

'A Day in My Wheels'

Penn State students experience first-hand how people with disabilities cope

By Anteia Consorto
Staff Writer

The day was a first for Michele Haskins.

She was familiar with the territory — the rolling greens of Penn State's Delco campus.

But she was still getting the hang of her new transportation.

She pushed a button on her motorized wheelchair and ventured forward.

Moving straight down the hallway was no problem. The seventh-semester telecommunication major chatted with a friend and steered the chair without a hitch. When she got to the door, a fellow student held it open and let her pass.

It wasn't until she was scooting up the steep hill to the library that she encountered a real challenge.

About midway up the hill her wheelchair began to roll backwards.

Still a rookie on wheels, Haskins didn't know what to do.

She clutched the arms of the chair, braced herself and said a little prayer. Thankfully, the chair didn't topple and soon stopped on its own.

Haskins was just one of the students at Penn State Delco who ventured into a world unfamiliar to them Aug. 31.

"A Day in My Wheels," was a program to help give able-bodied students a glimpse into what life with a disability is like.

Each student had the opportunity to chart their course in a wheelchair, on crutches, with a blindfold or with ear plugs.

With each disability came a list of tasks for the student to attempt.

For example, learning to read lips if you can't hear, or trying to navigate hallways and around campus without being able to see.

Coping with the disability wasn't the only change for the experimenting students. Haskins said people stared uncomfortably at her.

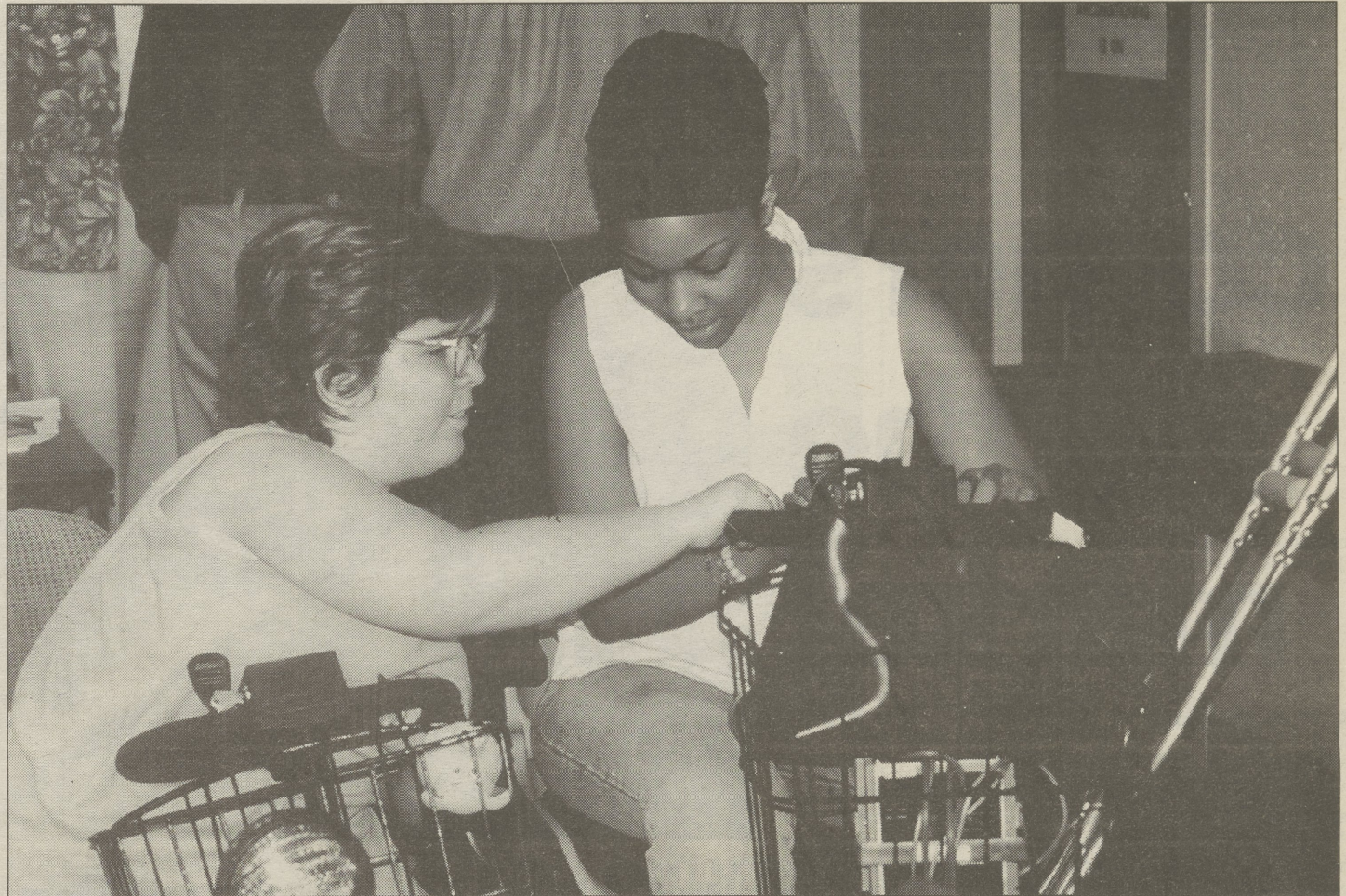
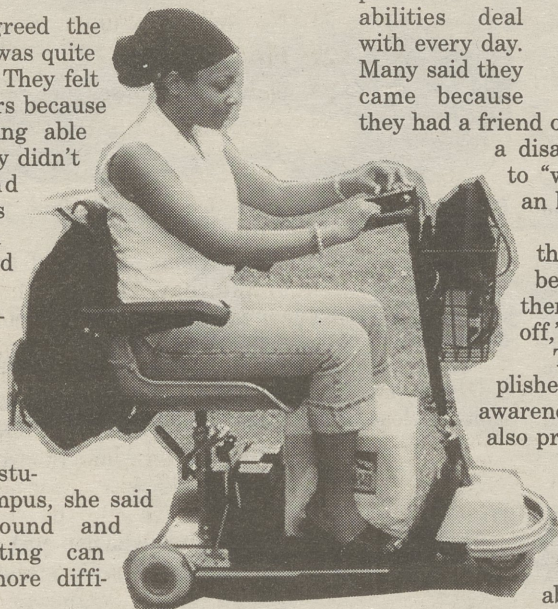
"The navigation is definitely very hard and I felt like I was holding others up," she said.

