

New

HORIZONS

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VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT

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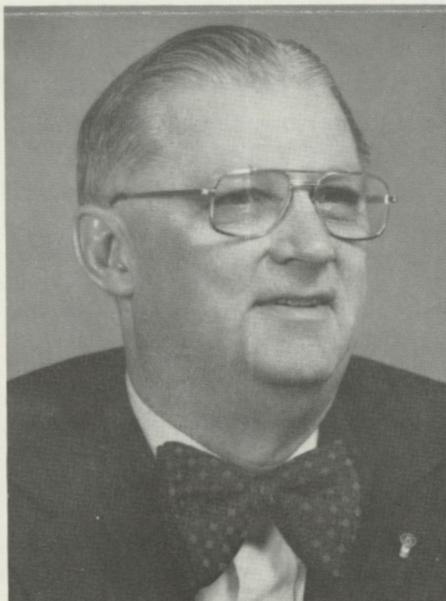
Wasson Named To Serve On Agency Board

J. Hewlette Wasson of Laurens has been named to serve on the Board of Directors of the South Carolina Agency of Vocational Rehabilitation. He is replacing Ernest H. Carroll of Rock Hill.

Wasson, confined to a wheelchair since age 16, has been active as a member of the South Carolina Rehabilitation Association and the South Carolina Crippled Children's Society since 1939. He is president of the Rehabilitation Association and past president of Easter Seal Society.

He studied law at night through LaSalle Extension University, Chicago, Illinois and passed the South Carolina Bar Examination in 1953. He has a law office in Laurens

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Aiken Holds Salute To Business And Industry



John Henry Williams (seated) receives a "Meritorious Award for the Handicapped" at the Aiken Rehabilitation Center's Salute to Business and Industry. Those extending congratulations are (from left) Sheriff Paul Grant of Aiken County; Raymond Mizell, Area Supervisor, Aiken Area Vocational Rehabilitation Office; and A. J. Sauerborn, Chairman, Board of Directors of the Aiken Rehabilitation Center.

The Aiken Rehabilitation Center recently recognized contributions toward the success of the facility from business and industrial leaders at its "Salute to Business and Industry."

A special "thank you" was extended to members of the business and industrial community for providing jobs for handicapped individuals who had received services through Vocational Rehabilitation, as well as for providing contract work within the rehabilitation facility. Contracts from the community provide a means for evaluation and training of many physi-

cally and mentally handicapped individuals, after which many are able to return to the community as wage-earning, tax-paying citizens.

Displays for some of the contract work done in the facility were set up in the area where the Salute was held. An awards dinner was held, at which time a number of awards were presented to those who had done outstanding work in the facility.

John Henry Williams, a quadriplegic working as a dispatcher for Aiken County, was honored with a "Meritorious Award for the Handicapped."

HANDICAPPED PEOPLE AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

By Walter Cain

Editor's Note — The following is the winning essay in the 1977 Ability Counts contest sponsored by the Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped.

"If you can't compete, you can't win,"¹ one handicapped individual has said. By law, the affirmative action clause has given qualified handicapped persons the opportunity to compete on the same level as other applicants for job openings. This law affects many major United States industries and institutions that employ over one third of the national work force. But what affirmative action is being taken?

Industries with substantial government contracts are required under the law to "take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified handicapped persons."² Many industries now legally obligated to give fair treatment to the handicapped did so before the affirmative action law was passed. "We have had handicapped people working for us since our plant opened," said Al Stiefel, a Union Carbide employer.

Since the affirmative action law was passed, many employers have become more aware that handicapped people can perform on the job and should be given an equal opportunity. "People have talents that have no relation to their physical condition," stated Carol Ramel-

la of General Electric. "It's qualifications, not handicaps that count. We have been so impressed that we have asked the Vocational Rehabilitation Department to refer qualified handicapped job seekers to us," Mrs. Ramella added. For this reason, employers who have hired the handicapped and seen them perform seem not to mind the cost of building ramps and other revisions to make their buildings accessible.

Accessibility, however, is not a matter of choice for the employer. State laws require that public buildings, including those where the physically handicapped might be employed, be made accessible to them. An affirmative action program is also required by law if an industry is under a substantial government contract. Qualified handicapped persons may file complaints with the Department of Labor if violations of this law are cited. It is interesting to note that half the people employed so far to enforce this act are handicapped.³

"I like to see the handicapped judged equally with others," stated Dudley Coxe, a General Electric employee. Mr. Coxe, a polio victim who relies on crutches to help him walk, said he was hired because he had the training and experience necessary for his job. "We don't want special favors, just a fair chance," he added. Because he was given a chance, Mr. Coxe has been

able to prove that he and others like him can perform as well as or better than anyone else.

"Handicapped people are often better workers than other employees," stated David Eagerton, a counselor who has worked closely with many handicapped people. "They often have almost perfect attendance records," he added. Labor officials have agreed that the handicapped can be superior workers because they are anxious to prove themselves. Employers who take affirmative action by giving the handicapped a chance can find this out for themselves.

