1981:
UN International
Year of
Disabled Persons
ACTION Assists in IYDP
Goal of Full Participation

TTY (teletype) phones allow the deaf and hearing-impaired to communicate long-distance.

A leading spokesman for the disabled says it is vital for the government to understand that disabled Americans will insist on a more active role in planning for their own well-being.

“No longer is it appropriate that people in this government plan for us,” declared Harold O’Flaherty, executive director of the Federal Interagency Committee (FIC) for the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) which began on January 1, 1981. In a recent White House meeting for government public affairs officials, O’Flaherty, who is blind, detailed IYDP activities and cited ACTION’S effort to promote independent living for disabled Americans and to involve them in agency IYDP activities by increasing self-advocacy roles.

O’Flaherty told the group that they must work within their respective agencies to “create long-term commitments to full participation by disabled people – the IYDP theme is ‘full participation.’ You must heighten the sensitivity of policy makers and federal employees, and dispel the fear and recalcitrance often felt in dealing with disabled individuals.”

In commemoration of the year, the U.S. Council for IYDP was formed last summer to coordinate a series of planning and programming efforts on behalf of the country’s disabled citizens. Over 350 organizations, government officials and concerned citizens have joined as “partners” to work with the council in an effort to strengthen public understanding of the needs and potential contributions of the more than 35 million disabled people in the country.

The Federal Interagency Committee for IYDP was established in February 1980, to insure the proper direction and coordination of IYDP goals within the federal government. The committee, which consists of representatives from over 28 federal departments, agencies and commissions will, over the year, initiate, develop and promote federal programs geared toward the disabled.

ACTION’S Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation (OVCP) is taking the lead in coordinating agency-wide activities and is directing an agency-wide IYDP committee. (OVCP Director Mercedese Miller represents ACTION on the Federal Interagency Steering committee for IYDP).

(Cont. page 4)
New Union-Management Contract Signed

“This contract represents what I consider to be some of the best collective judgment around,” said ACTION Director Sam Brown during the formal signing of the new agreement with the ACTION Employees’ Union.

On December 17, 1980, Brown, union President Ken Greene and Peace Corps Director Richard Celeste signed the first negotiated agreement since May 1975.

Referring to the contract, Greene said it offers employees and management “a vehicle to work co-operatively with each other. Most importantly, this document contains the recognition that employees are an intrinsic part of all ACTION and Peace Corps programs, and that as such, they are to be treated with dignity and respect,” Greene said.

Celeste called it a vital document “that challenges the best in all of us - employees and management.”

Both Brown and Greene praised the improved training opportunities allowed for in the new contract. “This is long overdue,” said Brown, “and ensures that our employees have the chance for a better professional future.”

In addition to increased training and career development opportunities – and this includes the establishment of joint labor/management Career Development and Training Committees to study the feasibility of designing individual career counseling programs for all bargaining unit individuals – the contract provides for 15 percent of all bargaining unit vacancies to be filled as upward mobility and/or bridge positions. The contract also sets new affirmative action goals which require that minorities and women be represented at all grade levels according to their representation in the local working population.

The agreement, which followed thirteen months of negotiations, was signed by the union/management negotiating team on November 20, and overwhelmingly ratified by the union membership on December 19.

Brown, Celeste and Green all commented on the high quality of the negotiations and on the dedication and commitment of the members of the negotiating team. “I don’t believe we could possibly have such a fine agreement if it weren’t for the collective wisdom of the team,” said Celeste. “At the outset it was obvious that the individuals sitting at the bargaining table realized that the final result of their efforts would best be served by a spirit of cooperation and collectivity.”
Here are the four basic goals proposed by the ACTION/IYDP Committee:

- increase the numbers of disabled volunteers by five to ten percent over the year;
- initiate and support with agency funds or in cooperation with other agencies, long term efforts in independent living and other programs involving or affecting the disabled;
- exchange information through internal programs and other networks, raise awareness and participate in activities relating to the disabled - e.g. national, regional and local meetings and conferences, in order to emphasize and highlight the roles of the volunteers; and
- publicly recognize the efforts of volunteers and volunteer projects in the areas of the disabled.