Students Colleen Kelly and Katie Heath were hearing impaired for a while.

They said it was extremely hard to figure out what people were saying through sign language and reading lips.

Both agreed the experience was quite frustrating. They felt like outsiders because without being able to hear, they didn't understand what was going on around them.

For student Jenn Riley, the day was no experiment. As a disabled student on campus, she said getting around and communicating can be much more diffi-



Staff photos by ANTEIA CONSORTO

Dory Shea, left, helps Michele Haskins learn how to control a motorized wheelchair. Haskins was one of the student who learned how disabled students get around campus at a recent program.

cult than most students realize.

She said she thought the event was a real eye-opener for many students. Dory Shea, the event organizer, agreed.

More students than anticipated showed up to learn what people with disabilities deal with every day. Many said they came because they had a friend or a family member with a disability and they wanted to "walk in their shoes" for an hour or so.

"You have to realize that yes, there are people better off than you, but there are also people worse off," Shea said.

The program accomplished its goal of increasing awareness, Shea said, but it also produced another benefit.

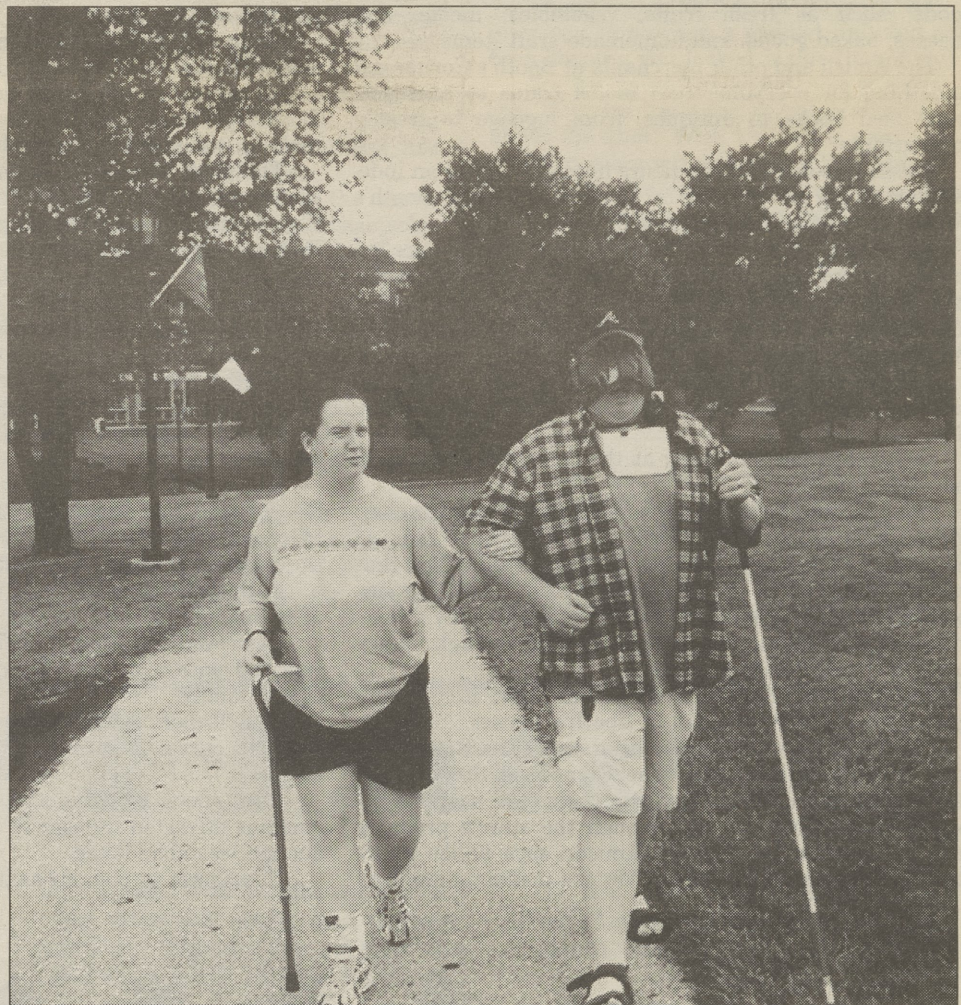
Some students suggested ways to make the campus more friendly and accessible to people with disabilities.

“

The navigation is definitely very hard and I felt like I was holding others up.

MICHELE HASKINS, STUDENT

”



Jenn Riley guides Andrew Lowrey around campus. Lowrey was experiencing blindness with a scarf over his eyes and a white cane to 'see' obstacles.

Group spotlights Hispanic/Latino heritage month

By Doris Ruiz
Assistant Editor

As the school year gets underway, the majority of the campus' clubs are preparing for this semester's events. But one organization in particular has been planning its events as early as July.

This hard-working club is Delco's Latino organization. It has been preparing for the long awaited Hispanic/Latino heritage month, which runs from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.

One of the club's special events is the arrival of Angel Ortiz, a city councilman

from Philadelphia. On Tuesday Sept. 26, Ortiz will speak on the topic of the development of Philadelphia's Latino Community.

Another famous Hispanic visiting our campus this month is Alma Martinez. She is planning a discussion on Hollywood stereotypes of Latin American women on Wednesday, Sept. 27.

Martinez is an actress who will receive her Ph.D. in drama at Stanford University. She will be the second Mexican-American to hold a Ph.D. in this field.

Although these two events will occur

only Sept. 26-27, Dr. Ginsberg, professor of Philosophy, will host a photo exhibit during the entire Hispanic/Latino Heritage month.

His exhibit, titled, "Visions of Spain and Latin America," will be on display in the Vairo library and will feature photographs Ginsberg took in his travels to Spain, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic.

The Latino Organization along with the International Studies committee will hold a public session titled: Meet the artist" Oct. 4 to give students a chance to speak

with Ginsberg about his travels, and experiences in Spanish and Latin American countries.

Penn State Delaware County has been hosting various diversity programs in the last two years including the visit from writer/director Gregory Nava.

The university hopes to extend the diversity population here at Penn State Delco. Also, these programs are help in conjunction with the International Studies committee to help gain a larger audience of participants for the new international studies program.