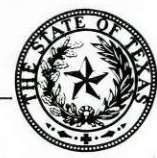


7x D
B1500.6 R229 6:1

NON-CIRCULATING

REPORT

TEXAS STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION



TEXAS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
4800 North Lamar, Austin, Texas 78756 512/459-2500

Vol. VI, No. 1 March 1989



Patricia Meredith

HER WORK ON THE GROUND HELPS KEEP COPTERS IN THE AIR

Patricia Meredith is employed in the Components Shop Division of the Corpus Christi Army Depot as an aircraft hydraulic systems mechanical helper. Each day her job requires that she assemble and disassemble servo units, a part of the helicopter that holds hydraulic fluid. This is an important task, one done in preparation of cleaning, repairing, and examining this piece of equipment. "I examine for scratches, burrs, and nicks — things that have to be removed," she says.

Through the assistance of a closed-circuit television unit, Meredith is able to do a number of things, including reading her mail and favorite recipes and balancing her checkbook. The Commission provided her with a variety of services, including counseling and guidance, orientation and mobility training, and employment assistance. Recently, according to Corpus Christi VR Counselor Jorge Garcia, Meredith received a superior sustained performance award in recognition of her fine work. "I don't feel handicapped," and "I've never been treated as a handicapped person," says the Corpus Christi native. According to one Depot official, Pat Meredith is a success story, one worth passing on.

TOP EMPLOYERS HONORED

In keeping with a practice begun in 1981, the Texas Commission for the Blind has announced the recipients of the 1988 Employer of the Year awards. The top employer in the federal category is the Internal Revenue Service Compliance Center in Austin. In the city/state category, the selectee is the City of Lubbock. The two recipients in the private industry sector are Church's Fried Chicken in San Antonio (large employer) and C & H Advertising in Nederland (small employer).

These employers were recognized for their outstanding efforts to enhance the independence of persons who are blind through employment opportunities. Nominations for the awards were received from Commission staff throughout the state, and the agency's governing board made the final selections in November.

INSIDE

- Technology Access
- "504 Day"
- IN BRIEF
- Deaf/Blind Task Force News
- New Service Announced
- Tips for Cab Drivers
- NOTES OF APPRECIATION

A Word from the Director

As this issue of REPORT is being prepared for press, we are involved in several important projects that will impact on services to Texans who are blind. In reviewing the past fiscal year, we note that there have been significant changes in services offered to agency clients. We are also actively involved in the current legislative session.

Some of the changes in our services, such as the technology program for selected school children, are much like investing money and expecting an increased return in future years. We may not see an immediate return, but future years will reflect young persons entering the work force better prepared to meet the challenges society has to offer. Other changes have made services available to persons who otherwise may not have had the benefit of vocational rehabilitation services.

This year began with complex issues facing the legislature such as prisons and school funding. The major challenge to the Commission is that of securing adequate funding to continue the provision of services at expanded levels in our programs for children and working-age adults, and to allow for the badly needed expansion in services to blind individuals who are now beyond working age or are physically unable to be in the work force. Most of these individuals contributed to the support of many tax-supported programs during their working years and now need assistance to continue to live independently and with dignity. Commission board members and staff will be doing our best to present these needs to the legislators for their positive consideration and action.

We are also working closely with The University of Texas at Austin's Department of Special Education on workshops geared for school teachers who may have a child who is blind or visually impaired in their classrooms. In an attempt to address the shortage of qualified teachers for these children in our state, we are also developing television public service announcements for statewide distribution. I expect great results from both of these efforts.

As always, I welcome any comments you might have regarding these matters.

Sincerely,



Pat D. Westbrook
Executive Director

TIPS FOR CAB DRIVERS

A poster designed to offer valuable tips to professional cab drivers on how best to assist their passengers who are blind or visually impaired has been prepared by the Commission. Developed as a public service by the agency's Consumer Advisory Committee, the poster is being distributed to cab companies across the state. Among the "tips" included in the poster are: (1) Talk directly to your passenger, even if accompanied by a sighted person; (2) Be specific when giving directions; and (3) When giving out change, remember to identify the denomination of the bills.

