

# Handicapped bias improved yet needs exist—professor

By Laura Garrison

The same social construction that causes racism and sexism causes discrimination of the handicapped, a crusader for the handicapped and co-author of *The Unexpected Minority: Handicapped Children in America* said Thursday.

"The roots of discrimination are not found in biology," said William Roth. "It's a part of society."

Roth, who is disabled, addressed a workshop sponsored by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Child Guidance Center.

He said society is capable of reconciling the social problem of the handicapped and the last 10 years have brought acceptance of the handicapped as a result of an intense effort by society as a whole.

Roth is an associate professor in the School of Social Welfare at the State University of New York at Albany. He received a Ph.D in political science from the University of California of Berkeley and he recently published *The Handicapped Speak*.

"Things are changing for the handicapped," Roth said. "This is made visible to the public by action groups and the media. It's not unusual to see ramps and curb cuts in buildings anymore," he said.

Roth said the best way for a handicapped child to grow up "as a child should," is

to provide a normal childhood. One of the worst disservices a teacher or parent of a handicapped child can do is not listen.

"Many handicapped children are not kids first," he said. "They are patients. How do we expect a child who does not live like a child to grow like a child?"

He said it is remarkable that disabled children grow up at all considering the amount of resistance they encounter in school and in social situations.

Teachers and parents need to develop a way of listening that allows them to hear, he said.

"Children are very honest in telling professionals what they need," he said. "Adults just aren't very good at listening."

The goal of special education should be to make the disabled child a "connoisseur of life". The strong parts of the child should be expanded, he said.

Future federal cutbacks should not hinder the disabled in their fight to gain rights, Roth said.

Some people have a hard time thinking of the disabled as a minority," Roth said. "But the fact is we suffer from underemployment and segregation. The handicapped are denied the self-evident right of humanity."

Federal cutbacks don't make sense morally and hurt the future promise for rights of the handicapped, he said.

## Dances highlight of jubilee

The second annual Wild West A Days will be from 7 p.m. to midnight Friday and 11 a.m. to midnight Saturday, said Michelle Heitmann, publicity coordinator for the Willard Community Center.

The celebration will be at 501 West A St. in the Village Square Shopping Center parking lot.

A scavenger hunt and a teen dance sponsored by KFRX radio will highlight Friday night, Heitmann said.

Saturday events include: tug-of-war, an egg toss, a frog jumping contest, a turtle

race, a horseshoe pitching contest and sack races. There also will be a barbeque, a beer garden, a flea market, a free country-western dance with George Amen and White Lightning and rides, Heitmann said.

Proceeds will go to the Willard Community Center, Heitmann said. The center is a renovated school which houses child care and senior citizen programs, Heitmann said. It also is a meeting spot for neighborhood organizations such as Boy Scouts and 4-H groups, Heitmann said.



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