

Vol. 21 No. 2 February 1998

trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission

*Dreams really
can come true!...*

*And in Randy Souders' case, TRC helped
him reach his dream after a diving accident
left him quadriplegic.*

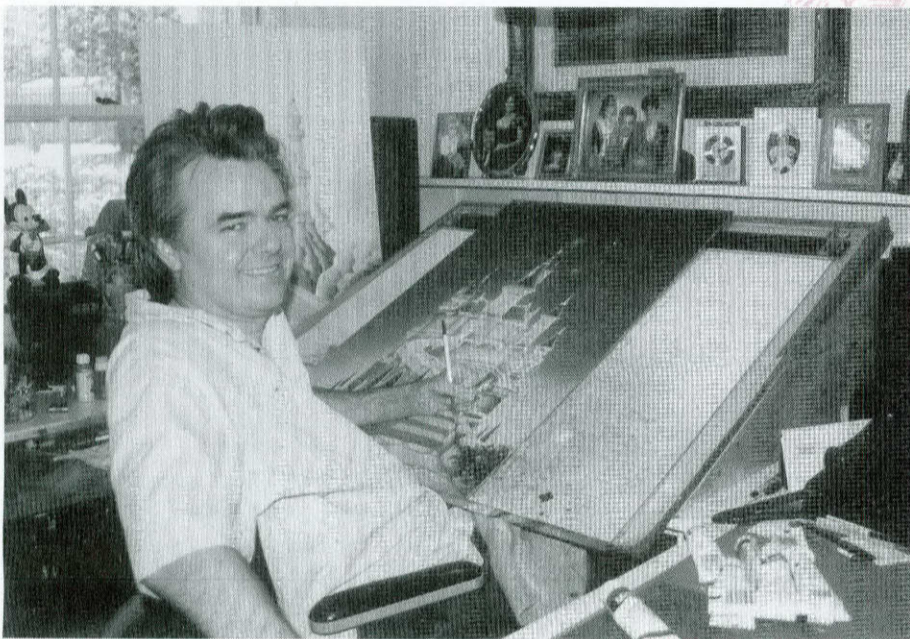
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Texas Rehabilitation
Commission
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78751-2399
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Reclaiming the dream...



You've heard the expression that dreams really can come true. As a young boy who loved to draw and paint, Randy Souder believed his dream to be an artist would come true someday. His family and friends knew he had a special gift. But, when he was 17, a diving accident threatened to put his dream out of reach.

Like most 17-year-old boys, Randy enjoyed athletics and getting out with his friends. He and some friends slipped off to the "old watering hole" for an afternoon swim. When Randy dived into the cool lake, as he had done many times before, he hit his head on something hidden beneath the murky waters. Suddenly, he was floating helplessly underwater and couldn't move his arms or legs. He tried to scream, but water gushed into his mouth. Within minutes someone grabbed him and pulled him up. But when he surfaced, Randy was in a different world.

In the hospital, Randy and his family were told a C-3 spinal-cord injury would leave him quadriplegic. "My sense of personal identity and self-esteem were totally shot," recalled Randy. "At 17, guys think they are indestructible. Now I was totally dependent on others for my most basic physical needs. It was like I had literally been ripped out of a body that worked and locked inside another one that didn't."

After several months in the hospital and facing the emotional trauma of losing his independence, a young physical therapist encouraged Randy to paint. "I had given up my dream of being an artist because I couldn't even hold a pencil," relayed Randy. "So, how could she expect me to paint!"

still there. As if it were magic, Randy reclaimed his special dream — a dream that would play a vital part of his recovery and his future.

Randy talked to his TRC counselor about his dream, and with TRC's help, he went to college and graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a degree in fine arts. After graduation, TRC helped him begin his career as an independent artist. "My counselor encouraged me and gave me the critical support I needed to pursue a career in art," says Randy. "I've been self-employed since 1978 and create artworks for Walt Disney, MGM, Turner Entertainment, State Farm, Maxwell House, and many more."

