



A new ad campaign/ 2D.*

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Dick Youngblood

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Youngblood

Will the message get across?

An intriguing public-service ad campaign that begins this week seems almost certain to offend a few people — including some of those it is designed to help.

The campaign, launched for a regional project to promote the employment of disabled people, unabashedly introduces some of the myths and stereotypes about the handicapped — and then attempts to knock them down.

The risk, of course, is whether the ruder will get past the shock to absorb the message.

The folks at Fallon McElligott Rice, when donated the campaign in cooperation with the Minnesota Advertising Federation, recognized the risks involved. But they determined that tiptoeing around the sensitivities would only distract from the impact of the message.

"We decided we couldn't beat the Atlantic — (that) we couldn't change everybody's attitudes," said Bill Donnelly, the agency's director of marketing and services.

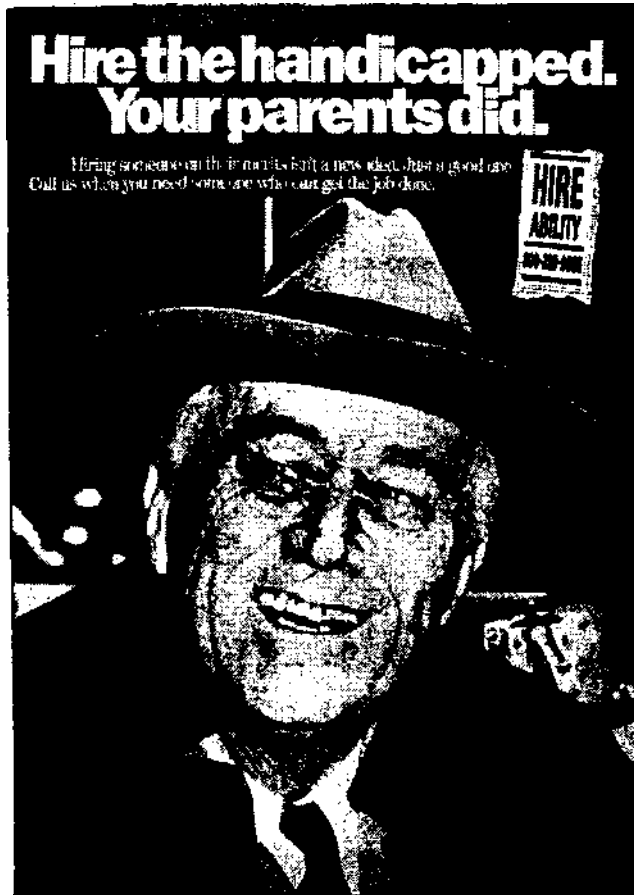
The aim of most of the ads is to "explode through the myths and stereotypes," as creative director Tom McElligott put it, by reminding readers of the accomplished people who have had disabilities.

Thus, the flagship of the ad series shows a picture of Franklin D. Roosevelt, a polio victim, under a headline that reads: "Hire the handicapped. Your parents did." The message: "Hiring someone on their merits isn't a new idea. Just a good one. Call us when you need someone who can get the job done."

A similar ad shows a picture of Beethoven and advises: "Disabilities don't stop people from making contributions. Please don't you."

But several take a different — and potentially more controversial — tack.

One ad features a little man in whiteface and clown suit under a headline that reads: "There have always been career opportunities for disabled people. Unfortunately." The smaller type underneath says, "It's time people with disabilities got some new jobs to pick from. If you have a position open, please call us. We have applicants who can do almost everything."



The flagship of the "Hireability" advertising campaign features* Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had polio.

A second shows Ray Charles under a headline that says: "What do you do if you're disabled and you don't sing or play the piano?" The copy goes on to say, "People with disabilities have talents you probably never realized. We know. We place them everyday in businesses just like yours."

A third — and perhaps the riskiest — entry shows a woman in cap and gown confined to a wheelchair. The headline, which plays off a familiar sexist phrase, reads: "Hire her. She's got great arms." The followup copy urges, "The next time you look at someone with a disability, think of what they can do. Call us and see if we don't have someone who is everything you need."

Each ad contains the logo of the project, which has been dubbed "HireAbility," and a toll-free telephone number (1-800-328-9095).

The campaign was created for a consortium of nonprofit agencies seeking to place disabled workers with businesses in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The program involves the Minnesota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and five "Projects With Industries" groups that receive federal funds to help the disabled find jobs. They are operated by the Sister Kenny Institute, the AFL-CIO, Control Data Corp., Multi Resource Centers and the University of Wisconsin-Stout