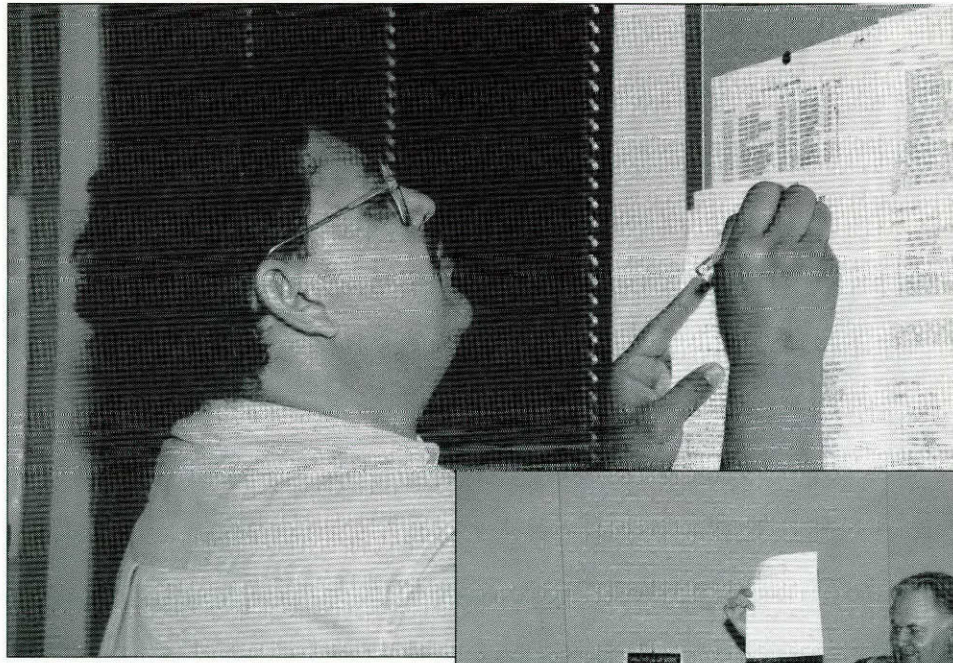




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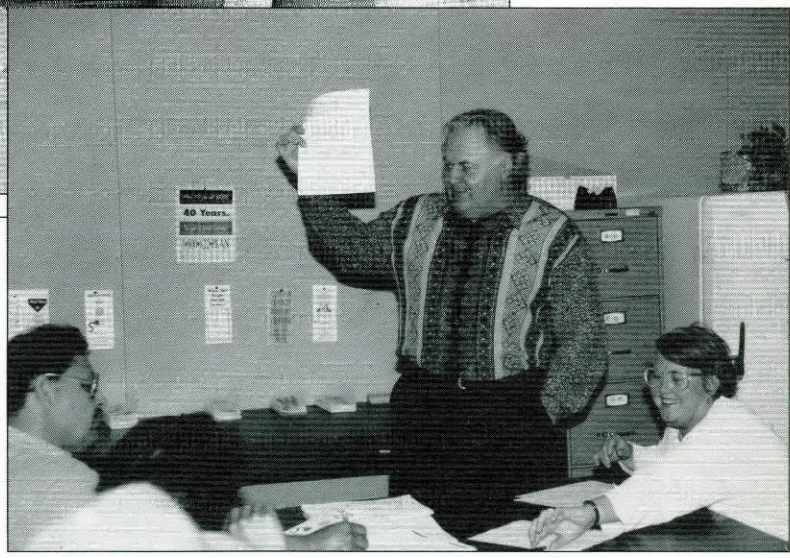
An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission

Job clubs — they're back!



The idea of job clubs isn't new but it's getting a brand new treatment in Brownsville. From employers to mobile learning labs, everyone is getting into the act.

Photos: (top) Client Jesus Jimenez writing down a job posting. (bottom) Counselor Duane Pitts with clients at a job club meeting.



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Texas Rehabilitation
Commission
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78751-2399
Vol. 19 No. 5 May 1996

Job Clubs – An idea come full circle

Duane Pitts, a new counselor in the Brownsville Field Office, came up with the idea of starting a job club in January. Since its inception, the job club has been gathering momentum in a snowball effect.