Today Randy paints about 10 original paintings a year and owns his own gallery where he publishes "limited edition" prints that are collected by thousands of people worldwide. He believes that his art provided the motivation he needed to get better after his accident. "I know that the arts have a tremendous power to heal," says Randy. "Ironically, the rehabilitation centers and hospitals I was a patient in 25 years ago are now decorated with my works. I hope my works can inspire others facing similar obstacles."

Randy also helps others who are similarly disabled or disadvantaged to realize the positive healing benefits the arts offer. He serves on the national board of directors of Very Special Arts (VSA), an organization which provides arts programming to 3.5 million people with disabilities in the United States and 86 countries worldwide. The VSA's mission is to promote arts, education and

The physical therapist forcibly strapped a paintbrush to Randy's hand. Not having the energy to argue, he began to manipulate the paintbrush by moving his upper body and shoulder. Much to his surprise, Randy painted a Christmas tree — and it looked pretty good. The accident had snatched his independence, but only for a while. Randy's special artistic ability was

creative expression for children, youth and adults with disabilities and represent emerging and professional artists with disabilities from around the country.

Mailing Address:

RANDY SOUDERS
52 Chelsea Dr.
Edgecliff Village, Texas 76134-1915

You can see some of Randy's special art by visiting his website at <http://www.randysouders.com> or read about VSA on their website <http://www.vsarts.org>

Letters...Letters...Letters...

Below is an excerpt of a letter received by Disability Examiner Guy Fletcher from a claimant:

Mr. Fletcher has always been a compassionate person in a business manner. He is always prompt in answering his messages. He takes time to explain procedures and listened to me even when I rattled on and needed to talk to another person.

If more people treated one another with the understanding of Guy Fletcher, this would be a better world. ∞

Mike Jones, disability examiner, received a letter from a claimant praising his courtesy:

I praise Mike Jones on his courtesy in handling my case. While so I realized I didn't want to be labeled disabled. I learned a lesson. I am capable of many things. ...God bless Mike Jones, he needs more praise. ∞

Here is an excerpt of a letter DE Kay Watson received from the wife of a claimant:

Thank you for being so kind on the phone. When one cares for a person with disabilities, it is sometimes painful when people ask questions about when do you think he will recover, or will he recover, etc. You were very gentle with your questioning. — Again, THANK YOU! ∞

We're doing our part...

Many of us help the recycling effort by putting materials in a recycling bin or at a drop-off center. What some of us don't realize, however, is that another important step to keep recycling working is to buy products made from recycled content materials.

It is common knowledge that the toner cartridges we use in our copiers may be recycled, but did you know your briefcase may also be made from recycled material? How about the ball-point pen you are writing with? Or your desk trays and pencil cups? There are a lot of products made from recycled materials that most of us just don't think about.

Purchasing recycled content products helps maintain market demand for recyclables and ensures the continuation of recycling programs everywhere. If consumers purchase more products with recycled content, manufacturers will continue to use it in their products and expand the usage to even more products.

A bill passed by the Texas Legislature in 1993 (S.B. 1051) charged the General Land Office to promote recycled products and required that government

agencies spend at least 8 percent of their consumable purchasing budgets each year on recycled or environmentally sensitive products. Last year, state government spent over \$70 million on recycled products. And TRC is doing its share. We reported \$154,059 of our total consumable budget of \$1,415,836 (10.9 percent) was spent on recycled products.

The purchasing power of state government has been a key factor in reducing landfills and bringing Texas over 20,000 manufacturing jobs in industries using recycled materials to make new products. So Texas government is doing its part.

But it is important for all of us to do our part — at home and at work — to send a message to manufacturers. When businesses and individuals "Buy Recycled," they assure manufacturers that a consistent, long-term demand exists for the recycled products.

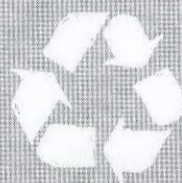
The next time you purchase something or start to toss that can into the trash, remember to do your part to think globally, but act locally.

It's in our own best interest to protect human health and safeguard the natural environment.

