

REPORT



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

Vol. V, No. 3 Sept./Oct. 1988

DEMAND FOR BOOKLET CONTINUES

Response to the Commission's recently produced booklet "In Texas, Any Place You Take Your Eyes, I Can Take My Dog Guide" continues to be widespread. Requests for the booklet have been received from various businesses, organizations and groups throughout the country. One restaurant chain has sent information regarding the booklet to its outlets in Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Virginia. Another organization has included information on the use of dog guides in their training for all new managers. In Abilene, local Veterans of Foreign Wars and VFW Ladies Auxiliary members have pounded the pavement distributing copies of the booklet to every Abilene business. Anyone wanting a copy of this publication may contact the Commission's Public Information Office at 1-800-252-5204.

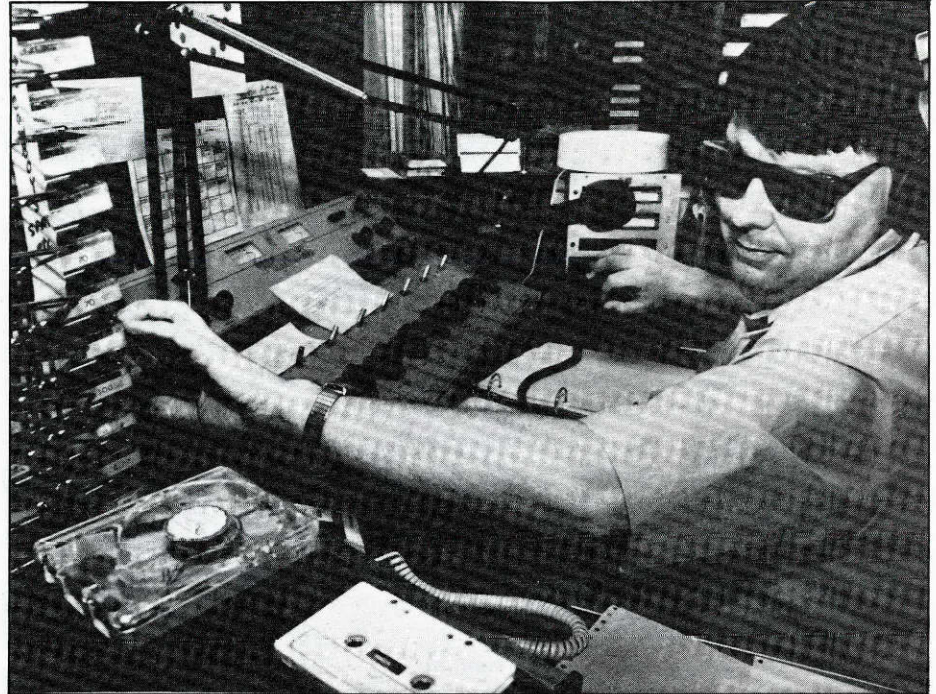


PHOTO CREDIT: Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Terry Lyons uses his hands to read braille type on cassette tapes. In his daily tasks, he uses hundreds of braille cards that list the names of albums, artists, names of cuts, and lengths and years of release.

EMPLOYMENT IS MUSIC TO HIS EAR

"I don't have any kind of earth shattering problems," says Terry Lyons. "I've already overcome them all." A disc jockey at KIBL-FM in Corpus Christi, Lyons was the subject of a recent story by *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* writer Shelley Emling. The University of Texas at Austin graduate gained his first experience in the radio broadcast industry in 1974 when he worked at KVWG-FM in Pearsall. After finishing college, he went to work for KOGT-AM in Orange as an advertising salesman and announcer. At his current job Lyons also reads the news, weather, and public service announcements in addition to his disc jockey duties. His baritone voice has been beamed into the homes and cars of thousands of listeners of Beeville's country radio station and his immediate supervisor, Jesse Jones, notes that he sometimes forgets that Lyons is blind. "I was a little nervous at first about hiring him, but as it turns out Terry has overcompensated and is one heck of a worker."

INSIDE

- Research developments
- The Texas Reading Machine Program
- IN BRIEF
- NATIONAL NOTES
- Steve's Coffee Shop
- Head Injury Awareness

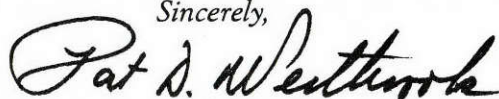
A Word from the Director

As many of you may already be aware, Congress has declared the entire month of October 1988 as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The basic goal of this observation, in terms of the Commission's mission, is to reach employers with the message that individuals who are blind or visually impaired are and can be qualified, competent, and reliable employees.