STEERING COMMITTEE WILL DEVELOP STATE PLAN

A 15-member steering committee responsible for formulating recommendations from consumers across the state into a state plan that will meet the technology-related needs of Texans with disabilities has been named. Executive Director Pat Westbrook recommended Charles Raeke of Austin, David Kennison of Houston, and Mrs. Joe Hartman of Austin to the panel. Working with the Texas Rehabilitation Commission on seeking funds under the Technology Related Assistance for Individuals With Disabilities Act of 1988, the Commission has been actively involved in seeking input regarding assistive technology from citizens who are blind and visually impaired. The new law requires a demonstration and innovative projects program to establish model projects, a loan program, and applied research and development.

Texas will be among the states competing for federal funds under this act which is aimed at removing barriers to accessing assistive technology. It is anticipated that a state plan will be developed by May 1 and a federal grant application submitted by June 1.

THIRD NOTICE

If you wish to continue receiving the REPORT, Texas law requires that you notify us in writing. Your name will be removed from the mailing list if you do not do so. To remain on the mailing list merely clip your mailing address label and return it to our Public Information Office. Thank you for your cooperation.

IN BRIEF

- The Lighthouse of Houston will soon open a 40-unit apartment Lighthouse Living Center No. 2, designed for adults who are disabled. The one- and two-bedroom apartments feature all-electric kitchens, carpeting, and mini-blinds.
- A new training program for professionals in the field of blindness who have lost useful vision will be offered at the Carroll Center for the Blind May 29-June 23. "Professionals Deserve Help Too" will include concentrated training in mobility, personal management, communications, and an introspective retreat. For more information, contact Margaret Cleary, Carroll Center for the Blind, 770 Centre St., Newton, MA 02158.

Continued on the following page

THE GIFT LIES IN THE GIVING

More than \$900 was raised for the Commission's Blind and Visually Impaired Children's Program during a recent performance of "The Night Before Christmas." Penguin Productions, a children's theatre group, performed the play on December 12 in Crockett. Hundreds of local citizens packed the local high school gym for an entertaining evening which also featured music by the Jordan School Choir and the Barber Shoppers Quartet. Susie Marshall, Children's Program Case-worker in Lufkin, presented an overview of the Commission's services for children who are blind and visually impaired. A special note of thanks goes out to Bryan Lake and Dr. J.P. Walker of Crockett for their efforts in making this event possible.



IRS EXPANDS JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGENCY CLIENTS

For more than two years, officials with the Internal Revenue Service Compliance Center in Austin have been working with the Commission to develop new job areas that could be performed by persons who are blind and visually impaired. As a result of a pilot project developed by the IRS, agency clients have been hired as computer programmers, tax examiners, telephone tax assistants, and computer operators.

On December 22, Commission Chairman Lewis R. Timberlake acknowledged the exemplary efforts of the IRS with the presentation of an Employer of the Year award. Speaking before a group of IRS supervisors and some of the agency clients working at the Compliance Center, Timberlake praised the IRS for their commitment and dedication to expanding career opportunities for persons who are blind.

Pictured above are Chairman Timberlake (l.) as he presents a special plaque to Robert AhNee, Director of the IRS Compliance Center.

TASK FORCE HONORS AGENCIES

Executive Director Pat D. Westbrook was one of three agency heads honored during a recent meeting of the Interagency Task Force For Future Services to Deaf-Blind held at the Commission's administrative offices. Presented with a certificate of appreciation by Task Force Co-Chairperson Pat McCallum, Westbrook was recognized for his personal commitment and emphasis on increased service delivery for persons who are deaf-blind. McCallum also acknowledged the fine work being done by the Commission's Deaf-Blind Unit.

