

*Atlanta Post-Polio Association (APPA)*  
*October 7, 2006 Meeting Summary*  
By Ron Swor

For its October meeting APPA was invited by Accessibility Services Plaza (ASP) to tour its facility in Marietta. ASP is comprised of four companies specializing in key areas relating to accommodating the needs of those with rehabilitation concerns. Their combined objective is to provide a one-stop rehabilitation resource environment in four strategic areas: 1) Nursing Services, 2) Durable Medical Equipment, 3) Vehicle Modification, and 4) Home Modification.

During consultations with clients, the experts within these companies seek to identify their specific needs as the basis for guiding them to the proper accommodations and equipment needed to facilitate their daily lives. These experts know the latest technological advances available and understand how best to apply these approaches to help those coping with rehabilitation situations. Their ultimate goal is to assist their clients by improving the quality of their daily lives through available rehabilitation technology and effective design modifications of their homes and vehicles. They also seek to find as many ways possible for their clients to be able to conserve energy each day, enabling them to expand their daily activities and/or improve their energy levels. In their presentations and demonstrations to the APPA members, they gave real examples of the importance of treating each client as an individual with unique needs. From their perspective, there is no situation where one solution applies to all clients.

**Company Number 1- All In One Accessibility**

The first ASP owner to address the APPA members was Jim Karl, owner of All In One Accessibility. Within his plaza area are four important rooms of a home that displayed the latest equipment and room designs to accommodate rehabilitation. The four rooms are a Kitchen, Bathroom, Bedroom and mock-up Stairway/Doorway (ramps, lifts, etc.). These areas demonstrate what can be achieved to reduce the burden of living in a home for clients with mobility limitations (whether using a wheelchair or not). They stress that creating the best customer fit requires an complete understanding their needs, likes and dislikes, as well as their range of motion, available room space and ambulatory issues. All this information is needed to provide a safe and low energy environment within or without the home. Besides providing lower countertop heights and open space below the sink and countertop stove, they incorporate every safety feature to protect the client. For example, the stovetop includes a frame that prevents liquids that boil over during cooking from flowing on the client's lap. Another example is the inclusion of a slide-out shelf directly below the countertop holding a microwave oven so that the client can remove easily items from the microwave oven and transfer its contents to another vessel. Many small instruments are on display to aid eating, cutting and transfer of food for those clients unable to handle standard kitchen items.

The bathroom is loaded with equipment to permit safe transfers to and from a bathtub or shower. Relating to the bathtub, a transfer chair was shown adjacent to the tub that had some interesting features. First, the chair is mechanized to raise and lower the height for

better adjusting to the height of the wheelchair and the tub during transferring. Second, the surface of the chair is covered with a soft, non-slip, surface. The design of the chair includes folding sides of the seat that can be customized in size to effect a safer transfer to tubs where the inside walls are irregularly shaped. For clients needing further assistance to enter and exit the tub, a ceiling-mounted overhead lift (on a track) is demonstrated. There is a walk-in tub (with door) on exhibit also.

The roll-in shower features considerable flexibility in design to accommodate many needs. Portions of the tiled walls are very strong, non-tile materials that looked like tiles. They permit support safety railings (or handles) to be located throughout the shower area to suit the needs of the client. Similarly, the location of the shower water faucet handles and shower spray hose can be located in any position to satisfy specific client needs. The size of the shower is larger than the standard home shower to permit safer transfers. The doors for the shower fold like closet folding doors and are easily opened and closed. At the entrance is a flexible rubber strip that fits under these doors and contains the shower water. This seal presents no obstacle for wheelchairs, etc., to roll in the shower.

There are several types of chairs and stools (with and without wheels) on exhibit in the bathroom to accommodate activities relating to use of the sink/mirror area or shower. These chairs have non-slip seating surfaces. Also on exhibit is a floor-mounted mechanical lift that, from a standing position, lowers and raises clients to and from the toilet.

The bedroom area is loaded also with technology to aid the client getting in and out of bed, and equipment to permit control of the room environment while in bed. The level of the bed could be adjustable in height and slope of mattress to help blood circulation, if needed, and accessibility. An air-inflated mattress (Sleep Number type bed) is featured that can be inflated after the client is on the mattress. They do not recommend the use of a memory foam mattress (that conforms to the body), as it is too exhausting for clients to turn in bed. The special telephone adjacent to the bed has capabilities to control lights in the room and adjacent areas, as well as dialing numbers with a push of one of the many big buttons. Alternatively, a voice-actuated instrument can be used to control the lights, etc. As with the bathroom, there is a ceiling-mounted lift over the bed for transferring a client in and out of the bed.

Other equipment shown relate to ramps and chair elevators for access to and from the home and movements between floors within a home. A complete computer setup mounted on a special table containing many accommodations for clients with limited movement are present for testing. More home and safety equipment are on display that are not included in this summary.

#### Company Number 2- Para/Quad Nursing Services

This company provides at-home nursing and attendant services. Much of their work relates to clients freshly out of the hospital where expert medical attention and accommodating living equipment are required. Considerable advanced planning is

needed to ease the adjustment of these clients to their home environment. Additionally, they provide services to people with chronic health problems and a variety of disabilities. The owner of this company is a quadriplegic and is eminently qualified to understand the needs of his clients.

#### Company Number 3- On The Go Medical

This company really delivers on the premise of one-stop shopping for medical and rehabilitation equipment and mobility hard goods. They handle healthcare items from crutches to hospital beds to mechanical and powered mobility equipment. A very large inventory of manual wheelchairs, power scooters and power wheelchairs from many manufacturers is maintained for clients to compare the different products and test for best fit. They provide repair services also for these pieces of equipment.

#### Company Number 4- Handicapped Driver Services (HDS)

Many APPA members are doing business with HDS and are very familiar with this company. A few spoke favorably about their vehicle modifications in terms of product quality and performance, thoroughness of experts, and ability to get repairs as needed. Many vehicles equipped with several modifications are on exhibit for APPA members and clients to compare. They include modified standard, Braun Entervan Conversion, VMI Northstar Conversion, Norcal Conversion and Sprinter Paratransit vehicles and others.

The expert from this company, Earl, stated that installation of equipment has become more complicated for newer minivans and other vehicles. In addition, any modification of vehicles must be in full compliance with related federal regulations for the original vehicle. For example, installing an assisted steering and braking accessory has to take into account that the protecting knee airbag is not compromised or functions in an incorrect direction. Similarly, installing a handle above the driver's door to assist accessibility cannot compromise the curtain airbags. He reassured everyone that all installations do not interfere with other drivers operating the modified vehicle. This company assists clients routinely in gaining up to 10 years of financing, even if they have credit issues resulting from past medical expenses.

The aim of HDS is to find the best equipment available that provides the best service and requires the least energy. For example, one of the platform lifts (Freedom) mentioned by an APPA member requires manipulation of locking pins at the beginning and end of the loading/unloading process.

The above summary is by no means complete. If more information is needed the Accessibility Services Plaza can be reached as follows:

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#### Disclaimer

The information provided herein represents what the author believes he heard during the October 7 presentations and demonstrations. The author is neither medically trained nor an expert in rehabilitation equipment and for this reason may not have recorded an accurate accounting or understanding of the equipment and modifications discussed. For these reasons, neither he nor APPA assume any responsibility for the accuracy of the information provided. It is, therefore, highly recommended that all and any information provided be confirmed with your physician or Accessibility Services Plaza experts before attempting to apply any of the indicated rehabilitation modifications or equipment. It is hoped that this summary serves to apprise the reader of the progress being made in helping PPS and of the rehabilitation approaches available.