

# REPORT



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

Vol. III, No. 4 December 1986

## Clients Served

# Commission Reports on Services

During the 1986 fiscal year 9,564 persons of an employable age received vocational rehabilitation services from the Texas Commission for the Blind. Of those served during 1986, 2,162 individuals completed training and received services that were necessary to place them in the category defined as "rehabilitated."

There were 189 clients who attended the regular evaluation and training program offered through the agency's Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center in Austin, with an additional 158 blind and visually impaired persons receiving specialized training at the Center. The Vocational Diagnostic Unit at the Center completed the development of a comprehensive vocational evaluation system and provided 147 evaluations during the reporting period.

The Commission's Career Development Unit provided services that affected 458 individuals. These services included direct specialized employment assistance efforts, rehabilitation engineering services, and help through the equipment loan fund.

At year-end, there were 126 operational Business Enterprises Program facilities. The highway vending program continues to expand the potential for increased job opportunities for blind vendors.

The Commission's Visually Handicapped Children's Program served 7,192 children during 1986. The number of children who received prevention of blindness service totaled 3,123.

Through the Older Blind/Independent Living Rehabilitation program the Commission was able to deliver services to 759 persons. As a result of a small grant, the Commission will be able to establish three new caseloads to serve older blind Texans in Amarillo, Austin, and Pasadena for 1987.

"We are pleased with the results in all service areas of the Commission and we are committed to maintaining the quality of services that blind and visually impaired citizens have come to expect of the Commission," says Pat Westbrook, executive director.

## CONFERENCE ON DIABETES

Diabetes is a major health problem that affects more than 12,000,000 people in the United States. According to some sources, the prevalence of diabetes among Mexican Americans is three to five times higher than the national average. In an attempt to explore current and future strategies for addressing this public health concern, the Texas Diabetes Council sponsored a conference on Diabetes Among Mexican Americans January 29 in Austin. Participants had an opportunity to examine the sociocultural aspects of the problem as well some effective treatment and patient information/education approaches. Also on the agenda was a discussion on some of the complications caused by diabetes, including blindness and visual disability. For more information on this program, contact the American Diabetes Association, P.O. Box 14926, Austin, Texas 78761.

# A Word from the Director

The Commission finished another year in September. In spite of operating under a hiring freeze from July through the end of the fiscal year, our staff maintained a high level of performance. More than 17,000 blind and visually impaired Texans received services last year from this agency. Nothing would satisfy me more than to be able to share with you the individual story of every child whose vision was restored or every person who went to work after doubting they would ever work again. Regretfully, however, like all governmental agencies we are required to report our year-end performance by predetermined categories and in numbers. This type of reporting often seems impersonal. Therefore, as you read the numbers quoted in this issue of "REPORT," I hope you will remember as I do that all statistics are composed of human beings—people whose lives were touched in some way by the Commission during the year.

During the last special session, our state budget for fiscal year 1987 was reduced by \$210,550. This cutback will not result in an immediate loss in our ability to provide direct services to clients. The loss will be felt most in our ability to plan and evaluate services for their effectiveness. The hiring freeze was lifted in November and we are currently filling badly needed positions around the state. We do have some good news, however, for 1987. Our federal funds were increased for vocational rehabilitation services by 11%.

The agency's appropriations for 1988 and 1989 will be decided during the next session that begins in January. We have already received indications that state funding problems might hold the agency to level funding, which would compound our planning difficulties of 1987. Level funding would also eliminate our ability to expand existing programs or establish an adequate program for elderly blind persons so desperately needed. In addition, our new federal legislation calls for increased emphasis on the provision of services to those individuals who will require supported employment in order to be placed in competitive employment. The financial effect of this new legislation is still being analyzed.

The agency's staff joins with me in expressing our appreciation for your support this past year. We hope you will continue to work with us as we explore ways to improve services to blind and visually impaired Texans.

As you can see, we have a challenge ahead.