In attendance at the meeting were task force members, agency liaison, and additional honorees Bill Miller, superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind, and Max Arrell, commissioner of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

STATE COMPTROLLER UNVEILS NEW SERVICE

Bob Bullock, State Comptroller, has announced the establishment of a new service for taxpayers who are blind or visually impaired. Beginning March 16, these citizens may ask to be telephoned and offered tax assistance if time-sensitive information is being sent to them from the Comptroller's Office. The new service will allow persons who are blind to resolve important tax-related issues within the time limits set by law. Representatives from the Comptroller's Office have met with Executive Director Pat Westbrook to explore ways of expanding their services to benefit persons who are blind. In addition to the new service, various publications will be made available in braille through the State Library and some materials may be produced on audio tapes. Anyone interested in learning more about this matter should contact the nearest Comptroller's field office or call toll-free 1-800-252-5555.

COMMISSION REACHES OUT TO EDUCATORS

The first in a series of workshops designed to introduce regular educators in the school system to blindness and visual impairment was held March 4 in McAllen. "So You Have a Child With a Visual Disability in Your Classroom..." was presented by faculty from The University of Texas' Department of Special Education in cooperation with the Commission. The workshop included participatory activities, simulations, and discussions. Additional workshops are planned for other parts of the state in the coming months.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Due to some unexpected delays in printing, the December issue of REPORT was not distributed. We've decided to add some timely information and combine the last issue with this newsletter.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT UPDATE

The Commission has awarded grants to the Tarrant County Association for the Blind, El Paso Lighthouse for the Blind, Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind, and the Beacon Lighthouse for the Blind in Wichita Falls for supported employment services. The purpose of each award is to expand employment opportunities for persons who are blind or visually impaired and for whom competitive employment has not been a viable option. Supported employment services include the use of a "job coach" who will assist the person to become stable on the job and then gradually reduce their involvement. By awarding these grants, the Commission is attempting to provide its clients with supported employment opportunities on a statewide basis.

In a related story, Keith Kitchens, Supported Employment Coordinator for the Commission, has been invited to address a national conference in Mississippi in late March. Kitchens will be speaking on "Supported Employment Issues: An Agency Perspective."

IN BRIEF *continued*

- The Texas Commission for the Blind, along with numerous other agencies and groups in Austin, is cosponsoring an "Austin Area Opportunity Fair for the Disabled" April 21. Participants will have an opportunity to interview for jobs, participate in simulated interviews, examine adaptive and assistive technology, and gather information on various services.
- The American Foundation for the Blind offers ten grants and scholarships for college students who are blind and visually impaired. For details on eligibility and application requirements, write or call Leslye Piqueras, Scholarship Coordinator, AFB, 15 W. 16th St., New York, NY 10011; (202) 630-2063. Qualified candidates must apply by June 1, 1989.
- The Texas Commission for the Blind, in conjunction with The University of Texas at Austin's Department of Special Education, is developing two 30-second television public service announcements for statewide distribution. The spots are aimed at recruiting qualified teachers to work with children who are blind and visually impaired.

REPORT is an official publication of the Texas Commission for the Blind. It is available free of charge to any individual requesting to be placed on the mailing list. News articles should be forwarded to the Public Information Office, P.O. Box 12866, Austin, Texas 78711 or call 512/459-2612. This newsletter is available on tape upon request. Toll-free number is **1-800-252-5204**.

Lewis R. Timberlake, Chairman
Pat D. Westbrook, Executive Director
Rolando Garza, Editor
Jean Wakefield, Editorial Assistant





Commission employees Marta Solis and Diana Gonzalez accompany Guadalupe de Anda on a recent shopping trip.

Photo Credit: *Laredo Morning Times*

LIVING THE GOLDEN YEARS

For Guadalupe de Anda of Laredo, independence is not something one talks about. Independence is something practiced daily, despite limitations. Independence for 71-year-old de Anda means living in her own home, doing her own cooking and cleaning, and being a discriminating shopper while out on a shopping trip. Although she lost most of her vision five years ago as a result of complications from a 40-year struggle with diabetes, de Anda remains active and, as one reporter characterized her in a recent article, "sprightly."

With a cheerful and good-natured approach to life and its many challenges, Guadalupe has learned to adjust to her diabetes and loss of vision. "The Texas Commission for the Blind taught me how to do all the everyday things you need to do," she says. "They (Commission staff) are very kind and I have learned so much from them. For example, they told me about how to order groceries and insulin from HEB, how to use the phone, how to dial."