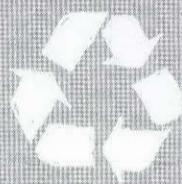
Check out our online edition for Internet links on recycling
<http://www.trcnet/trctoday/online.html>

Do you know why the recycling symbol has three chasing arrows?

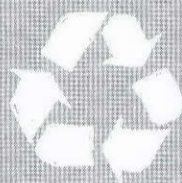
Each arrow represents one step in the three step process that completes the recycling loop.



1 The first step is collection. This is when you put your recyclable materials into your curbside recycling bin or take it to a local drop-off center. The collected materials are then prepared to be marketed and are sold to a manufacturing facility.



2 The manufacturing process is the second arrow in the recycling symbol. The recyclable materials are converted into new products and shipped to stores across the country to be placed on shelves as new consumer goods.



3 The third step is where you, the consumer, purchase products made with recycled content. When you "Buy Recycled," you complete the recycling loop.

Maximizers

These employees received 12 Maximizers in January

REGION 5

Emma Rodriguez

Delia Bazan

Josie Contreras

Tina Negrete

Computers available for client use

The 1990s will go down as the decade for recycling. For TRC and other state agencies, recycling is going far beyond re-use of pens, paper and toner.

Last month, we reported that installing upgraded LAN equipment will help software applications run faster and better, as well as put TRC in good shape for the year 2000. Due to that effort, at least 100 TRC computers will be available for client use.

"These are still very good computers and will serve quite well for many client needs," says John Davis, associate commissioner for Automated Services. "We have gotten a lot of good use out of these machines, and it's gratifying to know that we will continue to see

a good investment for this equipment."

In addition, other agencies are also donating computers for client use. TRC just received 33 computers from Texas Department of Health, 58 computers from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, and 150 computers from Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. The Christina Foundation and Lotus Corporation have also donated 1,500 copies of Lotus products for use on these computers.

"These computers might not work for people who need state-of-the-art equipment," says Steve Schoen, program specialist who coordinates this effort. "But they work very well for a large number of our clients with standard

computer needs."

"We hope counselors take advantage of this opportunity to serve our clients and stretch taxpayer dollars farther," says Mary Sconci-Wolfe, deputy commissioner for Field Operations/External Affairs. "It's a smart way to do business."

Counselors who are interested in these computers can call Jim Smith, a vendor who refurbishes the machines before re-use, at (512) 424-4824. Although the computers are free, there is a \$60 charge for refurbishing.

Reauthorization Update

On Feb. 4, 1998, the U.S. Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee marked up S. 1579, the bill reauthorizing the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The bill enjoyed broad bipartisan support and was voted unanimously out of the committee in less than 45 minutes.

The bill will now go through the process of being scheduled for debate on the Senate floor. With the election season around the corner and a congressional adjournment date tentatively set for Oct. 9, Congress has a lot of work to do before the clock on the second session of the 105th Congress runs out. Time frames for Senate debates, appointments of any conference committees, and final passage remain difficult to estimate at this point. Stay tuned for updates.



TRC Information Services Manager George Schneider (left) explains our RehabSys to Paul Brown (center) from Arkansas and TRC Chief of Staff, Charles Schiesser. Brown is Information Systems supervisor for Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and a member of a team that is evaluating client-service systems nationwide. TRC's automated case-management system (RehabSys) has drawn attention from rehabilitation agencies across the nation. The Arkansas representatives met with TRC staff on Jan. 15 to take an in-depth look at and consider using our system. "Our RehabSys offers the most comprehensive case-management system in the nation," says Jackie Feinberg, business systems project manager. "It is the only system that takes a client from intake to closure and includes purchasing."

Cases expected to pour in at DDS

Last month we told you about increased workloads expected at DDS, and now welfare reform legislation has been finalized. Claims that were being held in the Social Security offices throughout the state pending final outcome of the welfare reform legislation are beginning to pour into TRC DDS.

"The Social Security Administration wants to ensure that children receive their full rights," says a report on the new childhood disability regulations issued by SSA Commissioner Kenneth Apfel on Jan. 17. The report shows that SSA and state DDSs have done a good job of implementing the childhood disability changes, but some problems have been noted in the recent redetermination of childhood disability claims. The report said they plan to correct them

immediately.

