

PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PEOPLE

by Margaret Houghton

Until quite recently disabled people were socially isolated. Whether their condition was physical, emotional or mental, all met the same attitudes. Whether one carried a stick, or were in a wheelchair all were looked upon as being perhaps somewhat limited mentally and were hardly likely to be invited to a social gathering. However, thanks to the scientists, and dedicated educationists, social attitudes have changed somewhat, since hidden abilities of the disabled have been brought to the



fore making their lives more comfortable.

There always have and probably always will be some who cannot come to terms with the imperfect and dysfunctional human body and will shy away or ignore them altogether. The reason for this lies with those people themselves.

Thus society and the disabled themselves must pull together to

integrate and create a climate of acceptability.

People are encouraged to use different terminology e.g. A person who uses a wheelchair, carries a walking stick, walks with a frame may be called 'physically challenged,' while those with emotional or mental afflictions are 'intellectually challenged.'

Those hearing or using such terminology may develop a more accepting attitude and come to find that many disabled people have capabilities, needs, wants and feelings like anyone else.

Nowadays there is more access to information mainly through TV, the Internet, books and papers enabling disabled people to show their talents and abilities. The fact that they are now included by the media, puts them into the real world with their able bodied counterparts. This surely generates more knowledge that having a disability is by no means separates a person from everyday life.

The most important agenda is now dependent on scientific research to find preventative causes/cures for such physical conditions as Cerebral palsy, Down's Syndrome, blindness, etc.

Time will tell which and how many disabilities can be prevented or even cured. For the sake of families, however loving and patient they may be with their afflicted loved one, it is hoped that much suffering and stress can be alleviated once and for all.