Prospective handicapped employees are sometimes hired on a trial basis so that employers can be sure they can perform on a job. Such individuals are almost always hired. One specific case is that of Ricky Rogers, a young paraplegic who worked in a jewelry store for a reduced wage to see if he could handle an eight hour work day. After several months he was hired by a local industry because of his outstanding work record. He is now supporting himself and is happy with his work situation.

In conclusion, affirmative action laws have made employers aware of the abilities of the handicapped and made industries face up to their responsibilities in considering the handicapped for jobs. Qualified handicapped persons have been employed and have proven themselves on the job. The handicapped have been given the chance to compete, the chance to win.

¹Dudley Coxe, Production Technician, personal interview, December 30, 1976.

²Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 503(a).

³"What Affirmative Action Means to You," *Accent on Living*, Fall, 1976, p. 54.

South Carolina Ranked Top VR Agency For Third Year

South Carolina's vocational rehabilitation program was first in the nation for the third consecutive year.

Rankings are made by number of rehabilitants per 10,000 disabled population as well as by the number of severely disabled rehabilitants per 10,000 disabled population. The top position in both these categories went to South Carolina.

The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department was successful in placing 11,900 disabled men and women in productive employment during the 1975-76 fiscal year. Another 60,464 received rehabilitation services during that period and are expected to be placed in gainful employment in the future.

J. S. Dusenbury, Commissioner of the Department, attributes the success of the Department in carrying out its mission to "outstanding community involvement and interest in helping the handicapped help themselves." He adds, "it would be impossible for the disabled to be involved in productive employment without interested employers."

The rehabilitants increased their annual rate of earning from less than \$9 million before rehabilitation to more than \$46 million after rehabilitation. This is a net increase of 454% as a result of vocational rehabilitation services.

It is estimated that the rehabilitants will repay the cost of their rehabilitation through Federal and State income tax and sales tax in 5.3 years.

An analysis of the rehabilitants shows that 3,347 were disabled by

MANY ATTEND HANDICAPPED DAY At RIVERBANKS ZOO



Handicapped individuals from across South Carolina were invited to attend the third annual "Handicapped Day" at Riverbanks Zoo. Tony Schiffiano, a rehabilitation assistant at the Comprehensive Program for the Deaf, Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, "talks" with a group with hearing handicaps as they observe polar bears at play.

mental illness; 1,795 by mental retardation; 1,313 by orthopedic deformity and 1,239 by digestive system disorders. Others had such disabilities as hearing impairment, heart conditions, allergy and respiratory diseases.

Services provided by the Department in preparing the disabled for employment include, medical, surgical and hospital care, extensive individual counseling and guidance; artificial limbs and other prosthetic devices; education and job training; placement in employment and other related services. Each case is followed through after job placement to ensure that both rehabilitant and employer are satisfied.

WASSON

(Continued from Page 1)

and is licensed to practice in all State and Federal Courts.

He was elected Judge of the Laurens County Probate Court in 1938 and served continuously as Judge of the Court until his retirement in January, 1977. Wasson is one of two people who has served two terms as President of the South Carolina Probate Judges Association.

He graduated from Hickory Tavern High School as class valedictorian in 1932 after which he entered Presbyterian College. He worked with Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company and with the Laurens County Department of Public Welfare while attending college, and graduated in 1938.

Governor Recognizes High School Students For Achievement In Contests



Presentation of awards to winners in the 1977 Ability Counts and Poster Contests was held recently in the office of the Governor.

(From left) Bobby Altman of Dillon; Isaac Williamson, Jr., of Florence; Paul Jordan, South Carolina AMVETS; Scott Dilendik of Aiken; J. S. Dusenbury, Chairman, Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped; Governor Edwards; Walter Cain of Florence; Mary Melissa Pickens of Greenville; Mona Lynn Collins of Florence; David M. Collins of Myrtle Beach and Leon Parrott of Dillon.

Governor James B. Edwards recognized several outstanding high school students in South Carolina for their efforts in the 1977 Ability Counts Contest and the Poster Contest sponsored by the Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped.

Governor Edwards congratulated the students on their accomplishments and thanked them for their interest in handicapped individuals in South Carolina.

Handicapped and a cash prize of \$100.

Other winners in the contest were Mary Melissa Pickens of Greenville, second place; Mona Lynn Collins of Florence, third place; David M. Collins of Myrtle Beach, fourth place; and Leon Parrott of Dillon, fifth place.

The Ability Counts contest requires each entrant to do research and interviews on a topic, after which they submit an essay for statewide competition. This year's theme was "Handicapped People and Affirmative Action."

Scott Dilendik of Aiken won first place honors in the Poster Contest sponsored by the Governor's Committee. The prize for this achievement is \$100 presented by the South Carolina AMVETS.

First place winner in the Ability Counts contest, Walter Cain of Florence, won a four-year scholarship to the state supported institution of his choice, as well as a trip to Washington, D. C., to attend the annual meeting of the President's Committee on Employment of the

Other winners in the contest are Bobby Altman of Dillon, second place, and Isaac Williamson, Jr., of Florence, third place.



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