10—
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HAVING SOME
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DISABILITY,
ACCORDING
TO A STUDY
BY THE
COOPERATIVE
INSTITUTIONAL
RESEARCH
PROGRAM.



was expected to rise after Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was passed in 1973, but it has only been in the last seven years, since the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was adopted, that the Office of University Admissions has seen a significant rise in the number of disabled students applying to Rutgers.

Section 504 required government entities and institutions that receive federal funding—like Rutgers—to make programs and activities accessible to everyone, but neither attitudes nor architecture changed much in its wake. “The law carried a bureaucratic threat to take away the federal funding of institutions deemed non-compliant, but modifications were very sporadic,” says Melita Dolan, a member of Rutgers’ Board of Trustees. A longtime advocate for the disabled in New Jersey,

Dolan, who has a mobility impairment herself, says that Section 504 “was half-hearted” in its limitation to federally funded institutions. “Did legislators really think that people in wheelchairs hung out at municipal buildings and courthouses?” asks Dolan. “The ADA increased awareness by requiring all public buildings to be accessible to the disabled; it brought dry cleaners, supermarkets, banks—as well as the threat of lawsuits for noncompliance—into the mix.”

The ADA did not establish quotas or require colleges and universities to lower admission standards to admit disabled students, but it was still a major shot in the arm to higher education. “Suddenly private employers were required to accommodate the disabled,” says Brian Rose, director of Compliance and Student Policy Concerns at Rutgers. “That made the thinking of the disabled community change. Since employment opportunities would finally be there once they graduated, there was more of a reason to consider higher education.” Says senior admissions officer Richard Murray, “Disabled students have to meet the same admissions requirements as everyone else, but we look at each student on a case-by-case basis, and there

are often special circumstances to consider.”

With increased enrollment, compliance pressure, and heightened advocacy efforts brought on by the ADA, President Francis L. Lawrence appointed a task force in 1991 to evaluate Rutgers’ infrastructure and support services and to make sure that the University was not only making a good-faith effort to provide access but was working toward full compliance. “Rutgers did not have a very good reputation in the disabled community at that time,” says Dolan. “It’s one thing to encourage disabled students to enroll; it’s another to have the physical plant to back that encouragement up.”

The task force recommended major changes. Almost every corner of the University was affected by its findings: housing, recreational services, personnel, facilities maintenance, transportation, career services, and financial aid. Rutgers began allocating \$300,000 a year for building construction and renovation and the purchase of computer aids and other equipment for the disabled. The University also began lobbying state officials to help shoulder the cost of curb cuts, elevators, and improved classroom and laboratory access.

In 1995, for example, Rutgers received \$1.3 million in state-appropriated ADA compliance funds, \$38 million dollars from the Higher Education Facilities Trust (HEFT) fund, and an additional \$20 million in HEFT funding for the new law school building in Newark. The money funded physical improvements that give disabled students greater access to existing buildings and grounds; it will also allow planners to accommodate the

needs of the disabled in future construction. Last year, Rutgers got passed over for state funds, leaving a “wish list” of projects—like improvements to major classroom buildings on the Douglass campus—on the drawing board, says Frank Wong, assistant director of physical and capital planning.

In addition to physical improvements, an entirely new administrative structure was put in place. Previously, compliance and student policy concerns were the responsibility of an Assistant

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Vice President for Student Life Policy. Now responsibilities are divided and handled by an Office of Compliance and Student Policy Concerns and an Office of Diverse Community Affairs and Lesbian-Gay Concerns. These offices interact with an assistant dean on all three regional campuses and a disabled-concerns coordinator at each of Rutgers' schools and colleges.

Since 1994, ADA committees of faculty, students, and staff on each regional campus have been an important component. One of the first tasks of each committee was to have at least one member accompany a mobility-impaired student volunteer through campus facilities to identify where improvements could be made. The committees meet monthly to discuss legal, financial-aid, and physical-improvement issues and to share knowledge about distance learning and computer software technology that can be applied in libraries, classrooms, and computer labs. The committees often work with offices, units, and colleges on access issues and programs: The Office of Diverse Community Affairs and the Learning Resource Centers, for example, are co-directing a new program, The Learning Advantage, that will provide low-cost, first-time assessment for students who suspect they may have a learning disability or a visual or hearing impairment.

