

GAME PLAN

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW STADIUM AND EXHIBITION CENTER

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ADA Access – A Team Effort

Those of us who are lucky enough to be able to walk, see, and hear, often take our abilities for granted. We can forget that even the simplest tasks can present challenges to those who are disabled. When the Stadium opens with its first game in 2002, most visitors will be thinking of the event they are about to attend. But for visitors with disabilities, concerns might be of a different nature. They may be as simple as, "Will I be able to see the scoreboard?" or "How will I get to my seat?"

Thanks to the efforts of ADA consultant Kevin McGuire, the new Stadium and Exhibition Center will be fully prepared to meet the needs of persons who are physically, visually, or hearing impaired. McGuire was hired by Ellerbe Beckett Architects to ensure that the new facilities meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). He is also retained by First & Goal to oversee policies such as emergency evacuation procedures and training programs to sensitize staff to the needs of the disabled.

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- Kevin McGuire
Chairman & CEO
McGuire Associates, Inc.

"I've been working on everything from how someone using a wheelchair will be dropped off and picked up at events, to training employees on how to communicate with guests that are deaf," said McGuire.

McGuire has firsthand knowledge of the multitude of barriers a person with disabilities may encounter. Having been hit by a drunk driver at age seven, McGuire was left paralyzed from the waist down and requiring the use of a wheelchair. His physical disability did not stop his ambition however, as he went on to graduate from Boston University, then to complete his law degree at Georgetown University. Eventually, he established his own New York-based business as an ADA consultant. An expert on disability issues, he now travels the country to provide consulting services, employee training, and dispute resolution in dealing with ADA regulations.

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The Kingdome, which was built prior to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, has far from adequate access and seating for the disabled. The facility provides only 70 seats for wheelchairs and very poor restroom access. Because it only has three elevators, it can mean a 25-minute wait for someone in a wheelchair trying to get to their seat. The Stadium and Exhibition Center will vastly improve disabled access. Not only will the new Stadium provide 1,440 seats for guests with disabilities and their companions, but it will also offer seats closer to the field and with better visibility.

Advances in technology now bring new options to those hearing and visually impaired as well, with the availability of closed captioning, audio and telecommunication devices. "One feature we are exploring for possible use at Stadium events is a hand held device that guests

who are blind can use to direct them to their seat, for example, or to the restroom," McGuire explained.

McGuire also worked closely with Exhibition Center designers, LMN Architects. "We paid particular attention in the design of the Exhibition Center to ensure the outdoor surfaces and grades were safe, and that the parking scheme will work for both the Stadium and the Exhibition Center to provide access," McGuire said. This included making sure that sidewalk lighting was adequate for visually impaired persons and that truck loading across sidewalks would not impede wheelchair use.

At this phase of the project, McGuire is concentrating on developing training sessions for all levels of employees from ticket vendors to management, to educate and sensitize staff on understanding and responding to the needs of people with a variety of disabilities. In order to ensure ongoing training for future employees, he is developing training videos and computer programs that will be used as part of a new employee's orientation.

Assisting as a local link with the disabled community is Eric Bolstad, President and Owner of Absolute Mortgage in Bellvue. He, too, has a firsthand understanding of disabled issues. "I supported the project because I thought it would be a good chance to help the disabled community. I've attended events at the Kingdome in the past and have been very frustrated by the facility. Many times I couldn't even see the scoreboard. The new stadium will be in the forefront of providing access for individuals with disabilities," said Bolstad.

Bolstad originally was involved with the project during the campaign for Referendum # 48. He is a Seahawk fan and a Little League coach.