

University, borough assist blind pedestrians in bad weather

By JENNIFER NEJMAN
Collegian Staff Writer

Inclement weather conditions create many problems for those with sight disabilities.

"Snow is always a real nuisance, particularly to a cane traveler," said Doug Little of State College, who is blind. Little said when snow accumulates on sidewalks, injuries such as twisted ankles may occur, and blind pedestrians are sometimes forced to climb over the snow piles.

By law, both the University and the borough are required to

remove snow from sidewalks and keep them free of obstructions.

There are 23 miles of sidewalks, 657 buildings and 2,500 parking spaces on campus, said Paul Ruskin, spokesman for the Office of Physical Plant. With the record snowfall this year, OPP has been busy keeping the campus accessible for everyone.

"ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) legislation requires that institutions take proactive measures to ensure reasonable access to every facility and service available," Ruskin said.

ADA was passed in 1990.

OPP gives sidewalks a high priority, Ruskin said. During snowstorms, crews are out during the night and janitorial staffs clear walkways and stairs, he said.

Many blind pedestrians said they think the University does a good job maintaining sidewalk accessibility during winter storms.

Peggy Hoover, a blind pedestrian who uses a cane, said that not only does the University make the sidewalks accessible in times of bad weather, but it also provides services to help people with disabilities.

A number on the TIPS informa-

tion line provides updated information on the current construction projects and barriers on campus, said Kay Marshall, a disabilities service counselor for the Office of Disabilities, 105 Boucke.

Marshall said if students with disabilities give the office their daily routes, those sidewalks will be listed as high priority list for snow removal.

Hoover said she has used the TIPS number and found it very useful.

The borough also provides services to aid blind pedestrians.

Little said there are many places

in town that do an excellent job of clearing the sidewalks in front of their businesses, but some do not.

Although a path is cleared, sometimes the path is narrow, Little said.

This narrow path is usually fine for other pedestrians, but the paths are sometimes difficult for blind pedestrians to use, he added.

"Trying to find that little path is difficult," Little said.

The borough enforces a snow removal ordinance that requires business and property owners to clear any snow, regardless of amount, from sidewalks 24 hours

after the snow falls, said Larry Gephart, ordinance enforcement officer for the borough.

If residents or business owners do not clear a pathway, they receive a violation and must pay a \$10 fee, Gephart said. After three violations, the borough hires a contractor to remove the snow and sends the bill to the property owner.

"The property owners are responsible up to the curb," Gephart said.

Many of the residents who live near curbs have made extra efforts to keep the sidewalks safe, he said.

Transgender issues reach switchboard

By KRISTA HAWLEY
Collegian Staff Writer

Bisexual and transgendered residents may no longer feel unnoticed.

The Gay and Lesbian Switchboard of State College recently added the terms "bisexual" and "transgender" to address the community's diverse needs.

Switchboard Treasurer Morris Weinstock said the new Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Switchboard will stress the inclusive nature of its services.

Transgendered people fall into many different categories that include transsexuals (people who have had a sex change operation), transvestites (people who wear clothing traditionally associated with the opposite sex), intersex (people born with both types of sex organs) and androgynes (people who in some way identify with both sexes).

"Calls seem to come from people other than gay and lesbian individuals. Some people have questions about gender," Weinstock said. "We were trying to be as inclusive as we could."

Weinstock said the switchboard provides peer counseling and referral services on a wide range of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues.

The goal in changing the switchboard name was to include as many people as possible, he added.

The switchboard takes a variety of calls regarding gender issues, such as men concerned about being judged too feminine by society and women being perceived as too masculine, Weinstock said.

Kimberlie Kranich, who has been answering calls for the switchboard for more than three years, said she favored the name change.

"We have already been getting all kinds of calls. We wanted to reflect in our name the people we serve," she said.

Selena Jankovitz (freshman-division of undergraduate studies) said education about transgender issues is important.

"A lot of people will be confused what it means and it needs to be identified," she said.

But defining transgender is difficult because most people probably do not understand the term, Weinstock added.

"These are new terms. They are used differently," he said.

Transsexual and transvestite people are included in the definition of transgender, Weinstock said.

Ephraim Lopez, political co-director of the University's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Student Association, also said the term "transgender" is not easily defined.

Lopez said transgender is "an umbrella term — an encompassing term for all forms of gender identity."

Last year, transgender issues received attention at the University when LBGSA voted on two measures regarding the inclusion of transgender in both the mission and title of LBGSA.

Although the term transgender was not added to the organization name, the membership felt it was important to address education about transgender issues, Lopez said.

"This year's membership seems very encompassing," Lopez said. "(Transgender issues) will be addressed in the future."

Lopez said it was important to acknowledge the role of transgendered people in the history of the gay and lesbian rights movement.

The Stonewall Rebellion in 1969, often cited as the beginning of the gay rights movement, involved transgendered individuals — specifically drag queens, he said.

Kranich also said the ties between the transgender, gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities are strong.

"There are differences, but we're all dealing with discrimination based on gender," she said.



They *shelled* it out for your orthodontist bills.

Coughed it up for your car insurance.

And *forked* it over for that *fish tank* accident.

Yet they still *insist* you call collect.

Touched by their undying love, you spare them further expense.

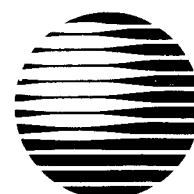
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