One of the first activities of the ACTION/IYDP committee was a survey of ACTION and Peace Corps field programs relating to issues of the disabled, and a plan to designate an ACTION contact person in each state and regional office.

This was followed by other measures - expansions of materials in the ACTION library relating to the disabled, installation of braille labels in the two non-attended elevators in the main headquarters building, and most recently, on January 6, the installation at headquarters of a telecommunications system for the deaf, on which messages are transmitted electronically in print. In addition, ACTION staff has prepared several issue papers for agency discussion of topics related to the disabled.

Agency regional offices are developing and reviewing plans for IYDP-related activities and programs. In Florida, for example, VISTA volunteers with the Florida Council for the Handicapped will be developing the first coalition of disabled people in that state. Georgia State Program Director Dave Damman states that the majority of VISTAs in 1981, will be placed in programs geared toward the disabled. And in East Bergen, N.J., five VISTA volunteers, who are themselves disabled or the parents of disabled children, are bringing together people with different disabilities in an effort to encourage them to work cooperatively on common problems.

When asked what she considered most important to the realization of IYDP goals at ACTION, Mary Jane Owen, former chairperson of the ACTION/Peace Corps/IYDP Committee, responded, “I would like to see a significant increase in the number of disabled people both on the ACTION staff and among the volunteers. This would automatically result in a greater awareness of and sensitivity to the problems of disabled individuals. That awareness and sensitivity is essential if those individuals are to participate fully and live independently.”

Developing IYDP activities at ACTION will be featured in future issues of Update. For additional suggestions or information, contact John Maddix at FTS 254-5324 or 800-424-8868.

ACTION STAFFER TO TEACH CRIME SEMINAR

Dan E. Moldea, executive assistant to Deputy Director Mary King, and author of The Hoffa Wars: Teamsters, Rebels, Politicians and the Mob, will teach an eight-week seminar, “Organized Crime in America,” at the Washington School of the Institute for Policy Studies. The seminar is scheduled to begin in mid-January. For registration information, call Lynn Liotta at I.P.S.: 234-9383.

COPE

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Employees and family members of employees wishing assistance in resolving personal, family, social, legal, financial, drug and alcohol abuse problems may obtain confidential help by calling:

COPE Counseling Center
484-7400
Humphrey Fellows Receive ACTION/PC Briefing

Thirty-four men and women from developing countries in Africa, the middle-East and Asia were briefed by ACTION Director Sam Brown and Peace Corps Deputy Director Bill Sykes, during a week-long visit to Washington, D.C.

Part of a larger group of 100 Hubert H. Humphrey Fellows, they represented the field of public administration and met with officials from various government agencies to discuss administration, management, operations and funding of federal departments.

The Hubert H. Humphrey North-South Fellowships were established to bring professionals from developing countries to the United States for a year of study and work-related experience at one of several U.S. colleges and universities.

The current 100 fellows are only the second North-South Fellowship group to come to this country. Last year 27 recipients completed the nine-month course, and it is expected that next year there will be 200 fellows.

Named in honor of the late vice-president of the United States and senator from Minnesota, the program fosters a philosophy similar to that of Hubert Humphrey's—human rights and international understanding.

During his briefing, Sam Brown explained the mission of ACTION and its programs, the agency's operational structure, the budget and how funding is received through the Congress. "We wanted to familiarize them with how a small, 'on-hands, online' agency works," said Brown, who following his presentation answered questions from the fellows.

Interest was expressed as to the inter-agency agreements ACTION has with other departments. Brown explained that the agency's tight budget over the last three years has restricted new programs. Through inter-agency agreements, ACTION has been able to support important and innovative work. "For example," said Brown, "the agreement we have with the Department of Energy, has enabled us to carry out community-based, do-it-yourself energy conservation programs in nearly 45 towns and cities throughout the United States."

Although more familiar with the Peace Corps than with the domestic volunteer programs, the Humphrey Fellows asked Sykes about the current emphasis on grass-roots volunteer projects.

"The Peace Corps," explained Sykes, "feels it's important that our volunteers work at a village level, assisting in developing self-sufficiency among the people whose needs are greatest. PCVs are involved in medical outreach programs, reforestation projects, water supply and sanitation facilities... What we hope to provide," he continued, "is a capacity-building, on-going type of service."

