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

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The Dallas Cowboys double-win was great. The Chicago Bulls three-peat was marvelous. But, move over for the Movin' Mavs of UTA wheelchair basketball — they have won four, count 'em, four consecutive national titles.

On March 9, in front of a boisterous home crowd of 2,000 fans, the 60-32 win over the Fighting Illini of the University of Illinois marked the first time in National Intercollegiate Wheelchair Basketball history that a team has accomplished a four-peat. Starting center Jason Van Beek broke the record for most points scored in a National Championship game.

Four of the starting five players are TRC clients in the Arlington Field Office (Sonia Nixon is their counselor) and the



remaining starter is a client from West Texas. Coach Jim Hayes is also a former client.

"This was the first time the National Title has been played in Arlington and was so exciting to watch," says Nixon. "It's such a great program — a real confidence booster and gives the players recognition and acceptance on campus."

"Jim Hayes does a great job with the team," adds Nixon. "I am proud

that these are serious students in competitive fields such as engineering, business and architecture. They work hard as students and Hayes emphasizes that their studies come first."

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4

consecutive national titles

TOP: Guard Chhay Mak, junior engineering student, celebrates "in the net" after their win. LEFT: First team All American, no. 5 Jason Van Beek, and second team All American, no. 12 Rusty Belknap, challenge a fighting Illini player for the ball in the final game. Jason and Rusty were tournament MVPs.

**March 1994
Service Awards**

Region I

20 years

Margaret Christian

Region II

10 years

Jane A. Ethridge

Barry L Hill

20 years

Patience Green

Region III

10 years

Ila Jistel

15 years

Paul Goldborer

Region IV

10 years

Michael Schepperly

Region V

10 years

Roger Peterson

DDS

10 years

Carolina Sanders

15 years

Vickie Knoblauch

20 years

Dora Reyna

Reyes Gonzales

Dennis Neitsch

Kaye Rogers

Mary Raigosa

25 years

Phyllis McKee

Central Office

10 years

Araceli Acuna

Thomas Belloni

Kay Beauchamp

15 years

Leslie Delvige

20 years

Roy Larsen

Edward Villarreal

25 years

Barbara Swift

Two DDS employees grab top SSA honors



Award winners Esther Diaz(left) and Dave Ward (right) with Ken Vogel.

The Social Security Administration recognized two DDS employees for outstanding achievement. Dave Ward, associate commissioner for Administrative Management Services and Esther Diaz, director of Staff Development, accepted the awards in person at the Disability Determination Services Management Forum in Boston in early April.

Nominated by Ken Vogel, Ward was surprised with the honors when he arrived at the Conference. But he is no stranger to winning awards. Many of you may recall that he won the "Manager of the Year" award in Kerrville last summer.

Diaz was also surprised in getting her award. She says she was called up to Dave Ward's office (her supervisor) and he was so solemn that she thought something was wrong. He then called Ken Vogel

into the office and handed her the memo. "I thought I was going to read something bad, and it turned out to be the notification of my award," says Diaz. "First I was relieved, then I was really happy."

Here are excerpts from their nominations:

"Dave Ward leads by example and earns the trust of his staff. He

inspires his staff to put forth their best effort and is perceived as one who is constantly pushing himself to higher levels of performance. The words "that's not my job" or "what's in it for me" are not part of his vocabulary. In a whirlwind of changing priorities and ever-increasing tasks, he has a remarkable ability to stay focused on key issues."

"Esther Diaz has been proactively involved in the planning, organizing, developing and implementing of all major training initiatives in the Texas DDS for the last four years. During the past year, she coordinated two DE classes that were in training assignment concurrently. As coordinator for the TRC United Way Campaign, her innovative ideas created wide-spread employee interest and enthusiasm."

Coelho succeeds Dart

On March 2, President Clinton appointed Tony Coelho to succeed Justin Dart as Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. Coelho, who has epilepsy, was a U.S. Representative and introduced the original version of ADA in the House. Upon retiring from Congress in 1989, he has done extremely well in the private sector and continues to be an active supporter of disability rights groups.

A new look in Programs

By now, most people in the field are aware of the new look in Programs. One big change is that regional program specialists have been decentralized. Instead of three in Central Office, there will be one specialist in each region. Lauren Begam-Brannan is moving to Region V and Johnny Weddington to Region III as new regional program specialists. Regions I, II and IV are currently working on filling the positions in their areas.

