

## **DR. BENJAMIN J. SOUKUP, JR**

Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to Benjamin J. Soukup, Jr. at its 131st commencement exercises on May 12, 2000, a fitting tribute to a lifelong public servant whose leadership and tireless advocacy have brought to Deaf America a tremendous gift – the Communication Service for the Deaf. CSD is the nation's largest private, non-profit corporation with over 2000 employees in 30 states, 132 grants and contracts, and financial stability for expansion.



Born in Wagner, South Dakota on January 4, 1952, the son of Benjamin J. Soukup, Sr. and Eileen (Kukuk) Soukup, Dr. Soukup received his education at the South Dakota School for the Deaf and graduated in 1969. His higher education background includes stints at Gallaudet, Augustana College, University of Colorado, and Cornell University.

Ben is as close to a self-made man as anyone could possibly be. This astute businessman and quiet leader has devoted his life to making the community a better place for the nation's 28 million deaf and hard of hearing people and he has succeeded beyond normal expectations. He built low income housing for deaf people, fostered national relay services, developed programs on substance abuse and AIDS care, provided legal services, interpreter referral and training, independent living services, job coaching, and other essential services.

On the national level, he served as board member, vice president and president of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and is in demand as a consumer service consultant throughout the country. His diverse background allows him to represent the concerns of deaf and hard of hearing citizens in a clear and concise manner.

Ben has been the recipient of many awards and recognitions at local, state, and national levels too numerous to mention here, including induction into the state of South Dakota Hall of Fame and the national Laurent Clerc Award.

The nation owes Ben a great debt of gratitude for his phenomenal track record of success. He fervently owes his success to the people of CSD, his wife, Monica, his children, Chris, a senior and Student Body Government president at Gallaudet; Nikki, a sophomore and honor student at National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY; and Jonathan, a sophomore at O'Gorman High School in Sioux Falls. Together as a team, they play a key role in justifying CSD's claim to the title, "The beacon of America's cradle-to-grave programs and services for all deaf and hard of hearing people."