Part of Rose's role as Rutgers' compliance director is to review the architectural blueprints for all new construction, making sure the buildings are fully accessible to all. His office's new Web page, currently under development, offers a guide for faculty who are teaching disabled students, a list of scholarships for the disabled, overviews of policies and practices relating to the disabled, instructions on how to handle grievances, and links to other information. When a dispute does arise, Rose is the final internal word on whether the University "is doing all it can under the provisions of the ADA." Dissatisfied students have the option of filing a complaint with the civil rights division of the U.S. Department of Education or filing their own lawsuit. Says Rose, "Even with this complex infrastructure in place, faculty and students often don't know that we're here to help when there's a problem."

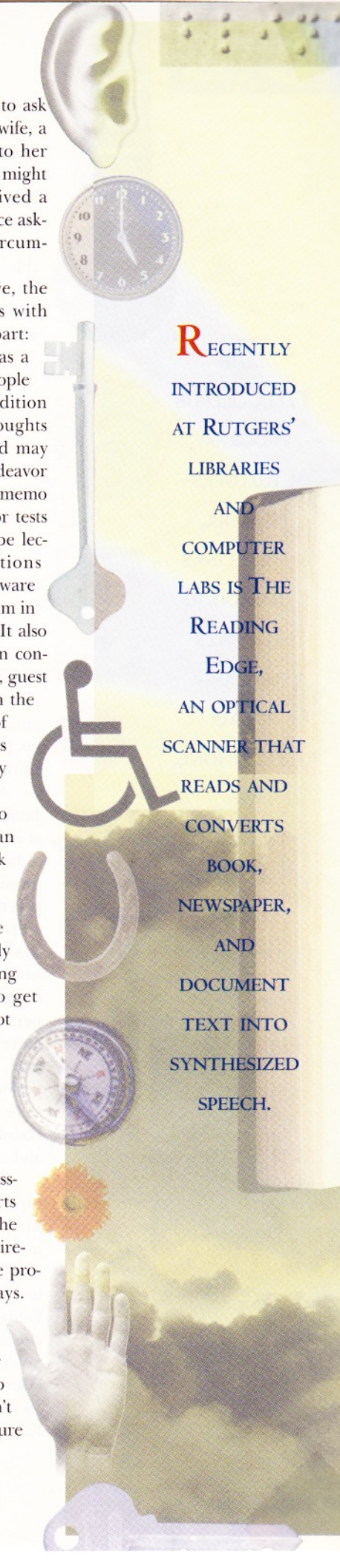
During a class discussion this past semester, Richard D. Heffner, the Edythe and Dean Dowling Professor of Communication and Public Policy at Rutgers-New Brunswick, noticed that one of his students, James Fabiano (RC'99), had an unusual speech pattern. A week

later, Fabiano called the professor's house to ask him a question and spoke briefly with his wife, a psychiatric social worker. She remarked to her husband that the student sounded as if he might have a disability. So when Heffner received a memo from the Rutgers College dean's office asking him to consider Fabiano's special circumstances, he wasn't totally surprised.

The memo, written by Clarence Shive, the assistant dean for Services for Students with Disabilities at Rutgers College, reads in part: "Recently, James identified himself to us as a person with autism. As you may know, people who have this neurologically based condition experience difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings verbally and nonverbally and may also exhibit abnormal behavior in their endeavor to relate to the world around them." The memo asks Heffner to give Fabiano extra time for tests and written assignments, allow him to tape lectures, provide him with clear instructions regarding course expectations, make him aware of study groups and tutors, and examine him in multiple-choice modes whenever possible. It also asks the professor to share the information contained in the memo with teaching assistants, guest speakers, or others who might take part in the course. "I had never received this kind of special request," says Heffner, who has taught at Rutgers since 1964. "I'm certainly willing to do what I can to help."