Although the employment prospects for a person who is blind or visually impaired are not always bright, our experience has shown that employers themselves are often the best allies in spreading the news that employees who are blind are as productive as anyone else when given the chance. Throughout the years this agency has spent extensive time and energy towards the development of a selective employment process that matches the skills of a qualified blind client with the particular needs of an employer. The advent of technology has provided added impetus to employers interested in employing qualified, productive individuals and each year employers join with us in the search for jobs people can do without sight and how they can do them.

In keeping with a practice begun seven years ago, the Commission will once again be recognizing those employers who have offered exemplary employment opportunities to Texans who are blind and visually impaired. The recipients of the 1988 Employer of the Year awards will be announced in our next newsletter. Our primary mandate in the area of vocational rehabilitation lies in those efforts that will help blind and visually impaired citizens secure productive employment. We're not talking charity on the part of employers. Rather, we are talking about employers who have jobs to be done and determine that persons who are blind can do them. We are essentially talking about the dignity of returned value for value given.

Sincerely,



Pat D. Westbrook
Executive Director

A GLIMPSE AT THE FUTURE

Researchers at Ohio State University are literally tickling the stomachs of people who are blind in an experiment to help them see. Over the past five years, research has been aimed at developing a miniature video camera system that can convert a picture into mechanical vibrations felt on the abdomen of a blind person. If the technique can be refined the system will change a picture from the camera into electrical impulses that mechanically "draw" a picture on the abdomen, similar to tracing a figure on the skin with a finger.

The small camera is about the size of a walnut and could be mounted on a cane or on the side of a pair of glasses. This would allow a person who is blind or visually impaired to "see" an object in front of his path. Researchers expect that a second-generation prototype might be ready for testing within a month. A commercially available version, one small enough to be portable and unobtrusive, is several years away, researchers say.

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.

TOLL-FREE
TELEPHONE
NUMBER

1-800-252-5204

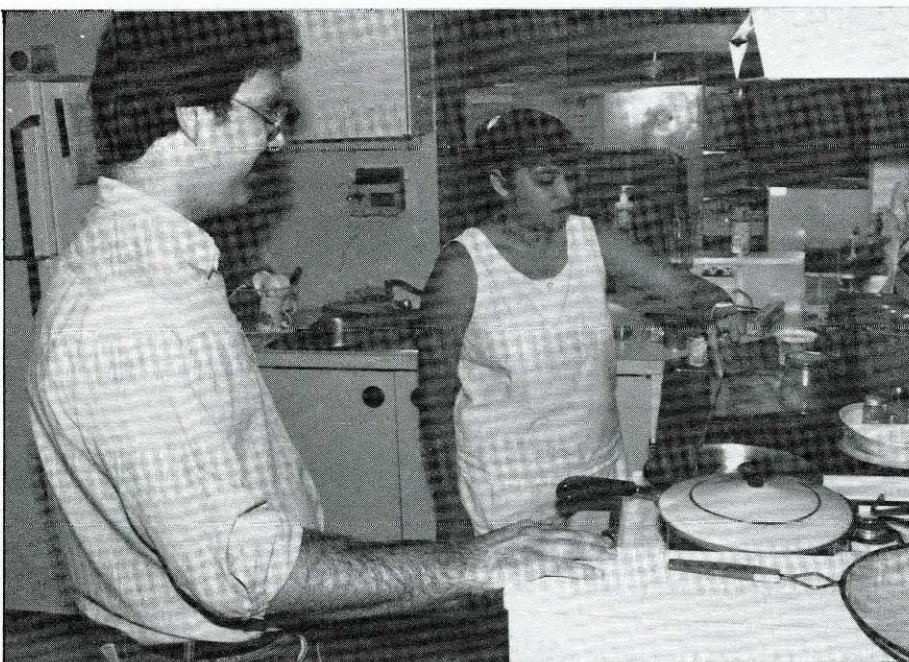
IN BRIEF

- The Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons will hold their annual Conference and awards program October 28 in Austin. "Employment: A Two-Way Opportunity" is the theme for this year's gathering. Sessions will be held on the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1988, AIDS in Today's Workplace, and employment outlooks and experiences shared by employers and employees who are disabled. For more information, contact Cindy Counts at 512/445-8741.
- The Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities is seeking volunteers in a survey of people with disabilities and their families. The survey will help meet the requirements as set forth in the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights in the preparation and submission of its three-year state plan and a special report to Congress. Anyone interested in more information regarding this consumer survey should contact the Council at 512/445-8852.

