

# Dole Foundation helping disabled Americans



WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Bob Dole was running late for an appointment with Kansas bankers in 1983 when he stopped for an impromptu meeting with two severely disabled young people seeking his help. Inspired by their example, Dole decided it was time to pay an old debt.

The Kansas Republican traces the birth of the Dole Foundation to that encounter in Dodge City and to the help he received in recovering from wounds suffered in World War II. Five years have passed since the charitable foundation accepted its first contributions.

"Of course I'd like to do better. But it seems to me we're doing quite well," says Dole.

So far, the foundation has handed out about \$2.6 million in grants for training and job programs for the disabled.

But even Dole expresses frustration with the difficulty the foundation faces in securing money for its work on behalf of the disabled.

"It's hard to get people to give money for the disabled," he said in a recent interview.

The foundation, a non-profit group that promotes employment of the disabled, was first announced by Dole in 1983; hired its executive director and received its first contributions a year later; and made its first grants in 1985.

It has raised \$4.4 million through the end of 1988, mostly from corporate contributions. In 1985, the foundation handed out \$257,000 in grants and expects to give out \$900,000 this year.

"It is remarkable for a very young organization and one that is dealing with some very sensitive issues and ones that nobody really cares a lot about," says Jackie Strange, the foundation's executive director. "That's been our most frustrating thing."

The grant program forms the centerpiece of the foundation's work.

"We got started because the Dole Foundation helped us," says Ronda O'Farrell, head of a training program for the disabled in St. Louis called START, Specialized Transitional Activities and Rehabilitation Training.

The program, which received \$20,000 from the foundation in 1986 and \$50,000 in 1988, helps the disabled learn to work as computer operators for data entry and offers a desktop publishing service using disabled workers.

"They have been fantastic. We would not be in an employment program at this level without their help," O'Farrell says of the foundation and its six-member staff.

In addition to the grants, the foundation is moving ahead with several of its own projects ranging from the establishment of job referral services for

pansion of existing activities or creation of new programs.

Dole serves as chairman of the foundation but exercises no direct control over what programs are funded. A board of trustees passes final judgment on all grant applications, which must first be evaluated and recommended by a "technical advisory committee" of experts in disabled issues.

In many respects, Dole's major contribution to the foundation is his national reputation — which he and Ms. Strange admit is a key to the foundation's ability to raise money.

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the disabled and an information clearinghouse for employers to video tapes to help business how to modify workplaces to accommodate disabled employees.

In addition, Ms. Strange says the foundation must help "sensitize the public to the needs of people with disabilities."

"I think that's what I see the foundation as really being a catalyst for change," she says.

"We're beginning to see some changes. It's an evolutionary process and I think we can compare this to the civil rights movement. We know how many years it took for us to actually see any movement for women's rights and for other minorities. That's exactly what we're seeing now. We're on the brink of seeing some really positive things happen in the field of disability."

She and Dole describe the foundation as a leader in its field because it focuses exclusively on job opportunities for the disabled — encouraging the ex-

"Without the name of Sen. Dole, then I think we would have had quite a struggle, much more than now," says Ms. Strange. "We're building on that recognition of his name and it's been very critical as the foundation has grown and we have moved forward."

But Dole emphasizes that he isn't directly involved in soliciting contributions for the foundation. To avoid any potential appearances of conflict of interest, Dole says no contributions for the foundation are accepted in his Senate offices.

As for the next five years, Ms. Strange hopes the foundation can double the amount of grants it provides. To expand its fund-raising, the foundation helped sponsor a celebrity golf tournament in the Washington area this year and plans a tournament this summer in Hutchinson. A charity fashion show of ski wear is planned for New York in the fall.

"We're going to keep plugging away," says Dole. "There's got to be a way to prick the conscience of corporate America."