

# PN

PARAPLEGIA NEWS



*Horses are heroes at*

**CAMELOT**

with disabilities.

## VANS HIT STREETS

To provide service to people with disabilities, Chicago now has 12 wheelchair-accessible taxicabs in operation. As part of the revised taxicab ordinance—passed overwhelmingly by the Chicago City Council last year—medallion owners with more than 15 licenses are required to incorporate at least one wheelchair-accessible van into their fleet.

By the end of 1999, an additional 15 wheelchair-accessible vans will be put into operation and 20 more will be added in 2000. The city of Chicago has agreed to finance up to \$1 million for the purchase and installation of ramps and wheelchair locking mechanisms in all 50 vehicles. The city is also looking for other funding sources that would allow for the conversion of additional vehicles.

"The goal of this ordinance is to ensure equal access to taxicab service for everyone," says Caroline Orzac Shoenberger, Department of Consumer Services commissioner. "Since we began discussing the need for improved service, we have been pushing for wheelchair-accessible vans."

Recently, the city expanded its efforts to improve service to people with physical disabilities by instituting wheelchair-accessible equipment training for anyone seeking a public chauffeur's license. Harold Washington College, which conducts the public chauffeur course, has incorporated a simulator of a wheelchair-accessible van's interior in its training. The

simulator was donated to the college by SCR, a local paratransit service provider.

"This innovative program will ensure that every newly licensed cab driver knows how to properly operate the equipment in these vehicles," says Cleota Porter, director of the Public Passenger Vehicle Training Program at Harold Washington.

Contact: City of Chicago, Department of Consumer Services, (312) 744-4090 / 744-9089 (fax).

## AGENCY HONORED

During its 1999 World Congress, held in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., January 6–10, the Society of the Advancement of Travel for the Handicapped (SATH), which promotes tourism for people with disabilities, recognized Accessible San Diego (ASD) for its excellence. The award honors ASD's "outstanding achievement in receptive tourism for travelers with disabilities."

ASD is reportedly the nation's first information center for travelers with disabilities. The organization publishes "Access in San Diego," a guide to the area; has a Web site ([www.accessandiego.org](http://www.accessandiego.org)); provides a telephone hotline ((619) 279-0704); and maintains a reference library on destinations around the world.

Contact: Accessible San Diego, (619) 279-0704 / [www.accessandiego.com](http://www.accessandiego.com).

## ACCESSIBLE VAN RENTALS

by Nancy Whaley

Renting a wheelchair-accessible van for personal use is only a phone call away—and funding sources are available



Many possible funding sources are available for renting wheelchair-accessible vans for personal use.

to pay for the rental.

People with disabilities need to become informed so they can advocate for their own needs. The following information provides possible van-rental funding sources.

◆ In some circumstances, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) will fund accessible-van rentals for clients. Keep in mind, however, that OVR's primary purpose is to help prepare people for employment. The office will assist with whatever is needed to keep a person employed. If your transportation needs are directly or indirectly related to employment—i.e., participating in physical or occupational therapy, studying at an educational or training institution, attending job interviews,

or just getting to your workplace—OVR may rent a van until you are able to purchase your own. When you are ready to buy, OVR will pay for the needed adapted equipment. Contact local OVRs for specifics.

If you are currently employed and your personal van is out of commission, OVR will rent a van to ensure that you can keep your good record of attendance at work. Paratransit and public transportation can not always meet work time schedules. A side benefit of renting a van rather than relying on other transportation is that you have access to the vehicle for your own personal use 24 hours a day.

◆ Another funding source for

renting vans is automobile insurance companies. If your vehicle is damaged in an accident that is the other driver's fault, his/her insurance company will pay for you to rent an accessible van while yours is repaired or replaced. Be politely assertive if you are told they will pay less than the cost of an accessible van. You are entitled to a vehicle that meets your special needs, not just those of an able-bodied person. Most insurance companies will pay the full rental cost for you.

◆ In many cases, Workmen's Compensation will pay to purchase an adapted van for an insured individual injured on the job. If the injury is tempo-

rary, they will rent a van for the time period needed. If the injury is long-term, they will rent while you are waiting for delivery of your own van.

◆ A fourth source of payment is through rental insurance. Most insurance companies have this option but few will cover the high cost of renting an accessible van. One source of coverage is Adaptive Assurance, (888) 592-6315. If your own accessible van is disabled as the result of an accident, regardless of fault, Adaptive Assurance will cover the actual cost of your renting a modified vehicle. You may wish to consider this option specially designed for owners and drivers of accessible vans.

◆ Another area of funding to consider is medical insurance. If your policy includes nonemergency medical transport, you might suggest renting a van rather than using an ambulance company, which charges up to three times more for a single trip. The advantage is that you have personal use of the van 24 hours a day and can go to appointments according to your own schedule. The advantage to the insurance company is much lower cost. Three trips a week for therapy using a non-emergency medical-transportation service would cost as much as or more than renting a van full-time.

◆ Special-interest groups and charitable organizations offer funding to fulfill the special wishes of children or adults who have needs. These organizations will rent accessible vans to make those wishes become reality.

Renting wheelchair-accessible vans has many possible funding sources. Explore these options. If you don't qualify for any type of financial assistance, you can pay the standard rental fee.

*Nancy Whaley is co-owner of Wheelchair Getaways of Pennsylvania, (800) 221-6501. The parent company has 34 van rental locations in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. (800) 642-2042 / (606) 873-*

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