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NEW ORGANIZATION AT UM EASES HASSLES OF HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

By Julie Heath
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MISSOULA--

In the early-quarter confusion of class-schedule changes, a blind student at the University of Montana could not locate a new classroom.

Another handicapped student, living off campus, caught a ride to the university with a friend who was unable to legally park in the handicapped-access zones.

Other students, confined to wheelchairs, encountered difficulties in traveling across campus on icy sidewalks.

The hassles of handicapped students at UM are compounded by the crowds at registration and the changes in schedules the beginning of each quarter brings, but they are always present.

One person concerned with helping handicapped students solve some of their problems, through services offered by the Center for Student Development (CSD), is Mary Ann Powers, appointed in November to her half-time position as counselor to about 150 disabled students.

Powers says CSD services available to handicapped students include assisting with admission procedures, locating housing, and making available alternative forms of testing.

Powers notes a need to coordinate these services to achieve greater efficiency in aiding disabled students.

(over)

New organization--add one

This effort to coordinate services has resulted in the formation of Nondisabled Assisting the Able Disabled.

NAADA will provide a list of student volunteers available to aid handicapped students.

The volunteers will tutor students and assist them with notetaking and reading. They will guide blind students over slippery sidewalks and perform other services.

Many of these services, although invaluable to the handicapped student, will require only a minimal time commitment from the volunteer, says Powers.

For the handicapped students, NAADA will mean having assistance available throughout the day.

The adviser is a "great resource" and is influential in effecting necessary changes, says Erik Osterberg, a blind student from Havre. As a half-time employee, though, Powers is not always available when the students need assistance, he notes.

The handicapped students need a full-time adviser, says Powers. For now, however, she hopes NAADA student volunteers will help fill the gap felt by disabled students.

NAADA will serve yet another important purpose, according to Powers and the handicapped students.

"I think a lot of people are afraid of disabilities," Powers says. "NAADA will reduce this uneasiness by providing opportunities for interaction between nondisabled and disabled students."

Sandra Townsend, a blind student from Hamilton, agrees. "Everyone should meet one handicapped person," she says. Then they would realize that "we're real people, too."

UM students from across the United States are showing interest in participating in NAADA. Volunteers so far include Cindy Ton, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Keith Gregory,

(more)

New organization--add two

Richmond, Va.; Nancy Sacrison, Kalispell; Tina Naugle, Felicia Sullivan, Jeremy Blanchard and Jennifer Fenchak, all of Missoula; and Sandy Chaney, Livingston.

As a member of UM Advocates, a service organization, sophomore Chaney assisted disabled students during fall quarter registration and has since become involved with NAADA.

"Mary Ann is such an energetic, fun person," she says, adding that she expects NAADA will thrive on Powers' enthusiasm.

Powers says she is "happy to be here" and encourages those with questions, concerns or interests to stop by her office in Room 148 of the Lodge or to call her at 243-4711.

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