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INVOLVING THE DEAF COMMUNITY IN THE TRAINING PROCESS

By **RAY L. JONES, Ed.D., Director, Center on Deafness, San Fernando Valley State College**

In the past eleven years of operating the National Leadership Training Program in the Area of the Deaf at San Fernando Valley State College we have found the following strategies largely responsible for our success in the field of training.

1. GO TO THE DEAF THEMSELVES

Consult deaf persons about all phases of training, planning, operation and evaluation.

2. ACCEPT DEAF TRAINEES

Accepting deaf trainees in NLTP was the best decision we have made. This changed the entire climate of the program, giving us in every class "experts on deafness" who could speak from first-hand experience on the educational and rehabilitation needs they had known. We gained appreciation for the abilities of deaf students who met the same criteria as hearing students and often excelled in the program.

3. FIRST-HAND ACQUAINTANCE WITH DEAF PEOPLE FROM THE COMMUNITY.

This has been accomplished through:

A. Conducting courses, workshops and conferences involving deaf representatives. Adult Education, Legal Rights, Telephone Communication, Leadership Training, Higher Education Needs have all been "vehicles" to accomplish this.

B. Week-end in homes of deaf families. For the past two years we've sent hearing participants into homes of typical deaf families in the

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greater Los Angeles Area. Deaf participants have been sent into homes of parents of deaf children. Results have been mutually rewarding.

C. Use of deaf persons as instructors and consultants. Deaf persons on our staff have included Vic Galloway, Dr. Tom Mayes, and now Greg Kimberlin and Larry Fleischer. Deaf consultants have included national leaders in organizations serving the deaf.

From our experience we have drawn the following conclusions:

1. Leadership in this field is a cooperative venture – most effective when capable and well-trained hearing people work with equally capable and well-trained deaf persons.

2. Leadership does not develop in a vacuum, but grows best in a laboratory setting which:

Gives trainees a first hand acquaintance with problems of deaf persons from birth through adulthood.

Gives trainees an opportunity to identify community resources which could help meet these needs.

Provides an opportunity for focusing the resources of community agencies on the needs of deaf persons in the community through pilot programs.

3. In the final analysis leadership at its best is merely providing an opportunity for people to grow.