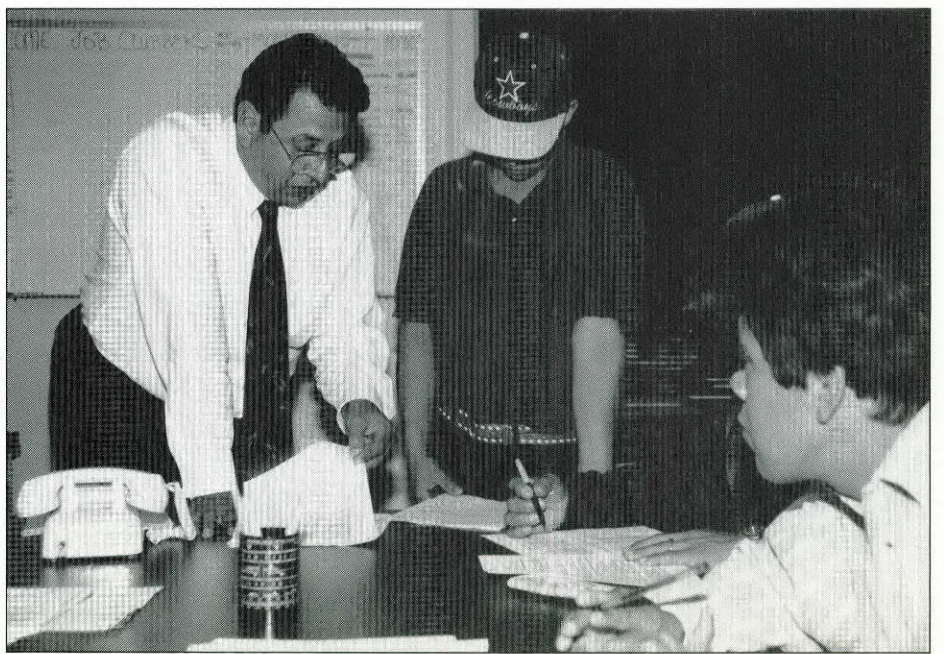
The job club is a team effort of RSTs and counselors in the field office where counselors take turns conducting the weekly meetings. The meetings will soon increase to two days a week with hopes for going to daily meetings. "If I can work on the job club a couple of hours a month and serve my clients, I actually maximize my time," says Pitts. "It's a lot better than an hour or two a day with 20 clients and, this way, I don't hire out those placement services."

Part support group, part classroom structure, the weekly agenda for the club is client driven and constantly changing. One week a resume or application workshop is offered. The next, a newspaper journalist comes to help clients write work wanted ads (which were published for free.) Each week, a mobile learning lab stocked with computers pulls up and offers, among other things, job specific skills development. Staff from the Texas Employment Commission occasionally come to speak about the local labor market. Clients share their experiences in looking for employment and get feedback from others.

Employer visits to the club meetings have also become very popular. Clients find out from employers what they want in an employee. And, it gives TRC an opportunity to establish relationships with businesses who are open to working with clients.

Pitts says that the job club also serves another important purpose. It points out those who need individualized counseling relative to employment. "We've given training, we've taught them how to write a resume and how to interview, so when this doesn't work, we know it comes down to helping them overcome some other last personal hurdles," says Pitts.

"A lot of the people we work with have heard for so long that they can't do it and slowly they lose their ability to shine, to be aggressive when it comes to getting a job. We help them gain their confidence back."



Fourth and Long

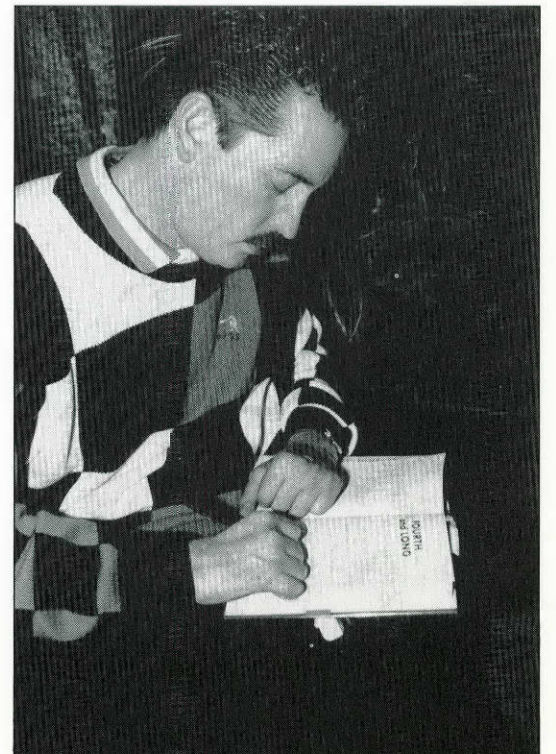
TRC Board Member Kent Waldrep calls his new book, *Fourth And Long*, a chronicle of his "adventure through the Medical Twilight Zone." But it's more than that. *Fourth and Long* offers hope and encouragement to those learning to deal with a disability. And for those without a disability, it's an interesting story and a good way to spend a couple of hours.