Pat D. Westbrook  
Executive Director

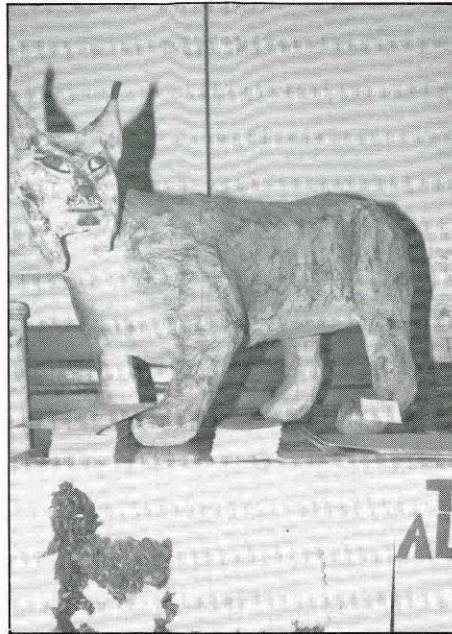
## TESTIMONY OFFERED ON REHAB AMENDMENTS

Legislation to reauthorize expand, and supplement programs in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, has been approved by Congress and signed by President Ronald Reagan. In an attempt to obtain the views of a cross-section of persons affected by the new legislation and develop regulations and policy which will implement the 1986 amendments, Justin Dart, Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, sponsored a regional forum on December 10 in Dallas. Commission Executive Director Pat Westbrook and Consumer Advisory Committee members Joe Juliano of Austin and Robert Reynolds of Wichita Falls attended the forum and offered testimony before the RSA officials. "The 1986 amendments to the VR Act represent a major milestone in the field of rehabilitation," says Westbrook. "The five-year reauthorization, through 1991, includes some important changes that we are currently reviewing to ensure that our service delivery system incorporates the necessary revisions," he adds.

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VA officials receive an award from Commission member Walter Musler (r). A papier-mache lynx was one of the many art pieces on display in the State Capitol December 13.



## Council on Disabilities Sponsors Special Day

Sesquicentennial Day for Texas With Disabilities was observed December 13 in the State Capitol. The event featured a colorful display of more than 1,000 pieces of artwork submitted by special education students from throughout the state. Entertainment for the celebration was provided by the Song in Sign group of the Texas School for the Deaf, the Austin State School Band, and Gail Hicks, a local pianist. "This celebration was a time for all Texans to remember the brave men and women who fought for our independence," says Commission member Walter Musler of San Antonio who served as chairman of the Council of Disabilities Task Force that coordinated the event. During the ceremonies Musler presented the Commission's Employer of the Year award to Thomas Acklen and Lois Hunt of the Veterans Administration Data Processing Center in Austin. "This event has also drawn attention to the need for all Texans to work toward the removal of barriers which impair a disabled person's search for complete independence," Musler added.

## TOP EMPLOYERS

The recipients of the Texas Commission for the Blind's 1986 Employer of the Year awards have been chosen: M.R.S. Datascope, Houston (private employer); El Paso Independent School District (state employer); Social Security Administration, Lubbock (federal employer); and Veterans Administration Data Processing Center, Austin (federal employer). Now in its sixth year, the employer awards program was developed to recognize those employers who have worked with the Commission to extend employment opportunities to persons who are blind and/or visually impaired.

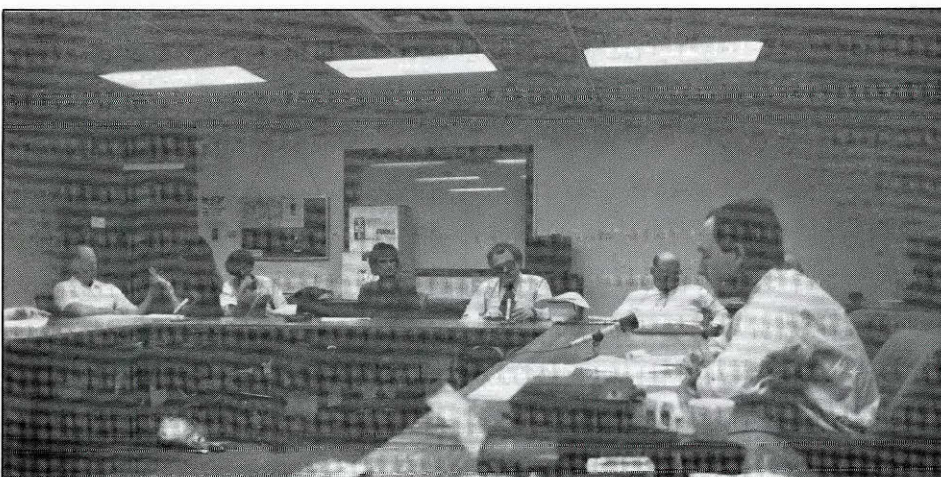
This year Commission staff nominated 28 employers for the awards and a committee comprised of three Commission board members reviewed each nomination before selecting the top four organizations. Formal presentations of the specially designed plaques were held during December and each nominee received a special certificate and a letter from Executive Director Pat Westbrook.

