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FOR MORE INFORMATION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEAF COMMUNITY PLANS WORKSHOP FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

On May 2, 1980 Massachusetts Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf (COSD) will sponsor a workshop from 1-5:30 at the Deaf Community Center, Bethany Road, Framingham.

The goal of the workshop is to describe through discussion, demonstration, and displays the potential use of computer technology to enhance communication and information flow into the lives of those handicapped by deafness. Plans for a new consumer-owned telecommunications network will be presented.

For the past two years, fifty deaf families have participated in a demonstration grant from HEW to the Deaf Community Center to evaluate the effectiveness of computer-assisted telephone communication. The HERMES message system of Bolt Beranek & Newman was used and taught successfully to all the users on the deaf network. This electronic mail system allows a person (deaf or hearing) to dial up the computer and leave a message for another who will retrieve it at another time. The user can also get national news, sports, and weather which is put on the system by WGBH Caption Center or get medical information supplied by Leonard Morse Hospital.

Recently, some of these deaf users of the network decided to form a new non-profit corporation called Deaf Communications Institute with the goal of having a permanent self-sustaining communications center for the deaf, deaf-blind, and hearing-impaired in Massachusetts. The Board of Directors will be

community based with 51% deaf people always in control. DCI presently has a proposal to the Department of Commerce to actually purchase a computer from Digital Equipment Corporation and set up a full facility in Framingham. Another proposal to Rehabilitation Services Administration would install terminals in all Massachusetts Rehabilitation Offices in the state for deaf-related services and communications.

Thomas Rule of Winchester-- the first deaf man to use telephone-teletypewriter communications in New England, has been elected Chairman of the Board. Other deaf individuals include Al Marotta and Mimi LaPlante of Framingham, Charles MacGillivray of Billerica, James Emery of Wilmington, Harold Whitehouse of Natick, Dolores Lilienthal of Newton, Hartmut Teuber of Watertwon, Barbara Wagreich of Acton, and John Levesque of Waltham.

This group of deaf people are determined to permanently establish this computer center to become the hub of communications for all the deaf in the state. Government support and the sponsorship and interest of business and the computer industry is vitally needed during the early years of this exciting adventure.

This transfer of the rapidly expanding computer technology into the lives of people isolated by deafness could help neutralize the handicap and bring the deaf into the mainstream of life in the hearing world.

Deaf
Community
Center

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April 10, 1980

A workshop on Telecommunications for the Deaf is being held at the Deaf Community Center on Friday, May 2, from 1-5:30 p.m. under the sponsorship of the Massachusetts Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf.

The purpose of this workshop is twofold: to publicize and explain the demonstration project currently being conducted by Deaf Community Center under a grant from Health, Education, and Welfare, and to explore the future of this deaf network to be permanently established as a new non-profit corporation called Deaf Communications Institute.

We want to explore how industry and commerce and professionals interested in serving the handicapped can both benefit and offer very important assistance by their involvement in this exciting use of technology.

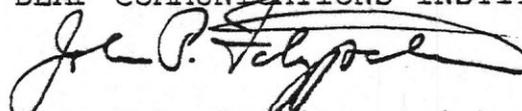
We invite you to be present to take part in this demonstration and discussion and ask you to bring other staff members who are interested in the potential use of technology found in a computer-assisted telecommunications network for the deaf.

Enclosed is a map and a flyer describing the workshop, plus a copy of the press release which may further help your understanding of the present DEAFNET and our dream for the future.

We hope that you will consider setting aside time to be with us and also invite other members of your staff or any interested person. We need your interest and support if this project is to succeed.

Sincerely,

for DEAF COMMUNICATIONS INSTITUTE



Rev. John P. Fitzpatrick
Executive Director

JPF:mr
Enclosures