YSU installs new phone system for deaf

By ROCHELLE LARKIN
Staff Reporter

YSU recently spent over $7,000 on five Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) units to accommodate the hearing impaired in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

This act requires public entities to provide appropriate auxiliary aids, such as TDDs, for effective communication with people who have disabilities.

A TDD looks very much like a word processor with a one-sentence screen. When an incoming call has more letters than what can fit onto the screen, the TDD automatically prints the message. Even if no one responds to the incoming message, the TDD acts as an answering machine and prints the message.

A TDD was installed in the Admissions Office and in the New Student Relations Office in order to try to increase the enrollment of the hearing impaired. Each of these TDDs cost about $500.

YSU also purchased three $2,000 TDD pay phones for the public use which are located in the lobby of Maag Library, in Kilcawley Center by the Buckeye Suite and at northeast Beeghly Center.

A committee, headed by Joseph Scarneccia, assistant director of Administrative Services, chose to install the TDDs in these areas because of the high accessibility to the public and the extended hours of these buildings.

If an emergency situation occurs involving a hearing impaired person after buildings are closed, contact the Campus Police. "The police know where these phones are located, and they know that, in case of an emergency, they can take the hearing impaired person into one of those buildings," Scarneccia said.

"We don't know at this point if Telephone Services needs to install a TDD in Campus Police. We're investigating that now," Scarneccia added.

According to Scarneccia, YSU had to pay for the installation of the TDDs because the phone companies do not provide this service. Also, if a hearing impaired person was hired by YSU and needed a TDD, YSU would be responsible for installing the machine.

Also, concern has been shown by the department where the TDDs were installed. Since the installation of the TDD, the Admissions Office has not received any incoming calls. Dr. George Letchworth, director of Counseling and Health Enhancement Services, said, "This may be because there are only a few hearing impaired students enrolled each quarter. The hearing impaired students may not have had the need to contact either one of these administrative offices."

Other concerns about the TDD stem from the TDD phone numbers not being listed in the Ohio Bell telephone directory. According to Scarneccia, Telephone Services missed the date to enter these numbers in the phone book because the TDD equipment was not yet installed. The numbers will be listed in next year's phone directory.

However, the TDD numbers are listed in YSU's phone directory. The Admissions Office can be reached by TDD at 742-1564. The New Student Relations Office can be reached by TDD at 742-1565. In case of an emergency, the Youngstown Police can be reached by TDD at 747-9324.

The TDD is very simple to use, according to Scarneccia. After the machine is turned on, a light will flash signaling a dial tone. Next, hold down the "select" key, located where the shift key would be on a typewriter, and type the number of the TDD you wish to reach. A light will flash signaling confirmation between the two TDDs and the parties can begin to type a conversation.

To make sure that it would be used properly, the Admissions Office and New Student Relations Office were trained on the TDD. The two offices practiced typing conversations to one another. Gina McHenry of the Admissions Office said that the training was brief, but the staff is ready for any incoming calls.