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ADA Summit Addresses Needs of Disabled Community

by Marianne Lewis, Contributor to San Antonio Spurs

More than 60 members and advocates of the disabled community in San Antonio gathered in early December to discuss the design features planned for the SBC Center, as guided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The summit, held at Warm Springs Rehabilitation Hospital, was the first of several forums to be held concerning this topic.

The event was a product of the Spurs' SBC Center ADA Advisory board, which consists of members of the architect and design team, city and county ADA officials, members of the Spurs staff, and Season Ticket Holders with disabilities.

Welcomed by Spurs officials Leo Gomez and Rick Pych, as well as Bexar County Judge Cyndi Krier, guests looked at seating options and sight lines available for wheelchair patrons and previewed architectural renderings that illustrate features already in place to accommodate visitors with all types of disabilities. Participants were also invited to share their concerns and recommendations.



"We are here to share our ideas and to listen to your suggestions," said Pych. "We are committed to building a model facility in every sense of the word and that includes not only meeting ADA standards, but exceeding them." Added Krier, "You are our resources because you are the folks that have been there or know someone in your family who has been there." As part of the forum, participants met with two key members of the SBC Center design team: Steve Allison, an architect with Ellerbe Becket and Kevin McGuire, a nationally-

recognized consultant hired by the Spurs who specializes in ADA compliance issues.

A frequent guest on CNBC to discuss disability issues, McGuire shared that at age seven, he was hit by a drunk driver. After extensive therapy, he was able to regain the use of his upper body and went on to graduate from Boston University and Georgetown Law School before working for Senator Edward Kennedy during the 1980s. In 1991, he started McGuire Associates and over the past decade has developed a solid reputation for assisting organizations in effectively and proactively meeting the standards prescribed by ADA regulations. His experience includes work on the Rose Garden, Staples Center, American Airlines Center and Conseco Fieldhouse.

McGuire and Allison said the SBC Center will include wheelchair seating options in all areas of the building and in all price ranges; the front of every concession stand in the building will be mounted 34 inches in height - the ADA standard; and all handicapped parking spaces will be located close to the building rather than being at various locations around the site.

"The number of parking spaces will exceed what the ADA requires and there will be a VIAtrans pick-up and drop-off zone right next to the building off of Houston Street," said Allison.

In addition, sinks in the public restrooms will be mounted at the prescribed height for disabled access with the appropriate type of faucets throughout. There will even be family restroom facilities available - a one toilet, one sink restroom to be used by a disabled person who is being aided by a member of the opposite sex.

McGuire added that the designers are developing the SBC Center not only so that it's accessible, but that the employment areas will be fully ADA-compliant as well.

"There's a commitment from the owners to do whatever is necessary to comply with the ADA codes and take the appropriate steps to ensure that everyone's experience at the SBC Center is as good as any able-bodied person's," he added.

Rick Pych, Spurs Executive Vice President and Chief Development Officer for the SBC Center thanked everyone for their participation and assured guests that all of their suggestions would be considered.

"From the very beginning of this effort, it has been the goal of the team's management and ownership group that we build a model arena and have the best arena in the NBA. So, we looked for experience and we hired a premier sports facility architect when we hired Steve Allison's employer, Ellerbe Becket. And, as you have seen tonight, we have the best ADA person in the business on our team - and that is Kevin McGuire," said Pych.

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