On Oct. 26, 1974, Waldrep, a TCU running back, landed head-first on artificial turf. The fall resulted in quadriplegia. Since that time, Waldrep has shown he is a true fighter — not only in learning to cope with his disability — but in refusing to accept conventional medical theory that any paralysis after six months is permanent and he is continuing a search for its cure.

Recently, Waldrep was at Barnes and Noble Booksellers in Austin for a book-signing. In a well-attended gathering, he gave candid answers to questions asked and insight into why he wrote the book, co-authored with Mary Malone.

"The impossible just takes a little longer," says Waldrep. "They told me I would never have children, but here I am the father of two sons. They told me there is no cure for paralysis, but recent progress tells me there is and I refuse to give up hope."

Kent Waldrep signing his book for a fan.



Above: Client Christina Zinns at a computer in the literacy lab. Top right: Counselor Victor Sabala helping clients with telephone skills and filling out applications.

Supported Employment – It’s Catching On

Caldwell County personifies the image of rural Texas ... rolling hills, small towns. Communities where just about everyone knows everybody and where change happens slowly and in small doses.

In Sept. 1995, TRC selected Caldwell County as one of 10 sites for the Supported Employment Systems Change Grant. Through a joint effort between the Capitol Area United Cerebral Palsy (UCP), Texas Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR), TRC, and local consumers and businesses, the concept of supported employment in Lockhart is catching on.

“Lockhart has been very supportive. A lot of folks thought that, in a small community, supported employment wouldn’t work. But it is working and, if it works here, we know it can work anywhere,” says Counselor Jenny Lagergren, who covers Caldwell County for TRC.

In a nutshell, the grant’s purpose in Lockhart is to move persons with disabilities from a sheltered workshop to employment in the community. Much of the credit for the grant’s success at this site goes to the strong efforts of Walter Jackson and Debbie Hall, who manage the facility for MHMR. (Hall now works with UCP as project manager for the grant.)

Jackson says that they have been laying the groundwork for supported employment in Lockhart for several years but with limited progress. “The grant gave us a tremendous boost,” he says. “It allowed us to do training, which is a key factor in moving clients out into the community.”

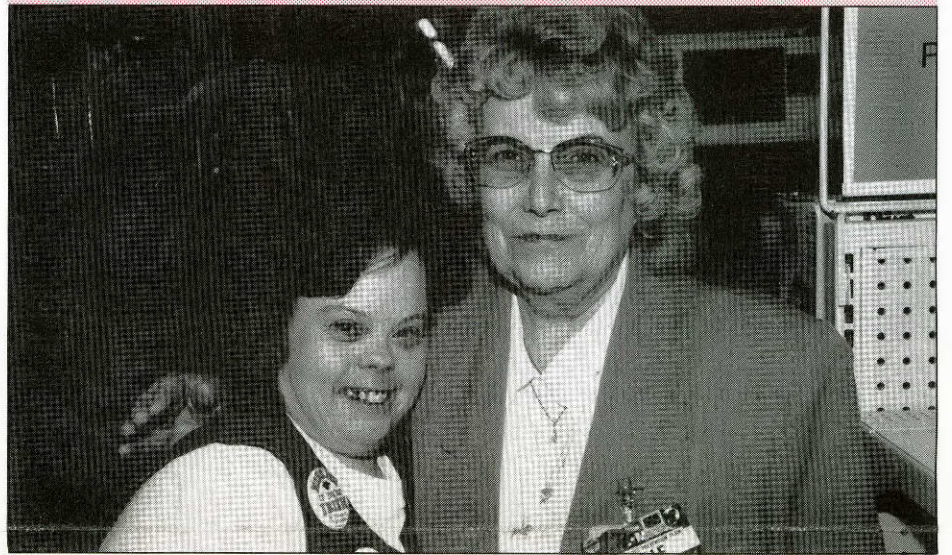
Training twice a month for staff, consumers, parents and employers in the community offers education on a variety of disability-related issues. “Prejudice and fear are based on lack of information and understanding,” adds Jackson. “With this training, employers are becoming accepting and willing to work with people with severe disabilities.”