- The Commission's Fort Worth District Office is sponsoring a seminar on diabetes and its complications on November 12 in Fort Worth. The seminar will feature presentations by various medical specialists and information provided through the American Diabetes Association. The Diabetes Supply Center in Arlington has arranged for the donation of four glucometers which will be given to some of the participants. The Commission's Diabetes Program Specialist, Robin Martin, and Fort Worth staff are coordinating the seminar with assistance from the American Diabetes Association, the Diabetes Association of Texas and the Texas Society to Prevent Blindness. Efforts are underway to contact the nearly 2,000 diabetics in the Dallas/Fort Worth area regarding this seminar.
- The National Federation of the Blind has announced that it now carries braille copies of the American Diabetes Association Food Exchange Lists. In addition, the Federation's publication, Voice of the Diabetic, is available in print and cassette tape. For more information,

contact NFB, 919 Main, Suite 15, Rapid City, SD 57709.

- A collection of 27 tape-recorded messages on topics related to technological developments for children and adults with visual impairments has been established through the Center for Special Education Technology. Callers may telephone 1-800-345-TECH between the hours of 2-5 p.m. on weekdays to use this service.
- The Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind will hold a re-dedication ceremony for their newly expanded and renovated manufacturing facility, the Austin G. Scott Industrial Center. The renovated building is being renamed after the late Austin G. Scott who served as chief executive officer of the Lighthouse for more than 30 years.
- Tactile poker chips, a "talking" wallet, and an audible carpenter's level are among the new specially adapted products and devices offered in the American Foundation for the Blind's 1988-89 edition of *Products for People With Vision Problems*. The catalog is available free in print or braille and features more than 400 household, business, recreational, and health care products. For a copy, contact AFB at 1-800-232-5463 or in Texas call 214/352-7222.



Denise Martinez of Dallas receives instructions in cooking skills from Adaptive Skills Teacher Clint Hoverson. Denise was one of the 40 students who participated in this year's College Prep Program offered at the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center. The program gives high school graduates from across the state an opportunity to gear up for the challenges posed by college or university life. Upon the completion of the program Denise enrolled at Mountain View Community College in Dallas.



STEVE'S COFFEE SHOP

It was not a pretty sight
empty halls with subdued light
cheerful voices long since departed
no hands with coffee that mornings started

Hustle and bustle of 300 strong
gone out the door and across the lawn
elevators open but are not greeted
forlorn they close and feel mistreated

Footsteps echo down the hall
a man's whistle bounces off the wall
It's the man of the hour, it's our Mr. "C"
and he'll open The Shop for you and for me

'Cause he's seen it all and will survive
he's seen fat and lean and he's still alive
the rest will fold when business is lame, but
come hell or high water, he'll beat the game

He throws open the doors, welcome and wide
flicks on the lights so it's bright inside
he kindles the coffee and fires up the griddles
gets the radio blarin' and throws on some vittles

Come one, come all, his shop is a'cookin'
ain't no better chow so stop a'lookin'
It's the Conradt Show and we're here to stay
so come in and see him. . . HE'LL MAKE YOUR DAY!

EDITOR'S NOTE: This poem was written by Robert Walker, a technical writer with the Texas Employment Commission. Steve Conradt is a Business Enterprises Program operator at the Sam Houston State Office Building in Austin. Steve has been with the BEP since 1953; and as the poem says, "he's seen it all and will survive."

NATIONAL NOTES

- The question of whether airlines can prohibit passengers who are blind from sitting near an emergency exit has been a controversial issue for quite some time now. On June 22 the Department of Transportation issued its proposed air carrier access rules which are supposed to prohibit discrimination by the airlines against travelers with disabilities. However, the proposed regulations state that the Federal Aviation Administration's safety regulations may properly exclude any person from a seat in an exit row on the basis of handicap, or may properly require that an individual sit in a particular seat on the basis of handicap. The FAA has not announced its position regarding this matter. Comments on the proposed rule prohibiting discrimination by air carriers on the basis of handicap will be accepted until December 19.

FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

The Texas Commission for the Blind has been asked to assist the United States Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation in conducting an evaluation of its programs and facilities in Texas. The evaluation will be used to determine if the Bureau's programs and related facilities are thoroughly accessible to persons who are blind and/or visually impaired. The evaluations will involve an on-site review of camping, picnic areas, and other recreational facilities at the Bureau's Reservoir areas near San Angelo, Victoria, and Three Rivers.



Bryan Baldwin, who has been legally blind since birth, uses a closed circuit television to inspect mechanical pencils at the San Antonio Association for the Blind. John Lucas, SAAB Plant Manager, looks on.