While in Washington, the fellows also met with representatives of the media, congressional staff members, World Bank officials, and with presidential assistant for National Security Affairs Zbigniew Brezinsky.
ACTION/Peace Corps Directors Discuss Their Administrations

Brown Cites New Program Directions

ACTION Update - What was the state of the agency and its programs when you came to ACTION four years ago?
Sam Brown - There were problems on both the program side and the administrative side. On the administrative side there was distrust and hostility between employees and personnel management people. Employees felt their work was not respected and they weren't trusted, and there was a sense that retribution or political hostility were present.

I found a demoralized staff and programs with little public identification. Feelings between the Peace Corps and the rest of the agency were at an all-time low. No Peace Corps director had been appointed in more than seven years. The title then had been director of international operations.

They couldn't even answer the phone by saying "Peace Corps" -- and that was true of VISTA or any of the Older American Volunteer Programs.

Update - What do you feel was the cause of this low morale?

Brown - A lot of this was due to a lack of communications. There wasn't an ACTION Update where you could run an interview like this one, there wasn't a Peace Corps Times, a VISTA Currents, a Prime Times nor a Reconnection, so that people couldn't even communicate about the common concerns or problems or share their successes with either employees or program sponsors.

And, of course, I believe the lack of strong program identification had a negative impact. People--staff and volunteers have to feel they belong to something. I said it then, and I feel it today--people don't volunteer for ACTION, they volunteer for

(continues on page 7)

Celeste Views PC Role in Third World Development

Excerpted from Peace Corps Times (January/February 1981).

Peace Corps Times - How do you feel looking back at a year and eight months as Peace Corps director?
Richard Celeste - Other than it's not enough time, it's been a useful and productive period. We laid to rest a considerable amount of the organizational aggravation that was plaguing Peace Corps in its relations with ACTION--we work more positively now, with more confidence in our ability to do what needs to be done in a friendly and cooperative fashion with those ACTION offices that support Peace Corps' efforts. Staff and volunteer morale, I sense, is high, despite the fact that for the first time in a decade we did not get a congressional appropriation, and therefore had to deal with extraordinary financial pressures. And I think we're more comfortable with programming now.

Third, recruitment in general is an area of concern. I wouldn't call it disappointment, because I'm optimistic about the longer haul. We've made changes in the way we recruit and "deliver" volunteers, and I think that will eventually yield an increasing number of qualified and committed PCVs. But it's frustrating to me that last year we had 20,000 applications and 8000 nominations--but we were only able to invite 3100 people at a time we had 4200 requests. We'll never be perfect, but we can do better.

PC Times - Let's talk about programming for a minute. Where do we stand?
Celeste - One of the pledges I made when I took office was, we weren't going to muddle the programming issue. I was comfortable with the focus on basic human needs, but I wanted to clarify what that meant--especially that working with basic human needs doesn't preclude programs in education, as long as we assess our efforts in education, as long as we assess our efforts in ed-

(continues on page 8)
(from page 6)

Peace Corps or VISTA or RSVP–ACTION is the administrative framework which enables us, at a low cost and in a way that unifies a mission, to carry forward the work of the agency and its individual programs.

Update - In terms of the programs, what did you find?
Brown - VISTA had been largely heading toward direct service, which seemed to me both contrary to the legislative mandate and intent, and contrary to the expectation people have for the program.

The Peace Corps had become more technically-oriented. For instance, there were more volunteers serving as health professionals in large cities than volunteers working at a village level in nutrition. I felt the focus should be on basic human needs at a grassroots level.

In terms of the Older American Volunteer Programs, while valuable and clearly respected, they seemed to put a greater emphasis on making the volunteers feel good and put less of a focus on “doing good.”

Update - Would you discuss the program changes you were able to initiate?
Brown - In the case of VISTA, the clear change of direction in the last four years is one of helping people help themselves. Less emphasis on direct service work, as valuable as that is, and more on advocacy. VISTA now works as an advocate to assist people in communities to find their own voices and solve their own problems.

