

## ATI Conference Highlights

By John E. Liebmann

The Association of Travel Instruction's Eleventh Annual Conference was held from August 12-14 at the Holiday Inn Historic District Hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was a busy three days of presentations, meetings and fun in the Old City of Philadelphia around the corner from Independence Hall where both the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution were signed. There were many highlights of this year's conference. Here are just a few.

The City of Brotherly Love is served by a strong regional transportation system, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), which provides bus, trolley, subway and regional rail service throughout five counties. SEPTA's General Manager, Joseph M. Casey, welcomed the conference attendees on Friday morning and encouraged them to use public transportation services while visiting Philadelphia,.

On Friday afternoon, a presentation highlighted an innovative program at Philadelphia's airport for children with autism. A group of clinicians including Angela Jones, Ph.D. and Wendy J Ross, M.D. have developed a program in conjunction with airport, airline and TSA staff that brings air travel within reach for children with autism and their families.

At the Friday evening reception, a special feature this year was the appearance of the MV-1, the first American built mobility vehicle designed for wheelchair accessibility. It will be built at a plant in Mishawaka, Indiana and may be the prototype for the accessible taxi. Terry Moakley, ATI's immediate Past President, arranged for the visit of a representative from the Vehicle Production Group LLC, a new American car company which is building the MV-1. Terry has made presentations in previous conferences on these issues.

On Saturday morning, Steve Garcia from the New York City Department of Education presented back-to-back sessions on "Critical Issues when Teaching Safe Street Crossings." He began this conversation in a presentation at the 2010 Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. This year he focused on several topics including what is meant by good judgment as it relates to crossings at intersections, and what techniques travel trainers use to teach students how to develop such judgment.

At the ATI Annual Meeting on Saturday afternoon, a committee of the Board presented their work on an important topic: What is the Definition of Travel Training? The committee, consisting of Board Member Julie Wilcke from Portland Oregon, Board Member Roseanne Bopp, and Past President Peggy Groce, produced a carefully worded document which was unanimously approved by the Board of Directors. It discusses the array, continuum or family of services offered to individuals with disabilities, seniors and others who need assistance to increase their mobility and travel on public transportation independently. This work will be the subject of an education and outreach campaign and will help in further research efforts.

Elections were also held to fill several positions on the ATI Board. President Mary Riegelmayr announced that Sarah Green from Grand Rapids, Michigan was chosen to fill a three year term; elected to one year terms were Julie Wilcke, Louis Hoffman from NJ TIP and Steven Gallo from the New York City Department of Education.

The Annual Banquet on Saturday evening was a Philadelphia Block Party. It was a fun affair with games prizes and lots of Philadelphia food. Jack and Helen Gorelick from New York City were honored for their half century of service and a special video was aired in which Jack spoke about the conditions in New York City in 1960 that led him to risk independent travel by developmentally disabled consumers in the AHRC-NYC pioneer travel training program. The video was produced and directed by Steve Garcia and featured a rare 2003 interview with Jack and his first independent traveler, Billy Conklin. Former ATI Board member, Millie Santiago-Liebmann, arranged the 2003 interview and had it filmed.

President Riegelmayr also thanked Terry Moakley and Board member Steven Dickerson for their contributions to the organization. Steve's term on the Board of Director's is ending this year. The Raffle was a big success again this year with the grand prize a beautiful Northwestern Quilt produced and donated by Board Member Frances Rankos of Fircrest, Washington.

On Sunday morning Jack Thompson and Erica Hopson from the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority in Ohio concluded an outstanding series of presentations by describing how they have developed a strong travel training program that has served many constituencies.

There were many other highlights of a wonderful conference that ran on time and allowed for opportunities to explore the very historic environs of the Old City in Philadelphia. ATI President Mary Riegelmayr reserved her final thanks for the very able conference organizers, Board Member Peggy Schmidt and Cecile Charlton. Conference attendees gave these two leaders a well-deserved round of applause for their efforts and enthusiasm. Thank you, Peggy and Cecile!