As well, there are some new positions in Programs and some specialists will be performing some new functions. A familiar face to many, Mike Brevell, is the new program specialist for VR Process and Quality Placement. He will assist the regional program specialists in making sure that information about RSM policy and

procedures is given consistently around the state. He will also lead the effort in developing a comprehensive state plan on job development and placement.

"When there are changes, there is usually confusion and anxiety in the field as to whom to call," says Roger Ward. "We want employees to know that the support is there for them. First, employees with questions can call their regional program specialist or area manager. They can also look at the new assignment sheet to find out which program specialist they should be talking to. In addition, any employee in Central Office Programs will assist field staff in contacting the right person, especially during this transition period."

We want employees to know that support is there for them

Lessons Learned

Two Re-engineering task force members, Jimmy Jackson and George Schneider, just returned from a National Re-engineering Conference held in Chicago. They say they brought back some valuable lessons that will help TRC in its own efforts.

"I feel that TRC is definitely on track with what we're doing," says Jackson. "But we also discovered areas in which re-engineering efforts can be sabotaged. Although change is good, it's uncomfortable for many

people and there will be resistance — especially in a project that will dramatically change the way we do business."

Jackson describes the process as a contact sport, rather than rocket science. "This project will not be easy and there will be bumps in the road. What we've learned from this conference is that support systems need to be in place to succeed."

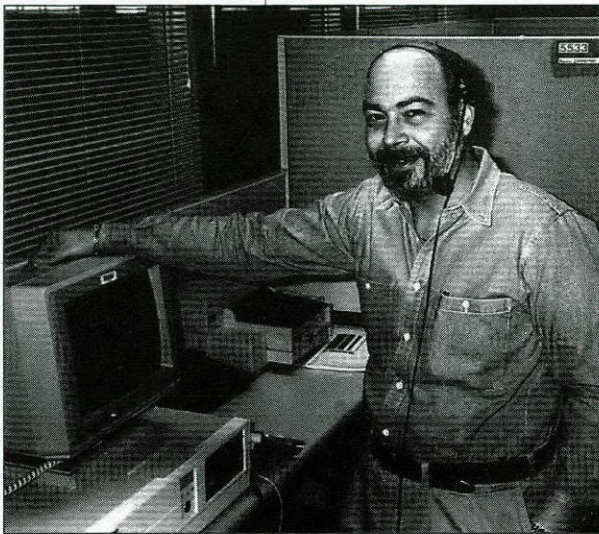
Things needed for success include:

- Commitment of top, senior and mid-management;
- Relentless communication of the effort;

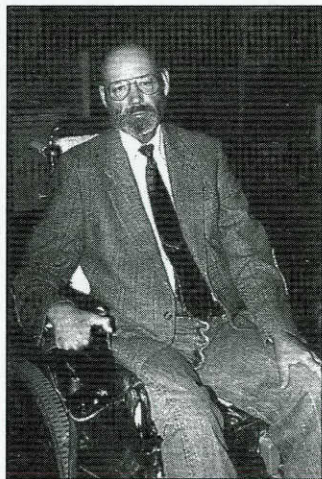
- Significant value added to our customers (clients, counselors/RSTs and service providers);
- Process first, then automation to support (automating existing problems merely helps you make mistakes faster.)

"Rehabilitation employees need to own and design the re-engineering process," says Jackson. "As a continuation of TQM, who knows better how the job should be done than the persons doing the work?"

MEET THE TRC Tech Team



TOP: The Tech Team is finding new applications for existing equipment. For example, voice-activated computers were designed for persons with mobility impairments but also work well for persons with learning disabilities. Roger Levy demonstrates a voice-activated computer. RIGHT: Newcomer to the group, Jim Talley.