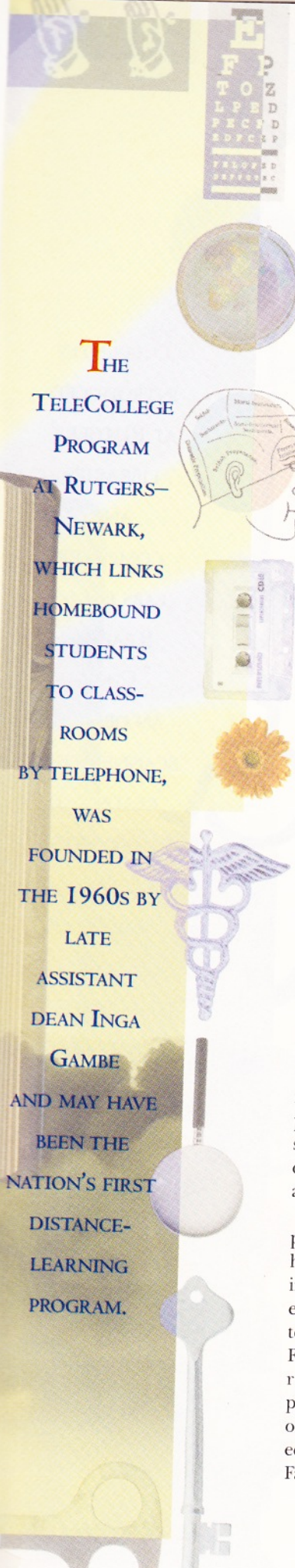
Not all faculty, however, are as willing to go the extra yard, says Karen Schaich, an associate professor of food science at Cook College. As the faculty adviser to Gary Noll (GSNB'97), a student with a hearing impairment who received a master's degree in food science last May, she was continually frustrated by colleagues who resisted making the kinds of adjustments Noll needed to get through a very technical curriculum. "A lot of Gary's professors were biased and insensitive," says Schaich. "Their attitude was, 'This is how I present the material; this is how I've always presented it. It's his responsibility to find a way to get through the course.'"

Some professors thought that Noll's classroom interpreters were distracting, reports Schaich. Others were reluctant to review the accuracy of his notes or to waive any requirements that he was unable to perform. "One professor even called Gary 'clueless,'" she says. "But when the material was presented in a way that Gary could understand by faculty who were willing to work with us, it was clear that Gary was very intelligent and would do whatever it took. A faculty adviser shouldn't have to fight and scratch like I did to make sure



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AND
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BOOK,
NEWSPAPER,
AND
DOCUMENT
TEXT INTO
SYNTHESIZED
SPEECH.

THE TELECOLLEGE PROGRAM AT RUTGERS—NEWARK, WHICH LINKS HOMEBOUND STUDENTS TO CLASS-ROOMS BY TELEPHONE, WAS FOUNDED IN THE 1960S BY LATE ASSISTANT DEAN INGA GAMBE AND MAY HAVE BEEN THE NATION'S FIRST DISTANCE-LEARNING PROGRAM.



their student gets through a program.”

Noll and Fabiano, like many disabled students at Rutgers, are determined to become productive members of society but realize they need help to meet that goal. Noll, who also holds a master's degree in chemistry from Seton Hall University, wanted to make himself a more valuable member of his research and development team at Nabisco, where he has worked for 11 years. Fabiano hopes to earn degrees in English and journalism and mass media and someday to work in the media or to publish short stories.

Other students, like Jacqueline Jackson, a 39-year-old University College student suffering from sarcoidosis and fibromyalgia, do not have any grand aspirations or ambitious plans. If one day she were able to fulfill her lifelong dream of earning a college degree, says Jackson, that would be enough.

Fabiano's case is typical of the struggle faced by disabled students. His father, Christian, a high school math teacher, says his son was “a typical autistic child” in his preschool years, but he gradually began to respond to positive reinforcement. By the time he graduated from primary school, it was clear that Fabiano's problems were more social than academic. “In junior high school, James began to reach out to his peers, but they treated him like trash,” says Christian.

At Edison High School, the consensus among James's family and teachers was that an education at nearby Rutgers was an attainable goal. Fabiano indicated on his Rutgers College application that he suffered from a mild form of autism, and his parents contacted Shive to find out what kind of help their son might receive in and out of the classroom. The assistant dean told them that he would send a memo explaining Fabiano's special circumstances to his professors and that he would personally intervene if a problem arose. So far, Shive has only had to send the memos. As a freshman, Fabiano went through a difficult adjustment period not uncommon among first-year students; since then, however, the junior has excelled in the classroom: This past spring he earned four As and a B-plus.

But there hasn't been the same kind of progress in Fabiano's social development, which his parents and a private therapist feel is as important as his academic record. Looking for experience in news writing and the opportunity to meet peers and possibly make new friends, Fabiano was encouraged in an Internet chat room to consider joining a certain student-publishing organization. His visit to the group's office discouraged him. “All [the students] wanted to talk about was drinking and wild parties,” Fabiano recalls. “It was very cliquey, and I left

there feeling pretty snubbed. It's not the first time that something like that has happened.”

Meanwhile, Fabiano's efforts to date or find a work-study job have been other sources of frustration. “Although James is very conscientious, we haven't found anyone willing to give him a chance to work,” says his father. “That's going to be a very important next step in James's development.”