A big part of this grant is sharing information on what works. Here’s what’s working in Lockhart:

Exposure – “Whatever is happening in the community, we’re there,” says Hall. “We rent booths, hand out brochures and talk up the idea of supported employment. We also take our clients out in the community so people can see us, such as coffee in MacDonaldis or a walk to the bank. Our clients are citizens just like anyone else and others become more educated about what cerebral palsy, mental retardation, or other disabilities are all about.

Local advisory boards – “It’s important to get community leaders in an active role,” says Jackson. “We discuss our needs and where we want to go. They guide us and help get the word out.”

Flexibility – “Keeping an open mind and being flexible is so important,” says Lagergren. “Staff in the workshops can change their outlook with education. So, it’s important to work together and listen to each other.”



Lockhart Walmart Personnel Manager Artie Lavin (right) with Supported Employment Client Belinda Embry. Belinda made the transition from a sheltered workshop and enjoys her job. Lavin says she’s a dependable and motivated worker.

TOOLTIME

Here are some features some you may be familiar with. If so, well done! If not, give it a try. It can save you time letting the tools do the work for you and might even be fun.

CUT-N-PASTE: Did you realize it’s easy to cut and paste between applications? For example, you can cut or copy text from an Amipro document and put it in a cc:Mail message. Just highlight the text you want and select the command from the Edit menu. Then toggle to the other application, put the cursor where you want the text, and select paste from the edit menu. So, did we lose you on the word “togglng”...

TOGGLING: “Togglng” is a funny word that means to go from one application to another without closing the application. It saves time in not having to open and close applications when moving between them. Why it’s important: In the new system, togglng will be the quick and easy way to move between the client’s case folder to other tools, such as the on-line RSM.

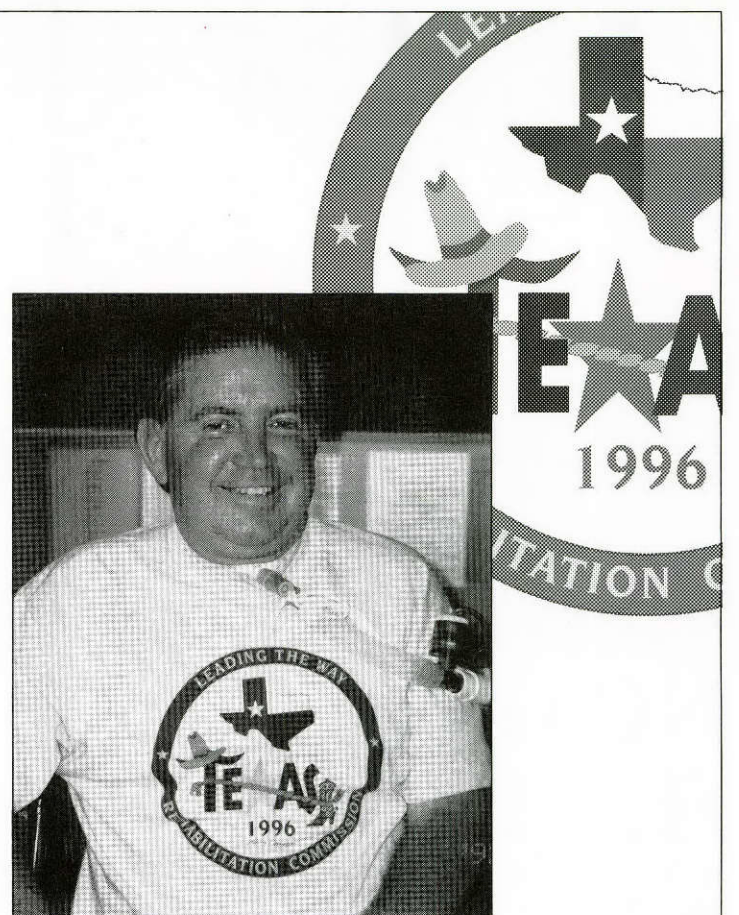
There are numerous ways to toggle. Here’s one: ALT TAB shows you which applications are open. Press and hold down ALT while pressing TAB repeatedly to cycle through running applications. When you release ALT, the application comes to the foreground. For other ways to toggle, look on Windows Help under “Switching Between Applications.”

TIPS: • When you’ve been using a lot of applications at once, it’s a good idea to actually exit Windows to free up your memory. Closing applications doesn’t do it.

• Some applications such as cc:Mail and Organizer use a lot of memory. If you are heavy users of these programs, open them and leave them open. Repeated opening and closing actually uses more memory than leaving them open.