"We are extremely proud to recognize the fine efforts of those employers who have worked with our staff across the state in a manner which enhances the agency's employment assistance efforts for our clients," says Westbrook.

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Deputy Director of Administration and Finance Michael T Phillips (foreground) meets with members of the Commission's Consumer Advisory Committee to discuss the agency's budget and the legislative appropriations process. The 16-member advisory group advises and consults with Executive Director Pat Westbrook on agency policies, program development, and implementation of both. Recent appointees to the Committee include Dick Bell of San Antonio; Joe Juliano of Austin; Joe Kelly of Texarkana; Thelma Salinas of Edcouch; and Larry Johnson of San Antonio.

This past year represents the highest number of nominations ever submitted for these awards and the partnership between employers and the Commission is resulting in increased employment opportunities for agency clients.

Other nominations submitted for the annual recognition include: Texas Commerce Bank, Houston• the University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio• City of Corpus Christi Police Department• Mesquite School District• City of Austin Planning and Growth Management Department• Lamar University, Beaumont• Greensheet, Houston• Vela Food Enterprises, Inc., San Antonio• Intercraft Industries Corporation, Taylor• YMCA-Downtown Dallas• E.I. DuPont DeNemours & Company, Beaumont• Manufacturer's Financial Group, Houston• James Coney Island, Houston• Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, Dallas; Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria• The Trane Company, Tyler• Capitol Area Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center, Austin• St. David's Community Hospital, Austin• City of Alvin• Metropolitan Transit Authority, Houston• Environmental Protection Agency, Dallas• Kelly Air Force Base, San Antonio• Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio• and the U.S. White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico.

- Radio Shack has issued its first catalog catering to the needs of persons with disabilities. Many of the products featured in the publication are designed to help persons with hearing and vision disabilities. Free copies of the catalog are available by writing the Radio Shack Circulation Department, 300 Tandy Center, Fort Worth, TX 76102.
- A bill has been introduced in Congress which would prohibit discrimination in insurance coverage on the basis of blindness or degree of blindness. H.R. 2741 is entitled the Fair Insurance Coverage Act and calls for a policy that would prevent insurers from refusing to make insurance available to any applicant who is blind.
- The Lighthouse of Houston is expanding its adult day center for individuals with visual impairments. Designed for older adults who have any type of vision loss that interferes with their normal daily lives, the program offers group therapy, orientation and mobility, recreation, and health services. For more information on the Multi-Care Program, contact the Houston Lighthouse, P.O. Box 13435, Houston TX 77219-3435.
- Congratulations go out to Justin W. Dart, Jr. who has been named commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. Recognized as a long time advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities, Dart has played a key role in issues impacting disabled persons on a national level.
- The Coalition of Texans With Disabilities (CTD) is developing a Statewide Independent Living Advocacy Program to provide outreach and inform clients and client applicants about the benefits and services available through the Rehabilitation Act and by the Client Assistance Program in Texas.

"The vocational rehabilitation program is one of the most cost-effective, excellent, and well-run programs in the entirety of the federal government. In fact, it may be the most cost-effective program. It is a 65-year-old program and it is estimated that it will return a minimum of \$10 in tax dollars for every \$1 of public money that is expended. It is largely administered, and very well administered, by state agencies."---Congressman Steve Bartlett, Texas