T

he Rutgers Association for the Advancement of People with Disabilities (RAAPD) offers students like Fabiano the opportunity for camaraderie and support. Yet they seldom turn to it. “The reason we don't see more conferences like this one is the students themselves,” laments Cheryl Clarke, seated in the exhibit hall of the sex and disabilities conference at the student center. “There hasn't been a strong student advocacy organization at the University since RU Handicapable in the late-1980s. Disabled students resist joining an organization that says, ‘Hey, we're different.’ But they're the ones who lose out in the long run.”

The conference on sex and disabilities, cosponsored by RAAPD and organized by Javier Robles (RC'89), attracted about 100 participants—half the number expected. Despite the low turnout, the satisfaction on Robles' face is immeasurable when a student in a wheelchair approaches him and says, “Thank you for this conference. Maybe there's hope for me yet.”

Robles, who was paralyzed at age 16 when he fell out of a tree at Branch Brook Park in Newark, founded RU Handicapable as a Rutgers College student in 1985. Even before the ADA brought compliance pressure and task-force recommendations to bear, RU Handicapable had successfully lobbied for access ramps, curb cuts, and a van-transportation service for disabled students. It also sponsored a variety of programs and workshops for groups representing students with a range of disabilities. By the time Robles graduated, he had helped build RU Handicapable into an organization with 35 members and a \$20,000 budget.

When Robles left New Brunswick for Seton Hall Law School, Scherrone Dunham (RC'94) tried to keep the organization going but watched in frustration as membership dwindled and RU Handicapable folded. Robles, who is back at Rutgers as a part-time program assistant in the Office of Diverse Community Affairs, is trying to ignite the same kind of spark for RAAPD that he once lit for RU Handicapable. “We've made a lot of progress in the area of physical improvements,

but I'm disappointed that there is no longer a strong coalition of disabled students," says Robles. "An active student organization is essential. It's a place where administrators can find out that we think transportation services should be improved and a more vigorous disabled-student recruitment effort should be made. It is also a place where we can talk about mutual concerns and lean on one another."

Yolanda White, who has limited vision, is a Rutgers-Newark student majoring in management and the only student member on the campus's ADA committee. She, too, has had difficulty attracting members to a new organization that she hopes to found, one that will include both disabled and nondisabled students. This past fall, she obtained names and addresses of about 20 Rutgers-Newark students who had identified themselves as disabled and sent them each an invitation to a meeting in the Robeson Campus Center. White, who is also president of the campus's Marketing Management Organization, says that the meeting attracted Provost Norman Samuels, members of the ADA committee, and hungry students in search of a free lunch. Only one of the 20 disabled students who were invited attended, however. "As sad as it may seem, too many differently-challenged students are in denial," she says, more analytical than bitter. "I should know, I was one of them. I learned that it's important to be who you are and to allow others inside."

White isn't giving up. She has even picked out an acronym for her organization, WORDSS (Willing Open Responsible Distinguished Students Society), and plans to organize another meeting. James Credle, assistant dean of students and the Rutgers-Newark coordinator for students with disabilities, has encouraged her to keep trying. He feels a strong student organization could work with admissions and other parts of the campus community to attract more disabled students to Rutgers-Newark.

Rutgers trustee Dolan, who has made several phone calls through the years to University administrators on behalf of disabled students, is

disappointed by what she perceives as "the lack of young people with the fire to take on the advocacy role. Many of the people who worked to improve our plight had the 1960s mentality—break down doors if you have to," says Dolan, the principal of an architectural engineering firm that specializes in accommodating the disabled. "I don't see that passion anymore. Maybe the apathy stems from the fact that a lot of the barriers have come down—but there's still a long way to go."

It would be hard to find a disabled person who disagrees with that assessment. All anyone needs to consider, advocates point out, is the 70 percent national unemployment rate among the disabled population. Jean Romsted, coordinator for the Concerns of Disabled Students at University College, calls it "a terrible waste of minds and resources." Schaich says, "We simply can't afford to throw away a whole segment of society just because they don't fit into a neat little package."

The uphill battle for equality in the job market, in the work place, and at educational institutions like Rutgers doesn't faze most advocates for the disabled—especially those who have faced much greater hurdles in conquering their own disability. Scherrone Dunham overcame cerebral palsy and slurred speech to graduate from Rutgers as an Eagleton Associate, earn a Master of Public Administration degree this past May from American University,

and land a job as a workforce development specialist with the Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. "Look at the Civil Rights Act of 1964; conditions didn't improve overnight, but they slowly got better," she says, her intellect and intensity coming through loud and clear. "In the seven years since the passage of the ADA, I'm proud of the remarkable progress we've made. Sure, there are still physical and attitudinal barriers, but if we keep working, someday they will come tumbling down." □

Bill Glovin is the senior editor of Rutgers Magazine.

