Blindness Cont. From /PG. 1

as theirs," said Amber.

Amber loves to go out, dance and go to
the movies. "We may not be able to see
what's on the screen, but we can still enjoy
the movie because we can hear what is
happening and sighted friends usually fill in
by whispering to us a description of action
scenes," Amher said. "We love to have as
much fun as everyone else. We just don't
have the opportunity because people seem to
feel uncomfortable about talking to us
and asking us if we'd like to get together
to hang out," she added.

David and Amber are not the only blind
students on campus, but they are seldom
seen spending time chatting with other
students. It might seem strange that even
though they often feel excluded, they are
not interested in limiting their circle of
friends to students with disabilities. "We
don't want to limit our friendships because
we like to select friends who are interesting
and have lots of things in common with us.
We are just as unique in our interests,
abilities and goals as any cross section of
students," Amher said. "If we just gather
together with other disabled students and
do not expand our circle of friends, we will
be extremely isolated and unprepared to fit
into the mainstream of life. We want to
expand, to go out and try to meet other
people with sight, other students who also
attend DBCC," Amber explained.

For Amber Wardell, the relationship they
have with their guide dogs, Stuart and
Rosie, is extremely important. The bond
between person and dog is incredible.
"When I am in a bad mood, Stewart
understands, and he will try to make me
happy or kiss me," Amher said.

Everyone is enthralled with guide dogs,
and people want to pet them. However,
when guide dogs are wearing the harness,
this means they are working and should
never be petted. Friendly, well-meaning
pats can confuse or distract the guide
dog.

Like David Bruzos, the majority of blind
people still use a white cane for travel
purposes. This is often a matter of
convenience. David can go home, prop his
cane in a corner and go on about his
business. On the other hand, Amber has to
feed and groom Stewart and take him for
long walks to make certain that he gets
enough exercise. Choosing whether to use a
cane or a guide dog is strictly a personal
preference.

Both David and Amber live by
themselves, and every day they manage to
overcome obstacles. They strive for their
dreams, for a better life, and for happiness
like everyone else. It is important for all
students to feel welcome and comfortable
at DBCC. A friendly greeting can make a
big difference. It is helpful to state your
name when you say hello to visually
impaired people because they cannot
pinpoint the voice of everyone they meet.
For example, it is helpful to say something
like, "Hi, Amber! I'm Camelia from your
English class. How are you today?" When
you begin to know the visually impaired
students on campus, you will discover that
they are just like us.

Amber dreams of one day working in the
field of communications, perhaps
advertising or journalism. David has not yet
decided on his future career goal.
However, he is inclined towards
psychology or law.

Amber and David feel they have had
understanding teachers for the most part.
Some instructors have never taught a blind
person before. However, they have found
that they are more than willing to help if
they understand what accommodations are
needed. "Teachers often give me extra time
to complete a difficult assignment and I
appreciate their support," Amber said.

In spite of many challenges, David and
Amber succeeded in winning a very
important scholarship. Although they need
double or even triple the time to study or do
their homework, they still manage to obtain
impressive grade point averages. They are
not ashamed to be blind; they are not
ashamed that they are different. "When
people hear that you are blind, they say I'm
sorry as if I am offended. No, I am not
embarrassed that I am blind. I don't need to
be referred to as sightless or vision-
impared. They think the word "blind" is
like some sort of curse for us. There is
definitely nothing to be ashamed of,"
Amber said.

"People react to blindness as if it is dev-
astating. The really sad thing is for blind
people to isolate themselves from the
world. That is the last thing we should do.
Instead, we must get on about the business
of "changing what it means to be blind,"
David concluded.

David and Amber are fighters, and they
feel good about themselves. Their mission
is to help every student feel appreciated
for their unique talents and abilities regardless
of their differences. Every member of the
DBCC family should feel included and
valued in the mainstream of activity at our
college.

Like Helen Keller said, "The best and
most beautiful things in life cannot be seen
or touched, but just felt in the heart."