

# TRC TODAY

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

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## INSIDE

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Counselors  
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For Jennifer Hall, her selection as new assistant commissioner for Civil Rights has special meaning. She's come up through the ranks.

Hall started with TRC 17 years ago as summer help in the Voucher Section as a Salary Group 2. She worked as a secretary II for George Clark and Gene Radford while attending Austin Community College. She then moved to personnel as a secretary III.

In 1979, Hall transferred back to the Office of Civil Rights where she prepared statistical reports for new hires, terminations, promotions, work force analyses, etc.

She has been there ever since.

"I took on a lot of responsibilities that my position didn't have to do to learn as much as possible," says Hall. "And I had a supervisor (Clark) that encouraged that. He was my mentor and the foundation for Civil Rights for TRC.

Hall prepared TRC's first Affirmative Action Plan. And while working full time, she went back to school and received her BBA in Business Administration from St. Edwards University in 1981. She was promoted to civil rights specialist in 1988, assisting the director in planning, developing and administering TRC's Civil Rights Program.

Having a solid track record in providing assistance in the recruitment of protected groups, investigating charges of discrimination and providing civil rights training, Hall was an excellent choice to fill the position of assistant commissioner.

"The response to my getting this position has been overwhelming," says Hall. "I received congratulations from all levels, colors and sexes — just a diverse group of people. And that's what civil rights is all about."

She goes on to add that although her abilities were the reason why she got the job, the training and support she received from TRC in going back to school made it all possible.

Hall predicts a big year for the Civil Rights Program.

"We have a challenging task ahead of us," she says. "ADA gives us added emphasis and we have a lot of work to do. I want to continue to build on the foundation that George

*Continued on page 2*

# UP



# THROUGH THE RANKS

**Hall wants to add cultural diversity to TRC's Civil Rights Program.**



## TRC's Return to Work Program joins forces with Fort Worth

Being an injured worker in today's economy can be a frightening prospect. But TRC's Fort Worth Return to Work Program (RTW) and the City of Fort Worth are making this situation a little more tolerable.

During 1991, the City of Fort Worth and the Fort Worth RTW team entered into a good-faith agreement to join

back to work," say Betty Torres, marketing employment specialist for the Return to Work Program. "By doing this, our program is able to conserve TRC funds by utilizing the company's disability management resources."

"Fort Worth has also been very proactive in their policies regarding injured employees," adds Torres, "and very open-minded to our ideas regarding job-restructuring and reasonable accommodation."

In addition, Fort Worth has been assertive in making sure the city complies with ADA regulations. City ADA coordinator, Libby Lanzara, has set up a special task force to evaluate accessibility in the city's 600 buildings and has organized an *ad hoc* committee of over 40 volunteers to be a part of the Mayor's Committee for the Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

Mayor Kay Granger proclaimed the week of January 26 as ADA Week to increase overall awareness of the act. Granger has also cited the RTW team as an integral part of the city's plan to implement ADA and plans to endorse the RTW team in a six-minute video TRC will produce.

"We work in a very friendly atmosphere," says Torres. "The city is not putting up any unnecessary roadblocks. We sit on each other's advisory committees and are really working together to make things happen."



Fort Worth Mayor Kay Granger shaking hands with Jim Grey, executive director of the National Paraplegic Foundation. Also shown left to right: Pat King, Warren Cotter and Charlie Shepard.

forces in ADA implementation and in returning injured employees back to work as soon as medically possible.

The partnership has been beneficial for all. Typically, an average TRC worker's comp case requires \$1,800 in case service funds and up to 18 months to assist a client in finding suitable employment. The Fort Worth RTW team has an average of five to seven months for a successful closure and spends less than \$15 of case service funds per client.

"The secret has been that the city gets us the names of injured workers quickly so we can work closely with the worker's company in getting them

### Jennie Hall *continued from page 1*

Clark laid and stoke the fire that Chuck Bailey put into the program by developing a cultural diversity program for TRC employees."

"In the past, equal opportunity employment was seen as has treating everyone with the same 'cookie-cutter mold' approach. We now want to recognize the unique differences and capabilities that each individual brings to TRC."



# Experience pays off

On March 17 - 19, experienced counselors from across the state met in Austin to share success stories, helpful tips and hindrances.

The event, "Experienced Counselor Symposium," was offered to counselors with over 15 years experience so that they may learn from other veterans and, in turn, spread this knowledge to others out in the field. Of the 111 eligible, over 60 counselors were able to attend.

"The wealth of knowledge in this room is impressive," says Bryan Forrester, training officer in the Dallas Regional Office, whose vision led to the symposium. "These people represent over 1,000 years of experience and over 500 rehabilitants."

"These counselors make my job easy," adds Commissioner Vernon "Max" Arrell. "They have built a tremendously positive reputation for TRC, here in Austin and across the state."

There will be several outputs from the conference available to all field offices. One will be a compiled list of written success stories from each of the counselors. The

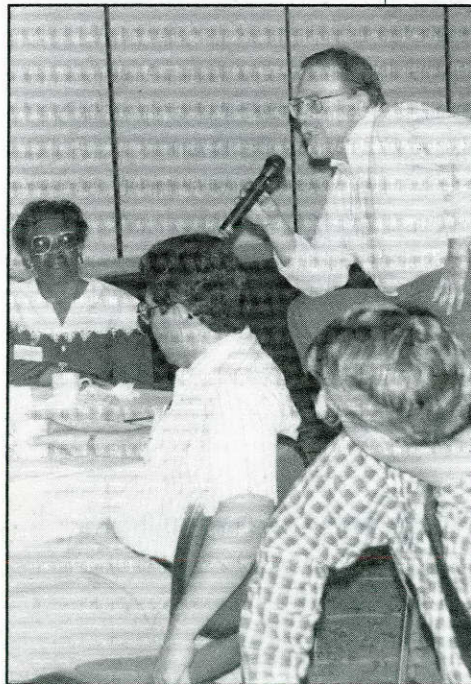
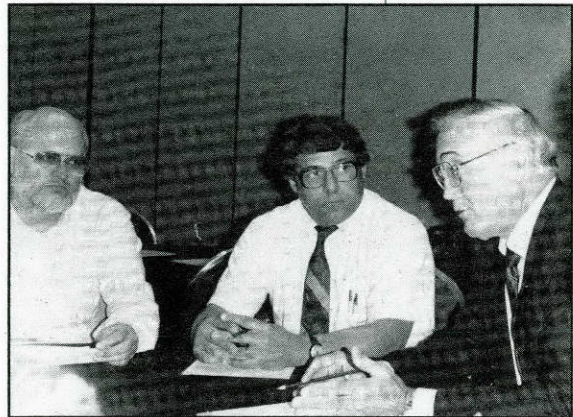
stories, to be put in a book called "The Best of TRC Yearbook," will provide case descriptions, what the counselor did in the particular situation and how the client reacted to it.

Other outputs will be a list of 10 helps/hindrances and eight "Open Letters to Counselors," offering advice to people just starting out in the field.

**"Very few activities are geared towards experienced counselors. Who will teach them?"**  
**The answer . . . they can learn from each other.**

people I have ever met," says Larry Davis, a consultant with TRC who helped design the symposium. "Very few activities are geared towards experienced counselors. Who will teach them? What we wanted to do here is let them learn from each other and give this knowledge back to us."

"I would like to see this more often," says Boyd Henry, counselor from Conroe. "You find that one success will work for another case and that gives us more resources to work with."



