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**KNOWBILITY'S AIR-AUSTIN: HUNDREDS GATHER FOR ONE DAY ACCESSIBLE  
WEB-RAISING  
CONTEST TO BENEFIT DOZENS OF LOCAL CHARITIES**

*Award winning community collaboration led by Dr. Alex Cavalli of UT's ICC Institute*

AUSTIN, Texas, September 30, 2004 — Knowbility, an Austin nonprofit organization focused on barrier-free technology access, is starting off Disability Awareness Month by inviting hundreds of local web developers and dozens of nonprofit organizations to come together on Saturday, October 2 to create web sites that Wen Stephens – and tens of thousands of Americans like her -- will be able to use.

In many ways, Wen is a typical student finding her way through the exciting and sometimes daunting challenges that confront a first-year graduate student at the University of Texas's renowned McCombs Business School. But Wen faces another challenge – she has been blind for several years as a result of kidney disease.

The Accessibility Internet Rally for Austin (AIR-Austin) improves access to the Internet for people with disabilities. By training web developers how to build accessible web sites for people like Wen, the AIR program enables millions of people with disabilities to use the Internet in ways that the rest of us take for granted. “The Web can be a powerful tool as I pursue my MBA degree.” Wen says. “And my screenreading software allows me to access many critical resources conveniently. But until accessible web design techniques are more widely adopted and practiced, I continue to be locked out of too many web sites that contain information vital to my research and studies.”

AIR-Austin is dedicated to teaching web developers how and why to create web sites that can be used by everyone. AIR-Austin teaches accessible web design tools and techniques in the context of a fun, friendly web design competition. Since early August, accessibility experts have trained web developers in the techniques of accessible web design. Volunteers from large companies – like Dell, IBM, and Grande Communications – to smaller ones – like Trademark Media, Coefficient Designs, and SiteCoach – have attended. Once trained, each team of developers was matched to a nonprofit organization. Their goal now is to build fully accessible web site for groups like 4-H Capitol Area, the Austin Project, Umlauf Sculpture Garden, Mind the Gap 4 Kids, and dozens more. On Saturday, they will all come together at the New Horizons Training Center for an intense day of community web-raising. AIR-Austin volunteers take the competition quite seriously as they all want to bring home the trophy for building the most effective – and most accessible – nonprofit web site.

AIR-Austin is a unique collaboration of the widely diverse elements of Austin's creative communities, including the tech sector, the nonprofit community, academia, and

business leaders. Dr. Alex Cavalli of the ICC Institute of the University of Texas chairs the program and provides inspiring and visionary leadership.

“Accessibility techniques designed for persons with disabilities are entering a whole new era and are increasingly easy to implement,” according to Dr. Cavalli. “And research indicates that implementation of these techniques provides a better user experience for 60 percent of all web users. Combining convergent, ubiquitous media and accessible technology, we can overcome disability every day, everywhere, so millions more people can work, shop and learn on an equal basis using the same tools that benefit everyone.”

#### **About AIR-Austin 2004**

**WHAT:** Accessibility Internet Rally (AIR) programs generate public awareness about the need and the benefits of accessible web design for people with disabilities while giving developers the skills necessary to make a difference. The program operates as a web-raising competition (Rally) where volunteer developers first receive hands-on accessibility training and then compete by building web sites that exemplify accessible web development.

**WHEN:** Saturday, October 2, 2004. 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

**WHERE:** New Horizons Training Center, 4515 Seton Center Pkwy, Austin

#### **About Knowbility**

Knowbility is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to improve access to technology opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities. They have won local and national honors for excellence and innovation from the Peter F. Drucker Foundation, the Department of Labor, and the White House. On Wednesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, they were recognized with a “Best of Austin” recognition from the Austin Chronicle.