In Peace Corps, the shift toward basic human needs programming at the village level started four years ago and is continuing even after Peace Corps became administratively autonomous. And here again, as with VISTA, the emphasis is on developing self-sufficiency through programs that will continue after volunteers leave.

The OAVP programs have shifted quietly and gradually, but the impact over four years is fairly dramatic. Sponsors, volunteers and program staff are committed to a broader focus of volunteer service. As an example: RSVPs not only delivering hot meals, but also helping people understand their own nutritional needs. Again, an expansion into an advocacy role.

Update - Do you think you’ve been successful in what you set out to do?
Brown - As I leave and look back on what was accomplished, I believe that as far as program directions go I was able to make changes, and I feel good about the consequences. However, on the front end if I'd been more thoughtful about it, perhaps we might have been able to do it with lots less disruption. There was a wrenching when there should have been a more gentle turning.

This was particularly true of VISTA. In order to get VISTA out of direct service and into advocacy, we had to define the issues very sharply, so there was no doubt as to where we wanted to go. I guess that made it inevitable that we were going to have a fight with Congress at some point. We took our chances on either winning it or losing it. Having won it, it was a clear cut victory. The Congress knew where we stood, and now we have many strong congressional backers.

I consider the programming changes in the older American programs among our greatest successes. Although less dramatic than the VISTA changes, those programs are so large that they have a tremendous impact overall.

The work we've done with other agencies through our inter-agency agreements is something I feel particularly good about. They have provided the resources and we have provided the expertise, such as in the Community Energy Project, where the Dept. of Energy gave us funds and we helped organize a self-help, do-it-yourself, community-based energy conservation program. I sense a new respect from other agencies as to the value and the notion of volunteer activity.

Update - In the second area you've discussed - administration - were you able to make the changes you wanted?
Brown - In many areas this agency is running a tighter, more efficient operation. We made positive changes in accounting, computer services, and personnel is now a much stronger unit. In terms of personnel, I think I badly overpromised in the early days, and created unrealistic expectations on the part of employees. In the ensuing years, however, I believe the worker participation concept became more of a reality. Flexitime, part-time employment, job-sharing-such as PC co-directors-all began during this administration.

At the senior level, we've done a terrifically good job of making opportunities available for women and minorities. It's a very different senior level staff than you'd find in most places—especially the regional directors—a Mamie Hughes, a Trini Garza, a Loni Hancock. Hopefully they have created opportunities for other minorities in their regions... created a trickle-down effect.

On the other hand, my greatest frustration is the mid-level area where there has been little movement or change in the workforce. I hope that the Affirmative Action/Upward Mobility Task Force which met last summer, and whose recommendations went into effect the first of January, will impact on this situation in the years ahead.
ucation the same way we assess those in other sectors in terms of appropriateness.

We've also emphasized the concept of women in development—not as just another programming sector, but as a prism, if you will, with which to look at all our programming. The idea of making women full partners in Third World development adds a healthy and constructive dimension to all our programming.

I also feel excited to be at Peace Corps at a time when the World Bank, that pillar of the development establishment, issued a World Development Report that in a sense confirmed the validity of 20 years of Peace Corps programming: namely, the thesis that human development is the cornerstone of economic growth; that it is the resource represented by people—their skills, their motivation, their use of local resources—that is the greatest source of development initiative. That's always been at the heart of Peace Corps programming, and it certainly is at the heart of our emphasis on basic needs.

...human development is the cornerstone of economic growth...

PC Times - Any disappointments, or unfinished business?

Celeste - I've been disappointed in our inability to get a budget cycle established with Congress that would allow our senior managers here and overseas to know what we have.

A second frustration is that, in spite of making enormous strides in terms of minority staff hiring and of contracting with minority firms—our business with minority contractors has grown by several hundredfold—we have not made the same strides in recruiting minority volunteers. We've made efforts: we have more ‘strategy’ contracts on college campuses with that aim; our summer minority intern program was a good start toward recruiting minority PCVs. Still it would be foolish and insensitive not to recognize that we need to improve minority recruitment. It's more than just minority participation. Understanding that sense of world majority, and how you build solidarity is important for black, Hispanic, Asian and white Americans alike.