TECHNOLOGY CREATES JOBS

While high technology often means the loss of jobs in many industries, it means more jobs for individuals who are blind. During recent weeks, several new jobs and training opportunities have been created at San Antonio Association for the Blind (SAAB) through the use of closed circuit television. The equipment was purchased through a grant from Texas Commission for the Blind.

By using a closed circuit television, a person with limited vision can focus the camera on the work area and view an image enlarged hundreds of times the normal size. The clarity and magnitude of the enlargement opens many job opportunities which in the past have been closed to individuals with vision problems.

Bryan Baldwin, a 28 year old man who has been legally blind since birth, is one SAAB employee who has benefitted from the technology. Baldwin has been promoted to lab technician and now inspects raw materials and finished products using the closed circuit television system. He also uses the equipment to record the results of quality assurance inspections.

Baldwin is the first blind individual to be promoted to this position at SAAB. According to him, "I never could have done this job before, but now I can perform the tests just as well as a sighted employee."

"My counselor at the Commission suggested I come to SAAB. Soon after that visit I began work as a general assembler and was promoted to a machine operator in one year. The next year I was promoted again to operate a more complicated blister packaging machine. I've been given the opportunity to try new things and to improve myself."

"In a regular business the emphasis is usually just on the product, but here the emphasis is on people first. The people here help employees explore their abilities and become the best they can be."

Baldwin would like for employers to see for themselves just how effective a blind work force can be. "If competitive employers would look at us, they'd see blindness isn't a barrier. They'd be lucky to have such a motivated, positive group of employees."

EDITOR'S NOTE: A special "thanks" goes out to Nancy Dunn, Public Relations Consultant at the San Antonio Association for the Blind, for contributing this article and picture.

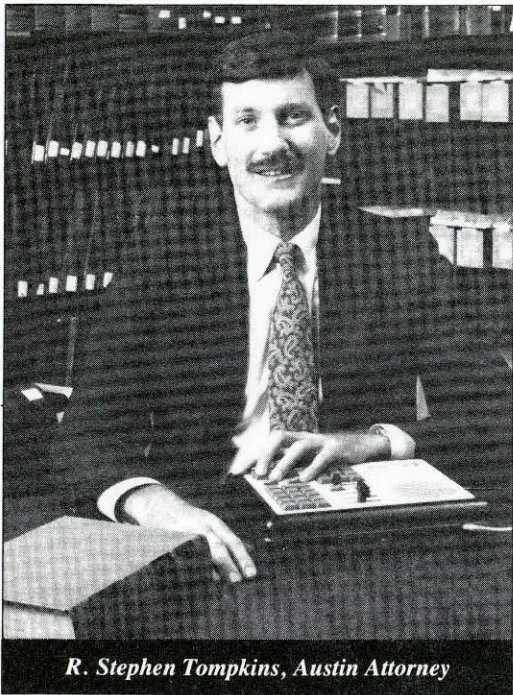
OCTOBER 1988
NATIONAL
DISABILITY
EMPLOYMENT
AWARENESS
MONTH

SERVING CLIENTS WITH HEAD INJURIES

The month of October 1988 has been proclaimed "Head Injury Awareness Month." Here in Texas, the Texas Head Injury Chapter and other groups are conducting a public awareness campaign to inform the public of the special needs of individuals with head injuries. On October 4-6 Commission counselors, teachers, and caseworkers along with staff from the Texas School for the Blind participated in a training program on "Rehabilitation of the Blind Head-Injured Client." The training featured sessions on various medical aspects, intervention strategies, and employment assistance issues involved when working with clients with head injuries.

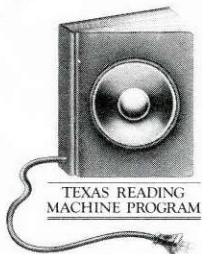
According to Charles Burtis, the Commission's program specialist in learning disabilities and brain injuries, "The challenges facing an individual with head injuries are many. When the effects from head injuries are accompanied by blindness, the result can be devastating. Therefore, it is imperative that our staff have thorough knowledge of the various factors associated with dealing with this population."

An article in a recent issue of **Impact**, a publication of the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, traces the services offered by the Commission to clients who are head-injured. Copies of the articles are available by contacting the Commission's Public Information Office 512/459-2612.



R. Stephen Tompkins, Austin Attorney

*"I'm blind.
But with this
machine, I can
read every legal
opinion ever
written."*



Discover the Texas Reading Machine Program at a library near you. Or, call the Texas State Library, toll free, at 1-800-252-9605.

A public service message by the Texas State Library to inform the estimated 150,000 blind and visually impaired Texans of the Texas Reading Machine Program which has placed Kurzweil Reading Machines in public and academic libraries throughout the state. Steve Tompkins is a former client of the Commission.

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



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