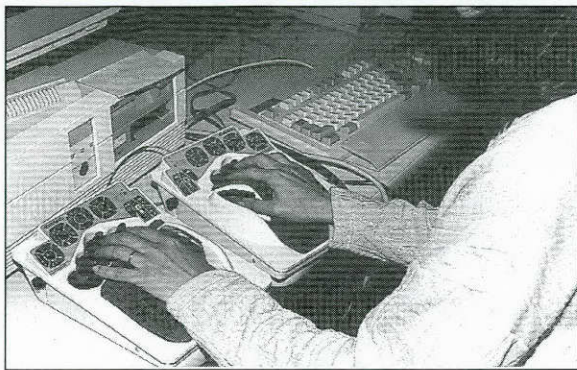
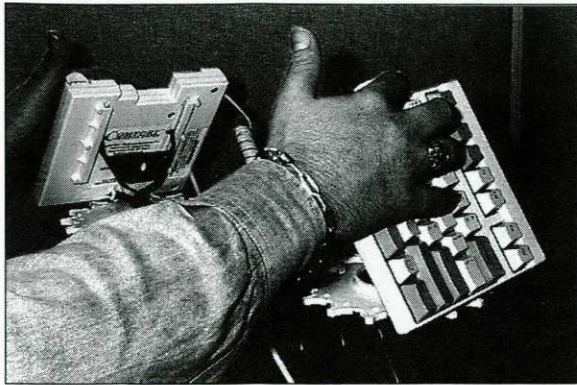
There's a great resource for counselors in Central Office that some may not be familiar with. TRC's Tech Lab has been operating for over 11 years now, but with the assistance of a federal grant and new changes in technology, it's come a long way in the last few years.

"It's a full-time job just keeping up with all the new technology," says Lydia Main, rehabilitation information technician. "There is so much available now for our clients." Main says that counselors call in with barriers to employment or increased independence for clients and it's her job to provide options to overcome those barriers through technology. "I had a call recently where a client could work but that he was in a wheelchair and the job required standing," says Main. "His solution was a stand-up wheelchair."

Good news is that prices are coming down for some high-tech equipment. A couple of years ago, the cost for a voice-activated (voice to text) computer program was \$9,000. Now it can be purchased for \$2,500 — a big difference in price.

Although the new high-tech equipment is exciting, Roger Levy, program specialist for Technology, says that it's the "low-tech" solutions that are typically used. Levy also reports that the types of disabilities they get calls for are changing from predominately spinal cord injuries to a wider variety of disabilities.

IT'S LIKE PUTTING TOGETHER A PUZZLE IN FIGURING O



New solutions for persons with carpal tunnel syndrome include split keyboards (top) and "Data-hand."

**We like
to focus on
what a client
can do, not
what he/she
can't do.**

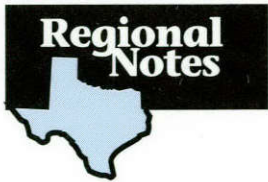


Main shows how small a portable TDD has become for persons with hearing impairments. Behind her, telephones and other communication devices are displayed that can help persons with different disabilities.

"The biggest misconception about us is that assistive technology is always high-tech, when so much of what we do is simple positioning and job restructuring," he says. "We look at how people do a task and come up with alternative ways to do it that are cost effective and work for the client." An example of this is simply taking a rolled-up towel to use as lumbar support for persons with back problems.

Main says that what she likes most about her job is that it is something new everyday. "When a counselor calls, we like to focus on what a client can do, not what he/she can't do. Then it's like putting together a puzzle in figuring out what type of assistance would work best. Today, there are more options for clients. Just because one approach works well for one client doesn't mean it will work for another. It's very important to treat everyone on an individualized basis."

UT WHAT TYPE OF ASSISTANCE WOULD WORK BEST



Region I

Jim Lee, counselor in the Wichita Falls Field Office, passed away after a brief battle with cancer. Lee had been with TRC for over 20 years. There is a memorial fund to help Lee's family cover the cost of medical expenses. Contributions can be made to the Jim Lee Memorial Fund (Account #74576), Union Square Federal Credit Union, 1401 Holiday, Wichita Falls, 76301.

Steve Ingram is the new counselor in the Odessa Field Office.

Lisa Enriquez was hired as RST in the El Paso Central Field Office.

Amy Gilmore was selected as RST for the Wichita Falls Field Office.

Region II

Donald White, counselor in the Weatherford Field Office, retired after 19 years of service with the Commission.

Leslie Wright has been hired to fill the RST position in the Fort Worth West Field Office.

Jerri Locke is the new counselor in the Fort Worth Central Field Office.

Region III

Cheryl Smith is the new RST for the Austin Community College caseload.

Region IV

Carol Young is the new area manager for the Houston Southwest/Katy Unit and Rosa Broussard is the new area manager in the Houston Central/TIRR Unit. Both have been counselors in the region and bring a wealth of management experience to their positions.

