

APR 04 1993

TRC TODAY

TRC TODAY is a newsletter for the employees of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

Vol. 15 No. 3
March 1993

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This was the theme of Capitol Day '93, a rally for community services sponsored by various major Texas disability advocacy organizations. On Wednesday, Feb. 10, people came from all over the state to be part of a rally at the Capitol.

The event drew not only disability advocates but also legislators who reassured the crowd that major cuts in the funding of programs for persons with disabilities would not happen. "No way!" said Sen. Barrientos to the crowd. Keynote speaker, Rep. Elliott Naishtat asked consumers to lobby for new ways for the state to generate revenue, including tax restructuring.

A gimmick of the event was the "Wheel of Misfortune," where program names were placed on balls and spun around. The unlucky losers drawn were those that were in danger of being axed by Legislative Budget Office recommendations.

Some advocates that attended the event were asked why they did so. Here's what they had to say:

"The main thing for me here today is to try and keep people in communities, productive and with dignity."
Ron Cranston

"Maybe the Texas financial debt will be lowered if more people with disabilities could find work. Some of these programs help us do that."
Boyd Kerr

Continued on page 2

DON'T GAMBLE

WITH OUR LIVES



Jim Comstock-Galagas, executive director of Advocacy, rolling the numbers.





Left: The DDS Mass Choir.
Below: Bill Branch playing the blues.



A jammin' jamboree

DDS celebrates Black History Month

Many times yearly celebrations become mechanical or "old hat." Not this one! Every year, a lot of work and effort go into making this an active, animated rejoicing of the traditions and heritage of the African-American culture.

This year, the program for the Fourth Annual DDS Black History Month Celebration featured a wide variety of talents. Gospel singing from the DDS Mass Choir and Jo Carol Moffet was heavenly. The DDS Mass Choir was formed especially for the event. Bill Branch, Unit 3, played a mean blues guitar and showed that he was a comedian as well.

Deep reflections and memories of African-American history were given by Dr. Robert Downs, a retired human relations expert who is now custodian of the Asbury Documentary Exhibition — a priceless archive of papers covering a period of over 150 years. Then, selected narratives were rendered by DDS staff that reminded everyone of just what the celebration is about.

In addition to the program was a display room that featured selections from the Asbury Exhibition on loan for DDS employees.



Terria Frazier-Robinson

"If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated."

— Carter G. Woodson

"There was so much black history before we were born that we need to know about," says Terria Frazier-Robinson, clerical supervisor, Unit 17, who facilitated the event. "Every year we learn more and more about our heritage."

It was Frazier-Robinson's first time to coordinate the event, "The work of committee chairmen and others made things run smoothly. I could not have pulled this together without them."

Gamble *continued from page 1*

"TRC just paid to have my leg operated on. That made a big difference for me in finding a job. This is my way of giving back." *Mike Byan*

"Don't give me that the 'boom time' is over. Spending for Health and Human Services was never in a boom and this issue is far from being over." *Pat McCallum*

After the rally, advocates spent the afternoon visiting legislators to let them know about the effects proposed budget cuts in health and human services would have on Texans with disabilities and their families.

Satisfying statistical results

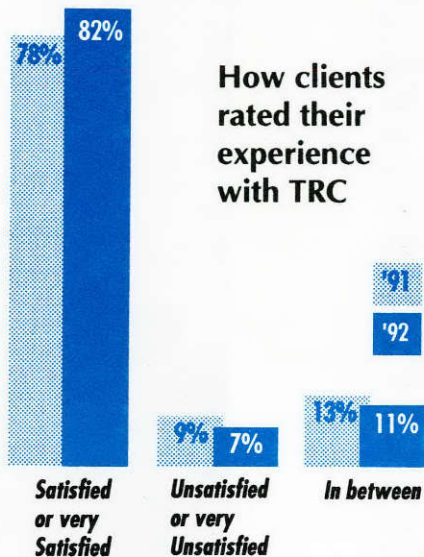
The results for the client satisfaction survey are in and they are good news. They confirm the initial results of the pilot in 1990 and show that, overall,

clients are happy with the service TRC has given them.

Of the 3,418 clients surveyed in a telephone interview, 83 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience with TRC — up 4 percent from 1990. Approximately 7 percent were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied and about 11 percent were in between.

In other questions concerning efficiency in returning phone calls and scheduling appointments, client treatment and involvement in decision-making, results were consistent with previous high marks.

“These results aren’t any surprise. They just confirm what I already knew — that we are doing an outstanding job out in the field,” says Joellen Flores Simmons, deputy commissioner for Rehabilitation Services. “My only advice is to keep up the good work!”



Speaking of quality ...

In January, 15 seasoned counselors and RSTs came to Austin for a special task — to make a video on “Quality Rehabilitation.” What determines quality and how to pass it on were the main topics for this lively free-for-all discussion.

The idea for the video came from TRC’s Quality Committee. “A lot of emphasis has been put on what people say about TRC and how managers evaluate counselors,” says Kay Sitton, counselor, Dallas Northeast Field Office, who was intensely involved in the

project. “We also wanted to address the philosophy of where quality comes from and share this with the field staff.”

The reason these particular employees were selected was that managers and clients have identified them with giving consistent, high-quality performance.

“Making a video like this can be tricky because of the number of people on the stage at once, but Ted Candler, who directed it, did a great job getting people focused,” said Randy Jennings, public infor-



mation director, who was on-camera guiding the group with questions. “In the beginning, I had to draw some people out, but once they got into it and realized they had something to say, they acted like pros.”

Ted Candler, video audio specialist, preparing field staff for lights, camera, action.

On the Senate side

The Senate Finance Committee voted to restore funding to three programs which the LBO had recommended eliminating — Personal Attendant Services, Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped and Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities — with full funding in the Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Program. They also voted to restore state funding for the VR program that would allow TRC to maintain its ability to match about \$26 million dollars in federal funds that would have been lost under the LBO recommendation.

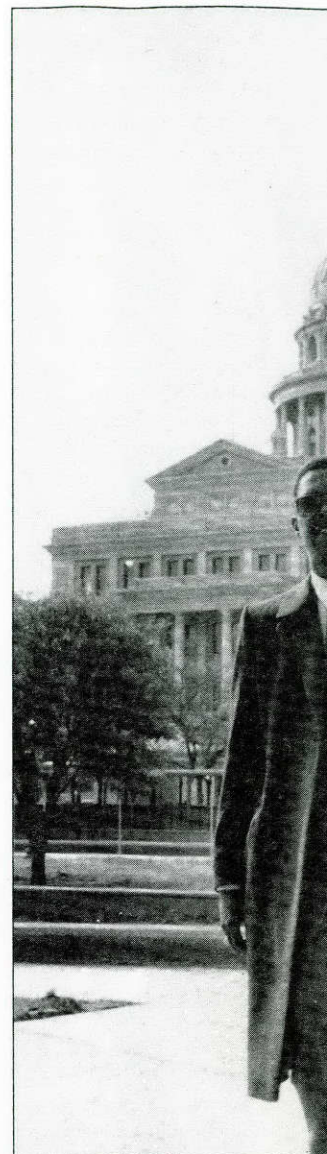
House happenings

Meanwhile, on the House side, a subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee (HAC) got the budget ball rolling with a public hearing on the TRC request. Commissioner Max Arrell presented testimony to the HAC Health and Human Services Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Elton Bomer. In testimony similar to what he gave to the Senate, Arrell highlighted the devastating effects of the LBO recommendation.

Approximately 20 consumers showed up and endured a long, tedious day to give personal stories about the significance of TRC services. “Without their testimony,” says Arrell, “it would be hard for legislators to see us as anything other than another state agency. They have done TRC a great service.”

So what's next?

The next step in the House is markup by the full Appropriations Committee. After that, if there are any differences in the House and Senate version of the appropriation bill, it goes to a conference committee for compromise ... and after that, it goes back to both the House and the Senate for confirmation. It sounds like a long process, but sometimes all this can happen quickly. So, stay tuned.



Rick Coaxum, legislative and

THE LEGISLATURE has maintained its fast and furious pace that, as far as Health and Human Services go, the ball game was over on March 1. Events are unfolding fast, but at the time of this writing

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES



lyst, covering his beat.

s pace. Many speculate
ll be over by the end of
g, here's where we stand ...

DATE

Behind the scenes

Staff from Financial and Planning Services provides a key link from TRC to the state Capitol. To prepare TRC to benefit from the fast pace and uncertain workings of the Legislature not only requires rapid response but also early and special preparation, usually behind the scenes.

A glimpse of what those preparations are:

"The session began in January, but our meetings with state officials and those preparing budget recommendations began months ago," says Charles Harrison, deputy commissioner for Financial and Planning Services. "In all stages, we have to be ready to answer in-depth questions on just about every facet of this agency that deals with money ... because what are becoming the big issues are cost effectiveness of programs and how we can maximize federal funds."

Many employees in the department work holidays, weekends and long hours to prepare for and attend relevant state proceedings so that TRC is kept informed of capitol goings-on. These state meetings can be dull and tiresome — sometimes lasting until midnight.



Charles Harrison, deputy commissioner for Financial and Planning Services, preparing for a legislative hearing.

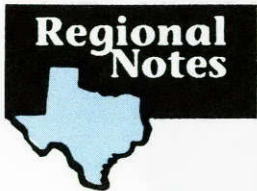
"The first year I did this it was tough, I was afraid to even go to the restroom or grab a bite to eat, thinking something might happen while I was away," says Rick Coaxum, legislative analyst. "Now I know what to look for and how to come prepared for a long night." The evidence for this preparation is the large, filled briefcase he carries with him.

Bill tracking is another part of every legislative session where thousands of bills are introduced with varying possible effects on TRC operations. Through a computerized program nicknamed "BATWIN," the capacity for every bill to be analyzed for TRC relevance and tracked for appropriate action by commission staff is possible.

"Making sense out of the avalanche of bills introduced is absolutely necessary," says Ellen Schroeder, information analyst manager. "This program allows us to do that."

All of this work is typically invisible for most employees. At the end of the legislative session, when TRC fares better than most agencies, few realize the hard labor of Financial and Planning Services and other "behind the scenes" departments that make this happen.

Harrison is quick to remind, however, that all the "behind the scenes" work would be for naught if it wasn't for the "front line" dedication of the field staff that takes place all year long.



Region I

Nancy Veazey was selected as RST in the Plainview Field Office.

Roy Kjosa was selected as human resources director in the Lubbock Regional Office.

Diana Najera was selected as RST in the El Paso East Field Office.

Region II

Melba Funke was selected as counselor in the Arlington Field Office, transferring from the Fort Worth South Field Office. She has been a counselor with TRC since 1986. Prior to that, she worked for Arkansas Rehabilitation Services as counselor and caseworker for 15 years.

Region III

Janice Ging was selected as MSS in the Bryan East Field Office. She brings

with her much experience from her past job as an RST in the Round Rock Field Office.

Tina Silgero was selected as secretary for the East Austin Field Office. She brings with her experience in providing courtesy services to clients in the Commission.

Yvonne Garcia was selected as regional programs support technician in the regional office. She will be assisting Doug Gullickson in all phases of the regional grants and contracts activities.

Region IV

Helen Theresa Smith was selected as medical services technician in the Houston TIRR Field Office.

Clifford McIlveen was selected as counselor in the Houston South Field Office.

Randolph Byrd was selected as counselor in the Houston Hobby Field Office.

Elaine Tacker will be answering phones on a part-time basis in the Corsicana Field Office.

Keith Thomas was selected as RST for Independent Living Services in the Houston Central Field Office. He brings with him experience in case-work and service delivery including manual communication skills.

Region V

Marva Patterson was selected as RST in the San Antonio Northeast Field Office.

Region VI

Kelly Yarbrough was selected as counselor in the Dallas Northwest Field Office. She transferred from El Paso.

DDS

The winners for the DDS Chili Cookoff, for the American Heart Association, were Jean Wortham, first place, Holly Houser, second place, and Steve Schkade, third place. Heartburn finished fourth.

Central Office

Gene Raiford died Sunday, Feb. 7. She was a long-time employee for TRC as a program specialist in physical restoration.

Clare Pramuk, senior planner, is on a temporary assignment with the Health and Human Services Commission and is working to develop an information services strategic plan until mid-summer.

Service AWARDS February 1993

Region III

15 years
Rossett Gonzales
20 years
Sue Mosley
25 years
David Stanford

Region IV

10 years
Helen Mireles
15 years
Melba Jean Mize
20 years
Frankie Watson
Linda Shaw

Region V

15 years
William Glenn
20 years
Carmen Solis

Region VI

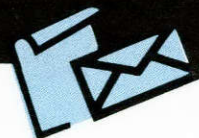
15 years
Hope Black
Ann Green

DDS

10 years
Michael Finan
Mary Fagan
Richard Fagan
Steven Heath
Daniel Igoe
15 years
Helen Pillack
William Smith
20 years
Michael Erickson

Central Office

10 years
Leigh Ann Meissner
15 years
Loretta Calihan
David Jourdan
Barbara Duve
20 years
Ed Buffaloe



Cause for Applause

A portion of a letter written to Linda Daniel, supervisor, Unit 16, regarding DE Kathy Silberman's exemplary performance in this claim:

In a few months, particularly when the claimant's case was to be scrapped, Kathy Silberman, through mountains of paperwork, saw and sensed something that required more than office savvy. She alienated herself from skepticism and applied her experience and reliable intuition into a resourceful communication with us to induce timely reports and follow-ups.

Through Kathy we found a warm, intelligent, caring case-worker and adviser. She helped us hunt down those doctors that procrastinated and hindered timely reports. Had it not been for her

persistence, our timely efforts would have been fruitless and the outcome would have been devastating.

Written to Beth Palmer, counselor, Irving Field Office, from a client's mother:

I want to thank you for getting our son started in his great life. He enjoys his work and is so happy. I know I was the one who didn't think he could do this. I am amazed.

Counselors not only touch the lives of many clients but are also a great help in the community. This is a portion of a letter written to Vicki Taylor from the Arlington Independent School District.

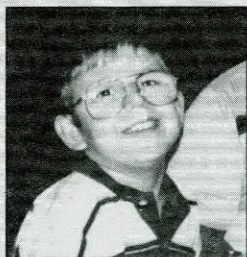
What an overwhelming success! Thank you so much for participating in

our first annual Special Education Community Services Fair. Your time and effort were so valuable in making the entire event professional and informative.

Comments from the parents were: "Wow, I didn't know this service existed," and "I wondered how a program worked and now I feel reassured about options for my child." You were the reason for this event's success.

A humorous and thoughtful letter sent to Bob Edwards, DE, Unit 22:

Thank you so much for your prompt attention to my disability claim. Actually I can hardly believe it — government and efficiency are oxymoronic terms. You are a shining example of a dedicated and thoughtful employee.



So, who is this mystery kid?

You might have recognized Adam Ganci's picture in the last issue of TRC Today and the 1992 Annual Report with Trene Medina. We've also come to find out TRC employee Jerry Withers, technology analyst in Automated Services, knows Adam rather well — he's been Adam's cub scout leader for the past four years.

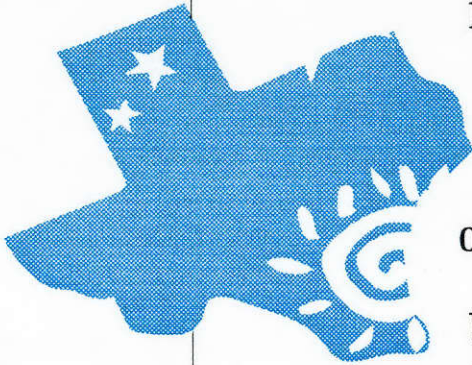
"This kid is terrific! As a cub scout, he's intelligent and active. He keeps up with the other kids and, in some ways, surpasses them because he sticks to things. I always enjoyed seeing the other boys include him in their activities, regardless of his disability. It's been a great learning experience for everyone and Adam has been an important addition to the pack."

They're here! They're here!

The 1992 Programs Reference Guide and Annual Report are out. Both publications can be very useful to the field staff in different ways. The Annual

Report is a "people oriented" introduction to programs with a general performance report. It has gone to all employees, but additional copies are available in the TRC warehouse under stock number 01884A.

The Programs Reference Guide, although brief, is full of in-depth facts and figures on each TRC program, including county listings. It is available on SOS, stock number 01896. Both are designed as companion pieces — containing similar information but presented in different ways. But don't settle for just one — both would be great to have.



TRC TODAY

TRC Today is published by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for distribution to its employees and retirees throughout the state. We welcome submissions for publication, but reserve the right to edit or screen materials according to newsletter policy. Address submissions or inquiries to Randy Jennings, Public Information Office, Texas Rehabilitation Commission, 4900 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78751-2399; or telephone (512) 483-4421.

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