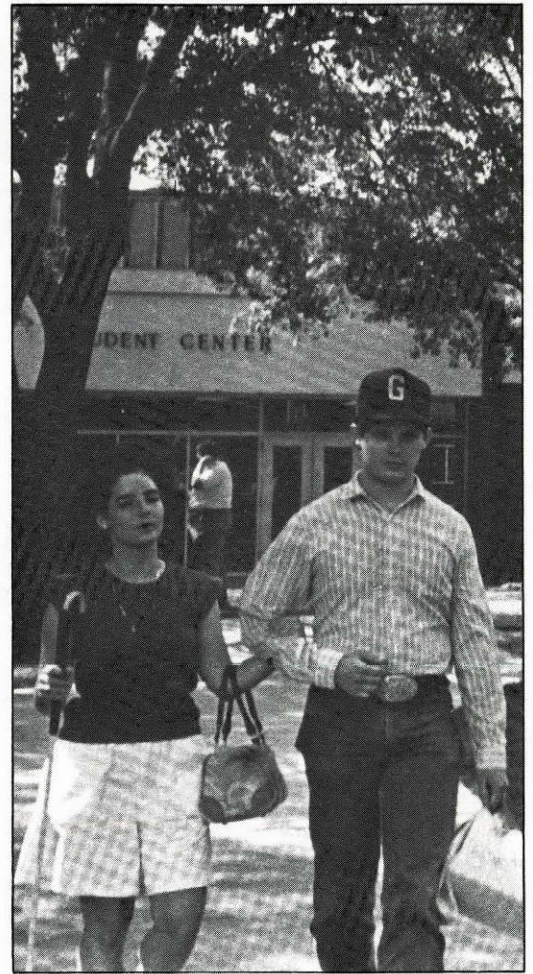
**REPORT** is an official publication of the Texas Commission for the Blind. It is available free of charge to any individual requesting to be placed on the mailing list. News articles should be forwarded to the Public Information Office, P.O. Box 12866, Austin, Texas 78711 or call 512/459-2612. This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

William C. Conner, Chairman  
Pat D. Westbrook, Executive Director  
Rolando Garza, Editor  
Jean Wakefield, Editorial Assistant





**DOROTHY MOUNCE**, Visually Handicapped Children's Program caseworker in Austin, has been selected as the 1986 Texas Commission for the Blind Employee of the Year. Dorothy first joined the agency in 1969 as a caseworker in Waco. After a brief break in service in 1979, she returned in 1980 to her current slot. She was presented with a certificate and plaque by director Pat Westbrook and a special certificate by State Representative Randall Riley of Georgetown. The Commission's governing board also passed a resolution honoring Mounce for her accomplishments. "I really enjoy my job and working with children and I accept this award on behalf of all my fellow caseworkers and persons involved in the Visually Handicapped Children's program" Dorothy said. Pictured above is Mounce receiving a special award from Representative Riley while Westbrook looks on.



Freshmen Kellie Stone and Ed Browning are two of the blind and visually impaired students currently enrolled at Tyler Junior College. Along with some other Commission clients currently enrolled at TJC, Stone and Browning were the subject of a recent article in the TJC newspaper. "I believe a person's disability is limited to themselves," says a student who serves as a reader at TJC and a person's ability is limited to those who are trying to accept them." Photo courtesy of the Tyler Junior College News.



Commission client Ronnie Simpson is one of the first deaf-blind clients to graduate from the Texas School for the Deaf. Family members and friends were present as Ronnie walked across the stage with his interpreter/guide to receive his diploma. After graduation, Ronnie left for Washington, D.C. where he is participating in a year-long preparatory program at Gallaudet College. Ronnie is a member of the board of directors for the Texas Deaf-Blind Association and is actively involved in activities for persons who are deaf-blind.

**---RESPONSE NEEDED---**

EDITOR'S NOTE: H.B. 480, passed by the 66th Legislature, requires state agencies which expend appropriated state funds to publish periodicals at no charge to insert in such publications a notice, in three consecutive issues, indicating that anyone wishing to receive the newsletters must so indicate in writing. To continue on our mailing list please fill out the form below and return it to the Commission's Public Information Office.

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COMMENTS? Any comments you may have to help improve the REPORT:

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FIRST NOTICE

**NOTES OF APPRECIATION**

"My brother 'Buddy' has received his second and final eye operation and all has gone well. I believe that had it not been for the Texas Commission for the Blind, Buddy would not have his sight today. This note is just to say thanks for all your help and for a job well done."

(Staff members Beverly Grantham and Donna Kachlic of Tyler received these nice comments.)

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"A few years ago your offices helped me out with a loan to cover the cost of glasses and contact lenses. . .We've had some good luck and I am enclosing a check to repay that money. . ."

(Excerpts from a letter received in the Commisison's El Paso office.)

"I ask you to help us still more. . .I hope you will work with us, striving to hasten the day when there shall be no blind child untaught, no blind man or woman unaided."--Helen Keller

**REPORT**



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