Region V

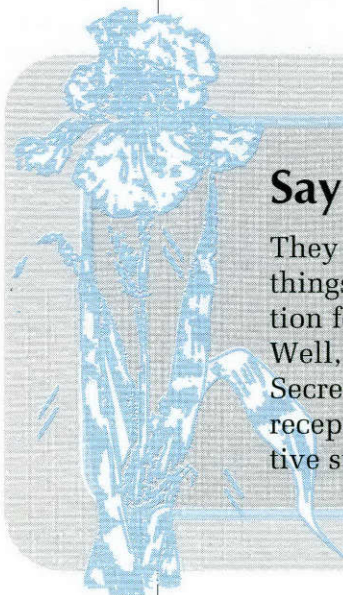
Emetrio Pelayo, counselor in the San Antonio Central Field Office, retired after 23 years with TRC.

Central Office

John Davis is the new associate commissioner for Automated Services. Davis has worked in Automated Services for over 20 years.

Mike Hendon joined the staff in the Budget Office. Hendon has worked in Financial and Planning Services for six years, most recently in the Accounting Office.

Bill Rehm was selected as a management technician for the Planning Office.



Say it with flowers

They do it all — managing a myriad of responsibilities to keep things running smoothly. And typically they get little recognition for their important role in the success of any organization. Well, on April 24-30, you can change that. During Professional Secretaries Week, take the opportunity to show a secretary, receptionist, clerk, executive assistant and/or other administrative support personnel that he/she is appreciated.

The following are excerpts from letters received by the Public Information Office:

A letter written to Commissioner Arrell regarding DE Patricia Jackson, Unit 07:

I am a social worker and one of my responsibilities is to certify the County Indigent Health Care Program participants, which includes case managing the SSI application and appeal process.

One of our applicants is a 19 year-old young lady, who speaks Spanish only and has no transportation of her own. She has had paralysis in her face, hands and legs since she was three days old but has never accessed any medical care.

Patricia Jackson, examiner with TRC, has been especially helpful in coordinating appointments for this client and has been sensitive to her transportation and travel needs.

Jackson's sensitivity to the needs of individuals, her pleasant, positive attitude and her professionalism exemplifies TRC's mission. She is a shining example for your agency.

A letter written to Dennis Kutach, area manager of the Dallas Southeast Unit, regarding the excellent work of Counselor Nancy Corley:

I would like to express my sincere appreciation

to TRC for your financial support in helping me attend several computer courses. This training will be of great value when my present employer converts our present office operations to a computer based system.

I would also like to express my professional admiration of an outstanding job well done by Nancy Corley for her counseling assistance and sincere concern with my situation. With Nancy, one is never made to feel like just another number to be run through the system. With her knowledge, experience and professional attitude, she is truly a great credit to her profession and TRC.

Letters



The new State Independent Living Council (SILC) is up and running.

Mandated by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992, this new Council just conducted its second meeting in one month and is getting down to business.

As with Texas Rehabilitation Advisory Council, its members are appointed by the Governor's Office. Seven of eight of the former council members were appointed to the new Council. And eight new members join the ranks.

In addition to the duties of the former council, the new Council has new responsibilities. "It is mandated in the Act that the Council chairperson, in concert with its other members, has co-signature authority on the State Plan along with TRC and the Commission for the Blind," says Vernon Dement, program specialist for Independent Living and TRC's representative to SILC. "The RSA is looking closely at the State Plan for guidance in funding IL activities in the State."

The Council will also coordinate activities with TRAC, hold hearings and forums to gather input and report to the Commissioner of RSA on IL business.

TRC's New Mission Statement

TRC exists to assist people with disabilities to participate in their communities by achieving employment of choice, living as independently as possible and accessing quality services.

TRC achieves this mission by :

- Involving people with disabilities in decisions that affect their lives and services by TRC;
- Valuing the diversity of people and providing an equal opportunity environment which offers challenging and satisfying work;
- Managing programs which are efficient and effective;
- Being an agency that is accountable to the public.

Come great product to have come out of the strategic planning effort late last year was a new mission statement. Accomplished by a stakeholder committee, it was done interactively with consumers and gives a powerful new focus on why TRC exists.

"We had a diverse group with people who were very interested in what the Commission is all about and the new Mission Statement reflects that," says Terry Smith, Region V director and chair of the stakeholder group. "It focuses on people with disabilities as our primary customer and emphasizes their involvement and choice in all aspects of the service delivery system."



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