Are there tasks you think you might be doing the hard way? Is there a feature you have never tried because you aren’t sure how? Ask us.

In the meantime, don’t forget! ... the TRC Library has some excellent resources for discovering computer tips and tricks.



Leading the way

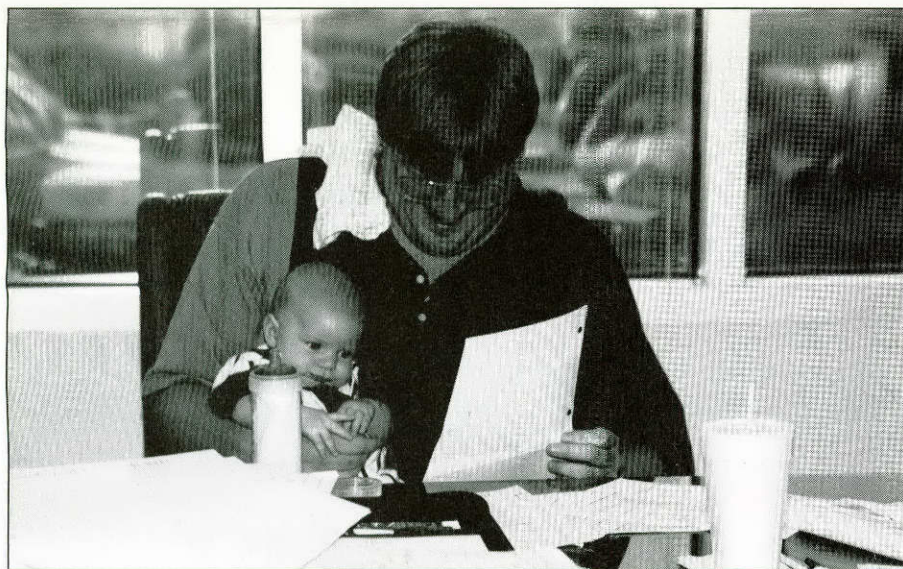
Here’s Larry Coindreau modeling his first place design for the 1996 Employee of the Year Campaign. A last reminder: place your nomination for someone special in your area for Employee of the Year.



Reaching the Max ...

Top: Unit 70 employees left to right: Mary Ann Rackley, Mary Sebesta, Phil Stoke and Julie Casner. Bottom Left: Region V employee June Armstrong. Bottom Right: Lisa Allen of the East Austin Field Office.

Correction: Last time we ran Maximizers, we mistakenly called Janie Escobedo and Lisa Allen a counselor/RST team. They are a MSS/AST team.



Tim Spang shows the new RSM to a tough audience, his brand new baby. TRC is trying to make policy as clear as it can, so if Baby Spang can understand it, the policy's a keeper.

Across the State March 1996

Welcome Aboard!

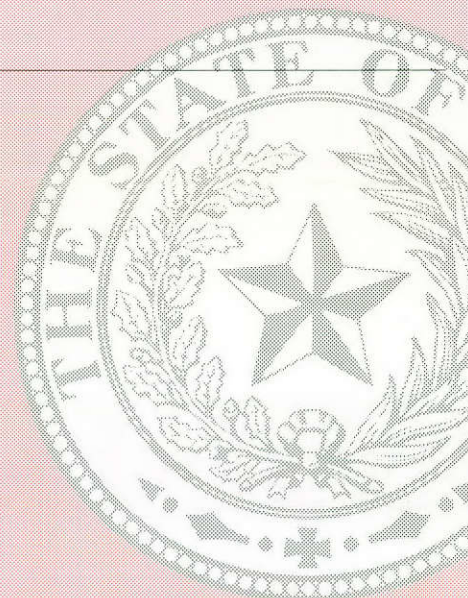
- Anita Garcia, administrative technician
- Roger Darley, legal examiner
- Lori Henry, planner
- Shirley Bates, counselor
- Beverly Tant, RST
- Glen Cagle, counselor
- John Gibson, Jr., administrative technician
- Helen Brooks, RST
- Tamatra Owens, secretary
- Lori Petty, RST
- Raul Tello, counselor
- Donna Sonnier, counselor
- Rosa Garay, RST

Retirements

Charlotte West, clerical supervisor in Central Office, retired after 25 years of service with the Commission.

Awards May 1996

- 10 Years
 - Sandy Pierson
 - Lynn Gray
- 15 Years
 - Tammie Saucedo
 - Darla King
 - Leticia Casares
- 20 Years
 - Edna Hollingsworth
- 25 Years
 - Donna Harris
 - Verlon Strickland



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