TRC DDS' accuracy rates on these cases are 100 percent on continuances and 97 percent on cessations. However, all DDSs throughout the country are being asked to review some of these claims again. The reviews will run March through September. SSA will provide additional training to ensure that all adjudicators nationwide share a common understanding of the new regulations prior to these reviews. Cases to be reviewed will include denials and cessations involving mental retardation, and cessations involving speech and language delay, unlisted diagnoses, insufficient medical evidence, or failure to cooperate. This will result in workload increases for disability examiners and disability hearing officers.

Across the State

January 1998

Welcome Aboard

- Rachel Estrada, administrative technician
- Mark Race, M.D., medical director
- Bruce Wood, budget director
- Larry Doty, counselor
- Michael Banegas, counselor
- Brook Dwyer, counselor
- Frank Navarro, counselor
- Rebecca Clark, counselor
- Joseph Mayberry, counselor
- Wanda Collins, counselor
- Cecelia Eudy, administrative technician
- Deirdre Stone, DST
- Michael Roberts, DST
- Stacy Kevin, systems support specialist
- Michael Sanchez, systems support specialist

Retirements

- Geneva King, counselor in the Houston Central Field Office retired with 29 years service.
- Joycennette Johnnican, counselor in the Houston Central Field Office, retired with 29 years of service.

Lucy Woodall, manager of customer service in Central Office, retired after 31 years of service.

J. Alfredo Duarte, program specialist in Central Office, retired with 28 years of service.

VRC Sylvia Perry, Waco Field Office, had 21 years of service upon her retirement.

Congratulations

DDS's Dale Harper was selected as Operations Director for DO 2 and Tom Henderson was selected Operations Director for DO 5.

Deaths

Carolyn Ashford Atchley, RST in the Wichita Falls Field Office, lost her battle with cancer on Saturday, Jan. 17. She had been at the Wichita office for almost 10 years.

Evie Scott, RST in the Stephenville Field Office, passed away on Jan. 13 from complications following cardiac surgery.

Austin Regional Director, Bobby Grant, died unexpectedly on Monday, Jan. 26. He began his 19-year tenure with TRC as a VR counselor in Houston on July 1, 1978.

¿Habla Español?

We heard your requests, and some of our more popular service brochures are now available in Spanish. Here is what is available through SOS:

- ⇒ Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services - #01828A
- ⇒ Deaf/Blind Multihandicapped Services - #1917A
- ⇒ Deaf and/or Hearing Impaired Services - #01863A
- ⇒ Extended Rehabilitation Services - #01895A
- ⇒ Independent Living Services - #01877A
- ⇒ Personal Attendant Services - #1804
- ⇒ Return to Work - #01850A
- ⇒ School Transition - #01827A
- ⇒ Vocational Rehabilitation Program - #01894
- ⇒ Want to Work (English/Spanish) - #01816A
- ⇒ Want to Work - #01846A
- ⇒ Work - #01821A

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Address Service Requested

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Shayla Fleshman, Editor
Prissy Pense, Writing & Photography

Cover illustration
from Randy Souders' original artwork "Sweet Hearts"

Visit us online at
<http://www.trcnet/trctoday/online.html>

State Service Awards - February 1998

10 years	Dixie W. McLeod
Margaret Sobeck	Janice Tucker
Carole Thornton	Ann Green
Charlotte Williams	Melita Jo Harris
Armando Zamarripa	Floradell LaGesse
Lynne M. Sharits	Arturo Lara
Francine Todar-Peters	
Doris Denton	25 years
Jay Johnson	Richard Phelan
Carolina Vega	Virginia Ribar
Evalyn Scott	Gloria Strickhausen
	Frankie Watson
15 years	Carmen Oliva
Leigh Ann Candler	Michael Erickson
Mary Fagan	Tom Henderson
Richard Fagan	Martha Pogue
Michael Finan	Richard Sutherland
Daniel Igoe	Billy Tumlinson
Randall John	
	30 years
20 years	David Stanford
Richmond Holmes	
Hope T. Black	

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