PC Times - To what extent is Peace Corps an instrument of U.S. foreign policy?

Celeste - Peace Corps has not and should not, serve short range U.S. foreign policy goals. But it would be naive to say that Peace Corps is not in any respect an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. We wouldn't get an appropriation from Congress if they didn't perceive some long-term benefit to the U.S. And frankly, host countries wouldn't believe it anyway if we were to say Peace Corps didn't benefit us. Clearly, the ability to generate, as PCVs do, a sense of who Americans really are has a major foreign policy value. It contradicts many of the false impressions people have about the U.S. That's a valid and legitimate interest of our government. And to the degree that the U.S. has a foreign policy commitment to development in the Third World Peace Corps serves that commitment.

PC Times - You've placed a lot of emphasis on Peace Corps' 20th Anniversary celebration. Why?

Celeste - Well, as you know, public awareness of the Peace Corps is at a low point. To get the best volunteers people have to be interested in the Peace Corps. And before they can get interested in Peace Corps, they have to know about it. Some people are surprised to learn we're still around, let alone going strong.

Americans do care about the Peace Corps. If nothing else, that was proven by the excellent response we had to our 20th Anniversary kickoff in Michigan last October (ACTION Update, October 31, 1980, PC Times, Nov.-Dec., 1980). The other activities we have planned for the 20th—the RPCV conference in Washington the 15-city “tour”, conferences and seminars and the attendant publicity—can go a long way toward heightening our visibility while performing an important development education function, helping to inform Americans about Third World issues.

The other crucial function I see for the 20th Anniversary is that it serves as a springboard for mobilizing the tremendous resource represented by 80,000 RPCVs. They'll be a cornerstone of whatever we do in the 80s—playing important roles in public awareness, serving as a reconnection network for returning PCVs, and most important, being substantively involved in the community, not only in responding to emergencies, as returned volunteers are doing in working with Cuban and Haitian refugees in the U.S., but by helping to create an understanding at home, of global issues.
Staff Spotlight:

BEN FIGUERAS

Ben Figueras sees his work at ACTION as "an integral part of what I’m all about." What he is about involves people and helping them grow. It involves human dignity.

As a program specialist at VISTA headquarters, he works with, oversees and makes decisions concerning VISTA programs in regions I, IV and IX—New England, the Southeast and far West. And for the past six-and-a-half years, he has been a steward in the ACTION Employees Union of AFSCME. Recently he was elected union vice-president for external affairs.

"I am committed to equity for all people," Figueras says. "I am particularly concerned for people who because of racial or other prejudices, are being denied the things due them. My job and my work in the union enable me to address these concerns in a way which is sensitive to the legitimate needs of all sides involved."

Born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, 39 years ago, Figueras moved with his family to New York City at the age of one. There he saw the problems and frustrations of poverty and racism. "I saw people being locked into dead-end situations, simply because of their color or background," he says, "and it made me angry."

Shortly after finishing high school, Figueras spent several years working in the banquet and buffet catering trade. "But as I saw more examples of racism and prejudice on and off the job, my work began to have less meaning for me," Figueras explained. "I wasn't serving people who really needed my help."

So in the mid-60's, he enrolled at Yeshiva University's Lincoln Hospital Mental Health Division in New York City, where he trained to be a community health worker. He went on to work in Trenton at the New Jersey Community Action Training Institute, the Neighborhood Family Health Center, and the Congress of Puerto Rican Organizations.

"But I wanted to be more involved with my culture," he says. So in November 1971, he moved to San Juan to work for a company that provided training to the board of directors of the local community action program. "It was intensive work," he recalls. "It involved a great deal of sensitivity, really listening to people and making an effort to understand their differences."

For the next several years, he worked with contractors in San Justo and Ponce, P.R., providing training to Peace Corps, and then VISTA volunteers. He moved back to New York late in 1973 to become a program specialist, and in 1975, a state program officer. "That was very rewarding work," he says. "Being 'down in the trenches'—very involved with people."

In early 1978, Figueras came to Washington to participate in negotiations for a new ACTION Employees Union contract. "In four months, I grew to really like this city," he says. "And I was ready to do something different." So he applied for and got his current position as a VISTA program officer in Washington.

