

reinvent the automated carwash, and do away with the familiar tunnel-like design. The wash tunnel at Sparkles is constructed entirely of glass, which grants a uniquely non-claustrophobic experience and aesthetic appeal. Michael and his sons also incorporated design elements from American automobiles, including a tower reminiscent of classic taillights shining red at night. The notion of a carwash as an architectural jewel perfectly reflects the sense of adventure and creative verve that Barnes Architects brings to every project.

"I've been in this business for 37 years, and you never know what's coming through that door," says Michael. "From outhouses to penthouses, we've built it all."



Empowerment for the Hearing-Impaired

The hearing-impaired of Fort Worth are lucky to share their community a leading developer of advanced products for the deaf. Barbara Ander, along with her husband, Sidney, founded Compu-TTY to distribute a broad array of inventive and revolutionary products. Originally from New York, Barbara moved to Fort Worth and started her business out of her home in 1982. In the years since, the business has evolved into one of the nation's premier manufacturers of devices for the hearing impaired, and serves both individual customers and massive corporations. Along the way, Barbara has received a plethora of honors for her entrepreneurial achievements. *Business Journal* honored her as one of the Top 100 Women Business Owners, and recognized her company as a Top 50 Manufacturing Business. In 2000, special honors came from Governor George W. Bush, who bestowed Barbara with the Small Employer Award.

Barbara is all too familiar with the travails of the hearing-impaired. Profoundly deaf herself, she recognized a dearth of services and resources in the Fort Worth area upon her arrival. She began to work with deaf children, and started a non-profit to teach typing and communication skills.

"I saw kids with very limited abilities and wanted to do something to help. It built up from there," states Ander. She initially founded Compu-TTY to distribute text telephones and other devices. The Anders later purchased Krown Manufacturing, one of the two major producers of hearing impaired products, and now both manufacture and sell a wide variety of items via the company website and catalogue.

Barbara has benefited from a keen sense of personal ingenuity in the development of new products. She describes it as a recognition of problems or difficulties, and how they can be solved. For example, as a deaf mother, she struggled with her inability to hear her children cry in the night. To address this problem, she developed the KA300 Wireless Alarm Monitoring System. This system allows hearing-impaired individuals to attach a transmitter to any kind of audible device, such as a smoke alarm or baby monitor. When the transmitter detects a sound, it signals to both a bed shaker receiver and LED flashers. A complementary device, the KA1000 Dual Alarm Clock, also has LEDs and a bed shaker, and comes equipped with a buzzer that can sound at up to 95dB.

The KA1000 Dual Alarm Clock exemplifies a little known effect of hearing-impaired products that Barbara takes pride in.

"Things made for the hearing-impaired become universal," says Debbie Anders, who, along with her sister, Alexis, now works with her mother. Closed captioning, for example, though developed for the hearing-impaired, now enjoys universal applicability in noisy environments like sports bars. The KA1000 has become popular among college students, for whom traditional alarm clocks often do not suffice.

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 opened up new worlds for the Anders' business. Krown Manufacturing and Compu-TTY filled a need among corporations for guidance to meet the new legislative standards. In addition to this, the ADA provided a greater general awareness toward the hearing-impaired and those otherwise disabled. In Fort Worth, the Anders work with local agencies, and also supply hearing-impaired individuals who qualify for free devices through Texas' STAP program. Overall, it's important to Barbara that the hearing-impaired understand the variety of resources now available to them.

"When some people lose their hearing, they begin to isolate," says Barbara. "It's important for people to realize that there are a lot of services and products to help you."

Debbie characterizes her mother's efforts on behalf of the hearing-impaired in striking terms.

"The way she sees the world, there are no barriers. If a barrier exists, she will break it. She dreams up these products and makes them a reality. She does not take 'no' for an answer."