



## High Tech Helps Spread Word

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PLANT CITY - The messages were never so clear at an annual religious convention here for worshippers with special needs.

About 1,600 people found it easier to follow services at the fourth consecutive Jehovah's Witnesses convention for the deaf and/or blind - thanks to a new, \$70,000 audio-visual system. The state-of-the-art equipment improved sound and video quality in the denomination's 2,000-seat auditorium off Interstate 4.

The Plant City convention was the last the denomination is holding this year specifically for the deaf and blind. The Aug. 1-3 convention activities were translated by interpreters using sign language and "tactile" communication, touching the hands of impaired people to translate sentences.

In the past, two large video screens and two stationary cameras captured lessons and, in a somewhat mundane display, showed speakers and displayed subtitles.

In the past two months, church administrators installed a new control studio, with all new equipment, including three ceiling-mounted cameras, new video monitors, camera switchers, audio-visual graphics computers, DVD players and map generators. The new control booth and equipment are part of an overall remodeling effort.

Bill Adams, district convention overseer from Miami, said there were three teams of audio-visual volunteers working to make the event more "seamless."

"There's a lot of people working behind the scenes. It's definitely improved the quality of the transmissions of the programs," said Adams, who attends the conventions from Miami with his wife, Janice, who is blind and deaf. "It's easier to attend the programs."

Tyrone and Denise Harper traveled from Marietta, Ga., for this year's convention. Denise, who is blind, said it was her third convention and the best yet, partly because of the new equipment.

"I learn so much about God and the Spirit, and I take home what I learned and pass it on," she said. "I share it with the people."

Jehovah's Witnesses built the assembly hall at 1904 N. Frontage Road about 23 years ago. The facilities include an auditorium and dining hall on a 25-acre campus.

The assembly hall is used throughout the year. This month were for worship services in Portuguese for Brazilians who have moved to the United States.

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