"I miss the hand-to-hand contact with programs in New York," he says. "And of course, that city
is 'my first home.' But here, I have more influence on policy and programs. So there's a trade-off."

Figueras is an avid photographer. "That hobby also enables me to share and express myself," he says. He has "loaned" his skills to ACTION on occasion - during the VISTA 15th anniversary celebration last June, he shot a number of pictures. He instructs children and adolescents in photography at a local community center. This past year, a number of his photos were displayed in four public buildings around Washington, and he recently designed a photo-collage of disabled children to be used in 23 different publications, including the cover of several DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) pamphlets - not bad for somebody who, ten years ago was "afraid of a camera."

His commitment expresses itself in other ways. As a member of MINORITIES IN ACTION, he tries to involve more minorities in agency volunteer and staff positions. And he has served on eight to ten agency task forces, such as the VISTA health program task force, and currently the ACTION/PC task force on Equal Opportunity and Career Development. "Task forces include new areas, expansion and variety," he notes. "And the more things I am involved in the more turned-on I get."

"There will always be frustrations on the job," he concludes. "Change is nearly always slower than I'd like. But at least there are changes. On my own job, I see a growing role in program development and decision making."

"Most important," he says, "there's a tremendous number of good and energetic people at all levels at ACTION. Together we have done so much, and together we can accomplish so much more."

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Regional Union Stewards

Editor's note: When we published partial results of the union elections in the October 30, 1980 issue of ACTION Update, results of steward elections in the regions were not available. The following is the final list of union stewards by region and location:

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<tr>
<th>Region I</th>
<th>Paul McCaffrey</th>
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<td>Region II</td>
<td>Leticia Santiago</td>
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<td>Rosalie Santiago</td>
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<td>Sherlene McCarther</td>
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<td>Eileen Ross</td>
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<td>Clara Sibert</td>
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<td>Dennis Warfle</td>
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<td>Barbara Weaver</td>
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Peace Corps, Part of Global Awareness Week on New York Campus

Jennifer Froistad, Peace Corps associate director for development education, is shown addressing student and faculty members at the Brockport campus of the State University of New York (SUNY) during Global Awareness Week, November 18-21, 1980. She was speaking on women in the Third World.

The week featured a variety of films, lectures and discussions on global issues. Among the topics addressed were "Energy and the Environment," and "Food and Population."

During her visit to the Brockport campus as a participant of Third World Day (Nov. 20) of Global Awareness Week, Froistad also addressed a group of students interested in Peace Corps, spoke to a class about her volunteer experience in Thailand and was interviewed on the campus radio station by the station's minority affairs director. In addition, as part of a panel discussion on the developing world, Froistad answered questions on the role of Peace Corps in Third World development.

Anne Muldoon, PC coordinator at SUNY-Brockport and a former volunteer in the Dominican Republic, said she hoped Global Awareness Week would become "an annual event. It's important for Americans, particularly students, to be aware of what's going on in the world outside our own borders," she said. "It fits in with Peace Corps' third goal, and Peace Corps' participation added credibility to many of the Third World Day activities."
ACTION Recruiter Trains California Staffers in CPR

With the aid of a startlingly lifelike "anatomical Annie" provided by a local fire department, Linda L. Lane, a Los Angeles area office recruiter who also happens to be an experienced cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) instructor, certified southern California ACTION staffers as "Heartsavers" following a December 3 CPR training class conducted by Lane.

CPR is described by the American Heart Association as "a basic life support for cardiac arrest." Lane received her instructor's training in 1979 as a means of "becoming more comfortable in performing CPR." She has since contributed over 60 hours to the local community through her twice-a-month training classes.

The 35-year-old Culver City woman is a veteran of three years in the Peace Corps in 1971 as a home economist in Columbia. She also served for a year in a VISTA bi-lingual education program in the San Diego area before becoming a recruiter for the two programs in 1975 with the Los Angeles area office.

Certified as "Heartsavers" were: Jim Ishikawa, David Gonzales, Janeth L. Rudolph, Jeff Hackle, Anthony Wilde, Barbara Boehringer and Gavellar Henning, all based in Los Angeles.