**top:** (left to right) Kay Sitton and Dorothy Cooke laugh it up while Ed White looks on.

**center:** (left to right) Rod Sturman and Andy Loker brainstorm with Commissioner Arrell.

**bottom:** Gerry Conway (standing) gets his point across; Shirley Pinson is seated left.

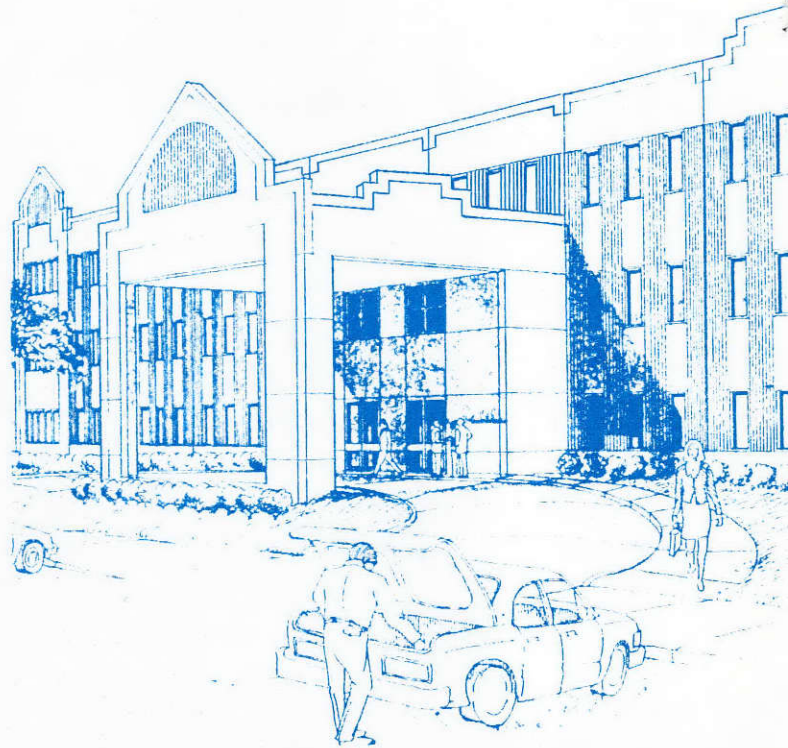


# COME RAIN OR COME



left to right: Vernon M. Arrell, commissioner; James L. Jackson, DDS administrator and Noel Wall, SSA regional commissioner.

**“WE WERE READY . . .  
the weather  
didn't cooperate,  
but that doesn't  
change anything.  
This building is  
going to happen.”**



## DDS WILL HAVE A NEW

Even though the ground-breaking ceremony for the new DDS building was rained out, optimism and enthusiasm for the building were undaunted.

“We were ready,” said Commissioner Arrell. “The weather didn’t cooperate, but that doesn’t change anything. This building is going to happen.”

“It has been a long time coming,” says DDS Administrator James L. Jackson. “But, DDS employees will soon have a new home that will make us all proud.”

And, quite a home it will be.

The selected site will house a facility of three floors, with over 700 surface parking spaces, nestled in a heavily wooded area that boasts a creek which will be crossed by an arched bridge.

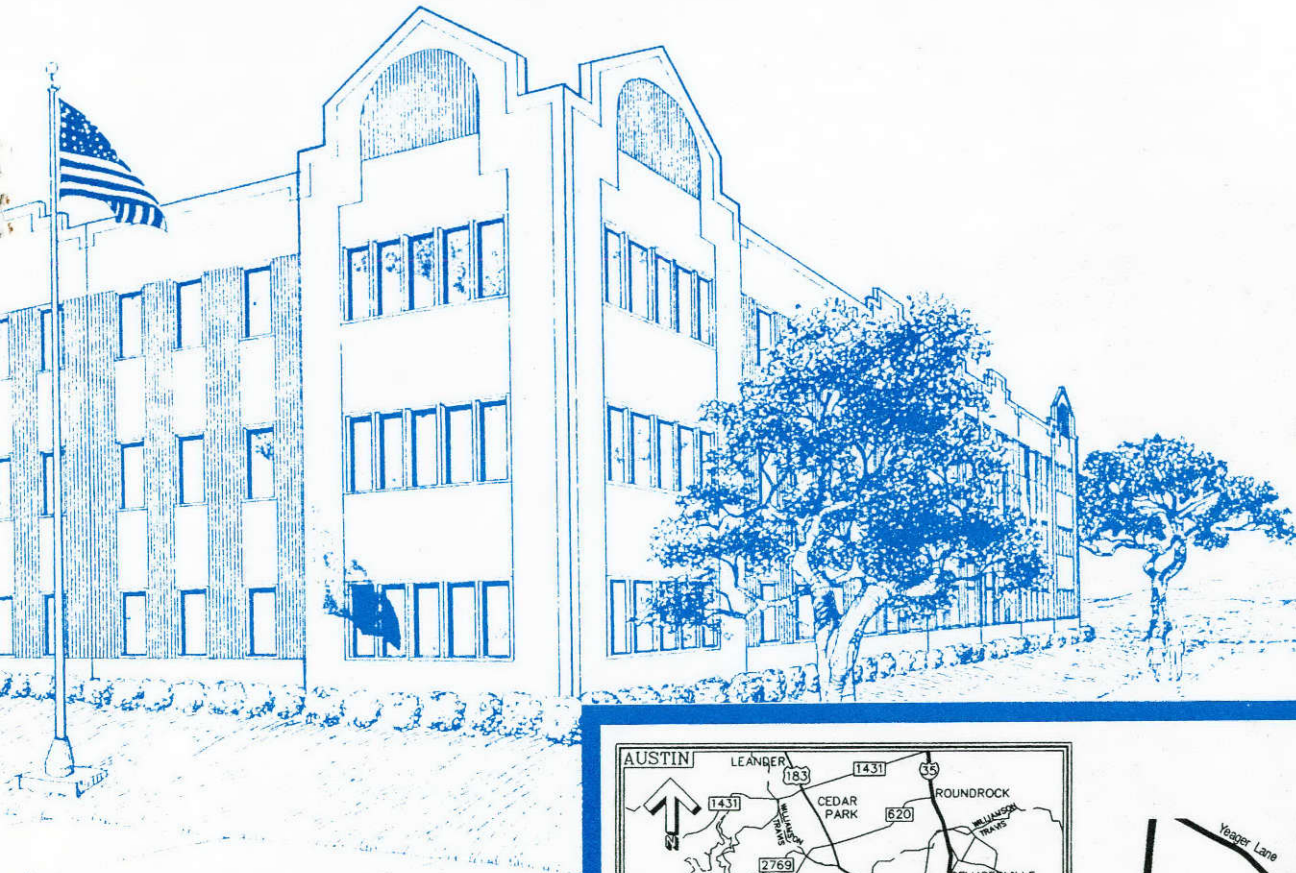
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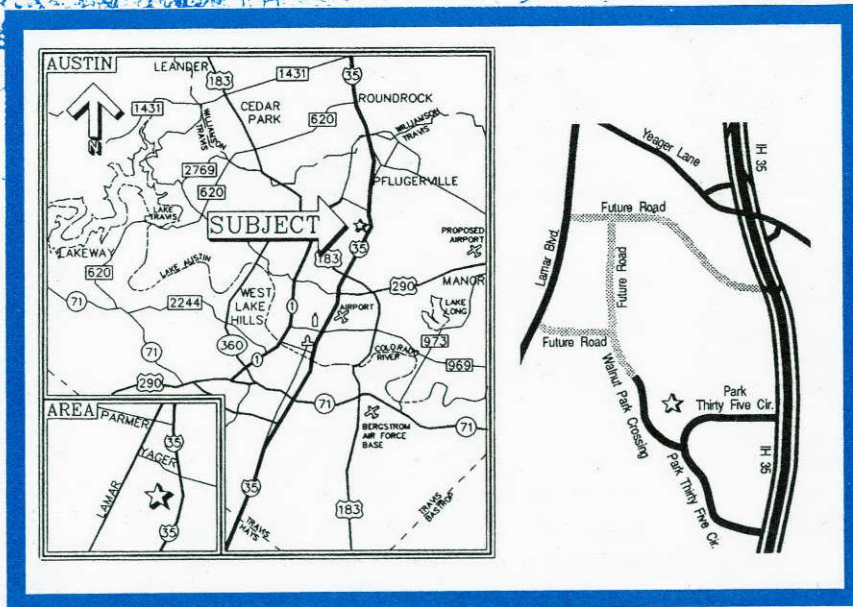
# THE SHINE . . .



## NEW HOME

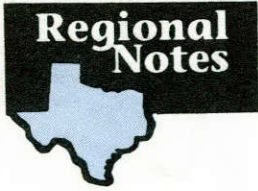
Some of the features in the new building will include a cafeteria, an exercise room with lockers and showers, and at least two break rooms and conference rooms on each floor. The new building will give to DDS employees something they have had precious little of . . . "Space, useable and functional space, is one of our prime considerations," says State Commissioner Dave Ward. "The DDS employees will occupy stations of a size equivalent to those used in the TRC Brown-Heatly Build-

ing new building, to be located in North Austin, just west of IH 35, is expected to be ready for occupancy in the Spring of 1993.



**LOCATION** West frontage road of IH35, Between Yager Lane and Walnut Creek, IH35 and Lamar Boulevard.





**Region I**

Jerry Don Rawley Whitaker was selected for the Catastrophic Caseload position in the Amarillo Field Office.

**Region II**

John Cosgrove, case management counselor in the Fort Worth South Field Office is retiring after 20 years with TRC.

**Region III**

Lisa Allen was selected as secretary III to the UT/ACC courtesy counselor in the UT Austin Field Office. She has been with TRC for three years and brings excellent experience in working with clients at both the University of Texas and Austin Community College.

**Region IV**

Rick Myers, counselor in the Houston North Field Office, is retiring after 19 years with TRC.

Bernadette Tovlin, rehabilitation services technician III in the Baytown Field Office, retired after 19 years with the Commission.

Laura Rohmer was selected for the deaf/hearing impaired caseload in the Houston Central Field Office. Along with her experience as counselor for TRC, she has worked as a placement specialist, vocational evaluator and staff interpreter for the deaf/hearing impaired.

Mary Frances Wasson was selected as administrative secretary to the regional director. She has worked for the Commission over four years in various clerical positions and for numerous counselors. She also has extensive experience as administrative assistant in the private sector.

**Central Office**

Buddy Fields, director of reprographics (printshop), retired March 31 after 21 years of service with TRC.

Billy McNeil, reproduction equipment operator III, retired March 31 after 17 years of service with the Commission.

David MacCabe was selected as assistant commissioner of Management Audit. He has previously held the position of internal auditor and most recently functioned as acting director of Special Services.

Prissy Pense, was selected as coordinator for media services. Having previously been administrative technician for Special Operations and Deputy Commissioner John Fenoglio, she brings extensive experience to this position.

Laura Banks' father, Neil Gilligan, sent a letter of appreciation to all TRC employees who contributed to the Memorial Grove Fund, in the memory of his son, Skip Gilligan. Tree planting began in November.



If you have seen this publication around, it is the new newsletter for DDS. Designed for DDS employees, Breaking Barriers addresses critical issues and employee achievement.

"There are a lot of great things going on in DDS," says James L. Jackson, DDS administrator. "We needed a way to let everyone know that and we hope this newsletter will help keep the momentum going."

**March 1992 Service Awards**

**Region II**

*10 years*

- Abigail Arguijo
- 20 years*
- Jack Norville
- John Cosgrove

**Region V**

*15 years*

- Irma Sierra
- Marcial Zamora
- 20 years*
- Brunilda Garcia

**DDS**

*10 years*

- Loretta Feggens
- Bernadine Garner
- Dottie Savage
- 15 years*
- Ofelia Hoelster

**Central Office**

*10 years*

- Gloria Fuentes
- Julia Montoya
- 20 years*
- Hermin Perez





## Cause for Applause

*We have received several letters regarding the excellent work of Barbara Scoby. This one comes from a co-worker, Sarah Burns, disability examiner for DDS Unit 03:*

Everyone is working so hard these days that time is often not taken to commend a good deed or the positive attitude of a co-worker. However, I am so impressed by the cheerful, professional assistance always given by Barbara Scoby that I had to let you know how very much she is appreciated. She is an excellent person to have answering the phone in Case Control.

*This letter was written by Houston Lighting & Power to Michael Schepperly, area manager Houston West Field Office regarding Counselor Karen Anderson:*

As the new year begins, I would like you to know how much Karen Anderson has meant to our Rehabilitation and Return to Work Program. Thanks largely due to Ms. Anderson's services, 13 employees were placed in rehabilitation positions and 61 were returned to their pre-disability jobs during the 1991 calendar year, resulting in a possible avoidance of \$3 million in unproductive labor and benefits costs.

We look forward to continuing the relationship

between Houston Lighting and Power Company and the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

*This touching letter was sent to Tom Rutledge, disability examiner for Unit 03:*

I usually walk through the park or the mall to keep from going crazy. But today I thought I'd take out the time to express my thanks to you

and let you know how much I appreciate your help.

Because of your kindness and concern, I am able to keep my home. They were about to foreclose, but because you allowed for my temporary S.S.I., I was able to receive a check and pay the mortgage.

I don't have words to express my sincere thanks to you.

### COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE BOX

*The Commissioner's Message Box is a "speak-up" communications process giving employees direct contact with the Commissioner by using the form "I Want to Hear From You." An employee may write to the Commissioner to express feelings about any aspect of TRC work life. This includes sharing concerns, complaints, ideas and compliments.*

*Among these messages, TRC Today will select a few on a regular basis to share with everyone. They will usually be in a question/answer format because if one person takes the time to write the Commissioner with a question, there are probably another hundred people wondering about the same thing. Thanks for sharing!*

**Q** I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed meeting and talking with you. It's nice to have you visit our office. I wanted to ask you if we will ever have flex time in the field offices — such as the federal government where they work nine hours a day and are off every other Friday or DDS where they work ten hours and are off every Monday or Friday?

**A** I appreciate hearing from you regarding flex time or variable work hours in the field. The field offices do have this option available to them if it has been approved within their interactive planning boards. If you are interested in flex time or variable work hours, I encourage you to bring this up at your next interactive planning board for discussion. It will then be the decision of you and other members to determine whether to implement a variable work program in your area of responsibility.



## African-American History Month celebrated

DDS observed African-American History Month with a celebration that included singing and a special address from Daniel Williams, executive director of the Black Texans Historical Society. Jean Martin, shown here with her grandson, received a special citation for her facilitation of this event. "Jonathan and his appreciation for his roots is what this celebration is all about," said Martin.



**TODAY**

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