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ADDITIONAL
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ARE
UNDERWAY.

Word's Worth

Thanks for the article in the Winter 1997 issue about disabled students at Rutgers, "One Step at a Time." The article came across very well. I'm sure you know that language is very important to minority groups, because it dictates the way society views the group. For example, African-Americans were formerly called Negroes, coloreds, and blacks. We change terminology to combat stereotypes.

For people with disabilities, the most damaging stereotype is that we are to be pitied because our disability is so awful that it is brave of us to even breathe. Therefore, in the sentence that begins "Scherrone Dunhamn overcame cerebral palsy," the word *overcame* is not appropriate. I still have and always will have cerebral palsy; saying that I "overcame cerebral palsy" only feeds the heartstrings of people who are not disabled.

SCHERRONE DUNHAMN (RC'94)
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First Step

I was delighted to read the article "One Step at a Time" in the Winter 1997 issue. I was a student on the Col-

lege Avenue campus in the late 1970s. Since then Rutgers has come a long way toward meeting the needs of students who are disabled. However, in citing the history of the organization of students with disabilities, you started eight years too late.

In 1977, I returned to Rutgers College using a wheelchair. I had successfully completed my first two years of college, living on campus. During the summer after my sophomore year, my disability became very bad, and I was forced to take a year's leave for surgery. While the surgery was successful, afterwards I could not walk very far and needed modifications to my living area.

When I contacted Rutgers College to advise them of my situation, at first I was told that nothing could be done. One of my therapists became an advocate for me, using Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to persuade the administration that they were required to build a ramp into my dormitory and to set up a room and bathroom so I could live on campus.

During that time, I worked closely

with the graduate student employed to assist students with disabilities. He introduced me to consumer groups fighting for the rights of disabled people. He convinced several of us that by organizing, we could better get our needs (and rights) addressed. It was then that RU Handicapable was formed. We received many promises from the provost and dean of students. However, it wasn't until we took action, such as publishing a protest letter in the *Daily Targum*, that those promises were fulfilled.

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Letters may be
edited to space and for clarity.



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world, the keys to international peace, the elimination of hunger, or any such other human hope does not lie buried with the ashes of Auschwitz.

HARVEY R. SORKOW (NLAW '53)
FORT LEE, NEW JERSEY

Your article "For Remembrance" was overwhelming. The courage and fortitude of these people were beyond my imagination. The evil that Germany brought to this world is beyond description. Here are seven survivors who had no nurturing, knew only horror and deprivation, yet rose to such wonderful heights in academia. Here is a living example of what Germany did, not just to the six million Jews, but to the entire human race. If these seven people could make it like they did under such odds, can you possibly imagine the intellect, the minds, the value that the world would now have if the Germans had left alone, to live as human beings, the people who perished?

I just wanted to thank you for your touching and poignant series of essays about the Holocaust in the Fall issue. These personal stories expressed the horrors of the time in a way not found in history texts. It is critical that the experiences of actual survivors be documented while they are still alive in order to counter the revisionists who deny that the atrocities of 1939-1945 ever happened.

MARVIN O. SCHLANGER (ENG'69)
CHERRY HILL, NEW JERSEY

I finally took the time to read the Holocaust stories in the most recent issue of *Rutgers Magazine* and found it a real treat to reacquaint myself with the Rutgers faculty I had gotten to know in my career as a University staff writer. I thought I knew them well—especially professors Hans Fisher and Ruth Mandel—but your articles provided graphic details that further enriched my knowledge of the lives they lived during the frightening 1930s and '40s in Europe.

showing the issue to my rabbi in Clark.

MORRIS ROTH
CLARK, NEW JERSEY

We have to congratulate everyone responsible for the magnificent treatment of the Holocaust in the last issue of the magazine. While my family had no one directly involved in this terrible piece of history, it brings back in full strength my youthful days in the Newark area, when homegrown Nazis were ravaging the city and suburbs with rallies and parades at their summer camps and elsewhere. Even Madison Square Garden was the site of one monster rally. So the Nazis were (and unfortunately still seem to be) a worldwide phenomenon.

PHILIP J. DODGE (RC'34)
WINNETKA, ILLINOIS

In the Spring term 1998, I will be teaching a course on the Newark campus called "20th Century Christian Thought." The remembrances of the seven professors who are Holocaust