When it comes to shopping, de Anda really asserts her skills and determination. She is "very picky about brands" because she does her own cleaning and cooking and is loyal to brands she trusts. "I do my own laundry and I don't want to get a soap that foams too much, because then it will make a mess and I'll have to clean up," says de Anda.

"THE TEXAS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND TAUGHT ME HOW TO DO ALL THE EVERYDAY THINGS YOU NEED TO DO... I HAVE LEARNED SO MUCH FROM THEM."

CONFERENCE WILL FOCUS ON CURRENT TRENDS

Julie Kay, one of the supervisors of the Commission's Blind and Visually Impaired Children's Program, will represent the agency at the West Texas Council of Service Providers Semi-Annual Conference April 11 in Wichita Falls. Kay will provide an overview of the Commission's services and programs in the area of transition. The theme for this year's gathering is "Current Trends in Vocational Services."

PETERS WILL KEYNOTE "504 DAY" IN DALLAS

Commission member Dr. Robert K. Peters, III, of Tyler will deliver the keynote address at the annual "504 Day" observation slated for April 28 in Dallas. Commission Executive Director Pat Westbrook will also be on hand to deliver opening comments regarding the Commission's role. This year's program will also include an update on the Americans With Disabilities Act by Kent Waldrep, Chairman of the Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons; a signed performance by the Callier Deaf Theatre; exhibits; sports demonstrations; and a forum on AIDS.

NOTES OF APPRECIATION

"I have known Cathy for approximately a year and a half while I worked at Beaumont Eye Associates. Cathy was an unusually hard-working and industrious caseworker for the Blind and Visually Impaired Children's Program. She was compulsive about getting the very best care for the children, both medically and through the school system. She was gentle, but firm when dealing with her clients. She was always accessible and understanding as well."

(Excerpts from a letter to a supervisor in the Blind and Visually Impaired Children's Program regarding CATHY McCANN, former caseworker in Beaumont.)

"I truly appreciate each and everyone of you. Your dedication and efforts are to be forever admired. But most of all, thanks for everything you did for my son during his stay."

(From a parent of a client who received services at the agency's Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center in Austin.)

"In this fast-paced lane that life seems to be traveling, it is rare to find people who care enough about others to put themselves out. It would have been so easy to tell the stranger on the phone that nothing could be done, but Barbara went that extra step for someone else and cared enough to make a few calls and find the cassette player... The Blind Commission should count it an honor to have a conscientious and caring person like her within its ranks of employees."

(Comments from a parent regarding Austin VR Teacher BARBARA BOLTON.)

"I would like to take this time to thank your organization especially Doris Henderson for all your help and kindness. Doris was the highlight of my life when I could show her each time what I had accomplished that week... Doris is so understanding, kind and very helpful... You may not realize how important your organization is to the ones who need it. I cannot say enough good things about Doris..."

(Comments from a client regarding the Commission and Dallas VR Teacher DORIS HENDERSON of Dallas.)

"Your organization was terrific! I've been in New York three and one-half months now... In Texas, I had such wonderful treatment. All due to Margaret Maxwell and Jorge Garcia... Again, keep up the good work. You all get a gold star from me."

(Excerpts from a letter to Executive Director Pat Westbrook regarding Corpus Christi staff members MARGARET MAXWELL and JORGE GARCIA.)

"I was wanting to call on you and thank you and through you, the Commission, for the timely and invaluable help I received in connection with my eye affliction. And I am glad and happy that the help has resulted in restoring my eyesight at least in one eye..."

While as a recipient of the Commission's help, I should have been the one to thank you. But in the tradition of a noble institution run by persons with noble minds, your letter expresses pleasure in rendering service to one in need. In this mundane world, it is really rare for the giver to be thankful to the recipient for the opportunity to render services..."

(Excerpts from a letter written to a Commission employee.)

REPORT



TEXAS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
Administrative Office Building
4800 North Lamar, Austin, Texas 78756

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage Paid
Austin, Texas
Permit No. 931

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED