

TRC TODAY

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

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FOR THE TEACHER

Kineta Bridge-Canderos doesn't consider herself disabled. It is also the last thing other people think about after speaking with her for a few minutes. Kineta exudes a positive, exuberant, irrepressible attitude that is infectious. It is this attitude that makes her so effective as a teacher in a special education classroom.

What is unusual is that it could have so easily turned out the other way. Even though Kineta's disability is cerebral palsy, she was labeled as mentally retarded upon entering the Washington State school district. Put in special classes, she was not challenged — academically or physically.

This changed when Kineta moved with her grandparents to Port Isabel, Texas when she was eight. Here, the school principal disagreed with the initial diagnosis and put Kineta in a regular classroom.

"All of a sudden, I had to carry my own weight and people expected things from me," says Bridge-Canderos. "I struggled for



a year. I had a lot of catching-up to do. And my teacher didn't give me any slack. She was tough on me and instilled in me the idea of doing for myself. It made all the difference."

Since this time, Kineta's goal has been to pass this on and help other kids in similar situations. Accomplishing this goal has not come easy. She had physical limitations and accessibility barriers to overcome. And she had other dreams to reconcile.

When Maricela Garcia, counselor in the Brownsville Field Office, met Kineta as a sophomore in high school, she was frustrated and depressed. Going through growing pains and teenage concerns, she

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An ounce of prevention . . .

You've heard the old saying about an ounce of prevention being worth a

pound of cure. Well, TRC hopes this statement rings true.

In a joint grant with the Texas Department of Health, the agencies are conducting research to develop an integrated disabilities prevention program. TRC's role in the project is to identify ways to prevent secondary disabilities related to traumatic head and spinal cord injuries.

Secondary disabilities are products of the original one which are not immediately recognizable. They are typically frequent, expensive, lead to a loss in productivity and include such problems as pressure sores, urinary tract infections, loss of mobility and depression.

"Each pressure sore costs about \$30,000," says John Fenoglio, deputy commissioner for administrative services. "What makes this an even sadder situation is they are so preventable with the proper treatment and training."

"Past research shows timely referrals to a rehabilitation center makes significant difference in whether people get certain types of

Secondary disabilities are just too costly... especially since they are so preventable.

--John Fenoglio

secondary disabilities," adds Fenoglio. "This research has direct implications for our clients."

TRC client, Joseph Hayes, was selected as research specialist for the project. Hayes recently received a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from the University of Texas.

He describes himself as the "typical" spinal cord injured person. "I was a male risk-taker of median age involved in a typical accident at a typical time of year," he says. "Having first-hand knowledge of and empathy for the subject will help me greatly."

"The idea of establishing a R & D function in TRC is a long time coming. It originally came out of an interactive planning meeting in 1990. We hope that this grant is the nucleus for other similar projects," says Fenoglio.

Cause for Alarm

During central office's fire drill on June 4, several concerns were confirmed. Namely, that the building's state-of-the-art evacuation system for persons with disabilities was not operating according to design.



"Our system was designed to allow persons with disabilities access to a pressurized vestibule next to a designated elevator and the time from the alarm to the arrival of fire personnel to go down the elevator and out the front door," says John Fenoglio, deputy commissioner of administrative services.

After the building was occupied, changes were made to the system, but they were not documented. One of the changes was that ALL elevators go immediately to the first floor and wait for firepersons to access them. Now, persons in wheelchairs must go with a designated "buddy" to a designated staircase and wait for firepersons to evacuate them out of the building.

"Most persons in wheelchairs would opt for going down the elevator," says Fenoglio, "And we want to give them that option if it can be done safely."

After the fire drill, Fenoglio met with representatives from the State's Fire Marshall's Office, the Austin Fire Department, General Services and Dover Elevators. He issued a challenge to come up with possible solutions to the problem. The same group will meet again in one month.

New Beginnings

Halfway to a better life

Traditionally, the chronically mentally ill have been one of the more difficult populations for the TRC counselor to place. In many instances, the only option for these clients is to live their lives in institutions. A pilot project in San Antonio just might be changing this.

Called New Beginnings, this program is geared specifically towards the chronically mentally-ill. Initiated by TRC and implemented by Easter Seal Foundation, one of its goals is to hone interpersonal and communication skills, then hopefully place the clients in a job.

So far, it has been very successful. Originally it started as a one person operation, Adele Gonzales, as both case worker and project coordinator. Now, the program has grown to a four-person team and serves approximately 35 TRC clients.

In its first year and a half, New Beginnings successfully placed approximately 17 clients in employment, giving it a 30 to 40 percent success rate.

"What is so significant about this is that we are dealing with a group that usually has a dismal chance of ever finding employment," says TRC Counselor Norman Hooge. "In addition, most of the clients who do not find employment are not going back into institutions, but into different programs."

"It's a win-win situation," he adds. "Not only are we saving federal and state monies by avoiding institutionalization, we are improving our client's quality of life ... isn't that what it's all about?"

The key to the program's success is providing a nurturing environment and flexibility in structure. "We adjust to

individual needs," says Gonzales.

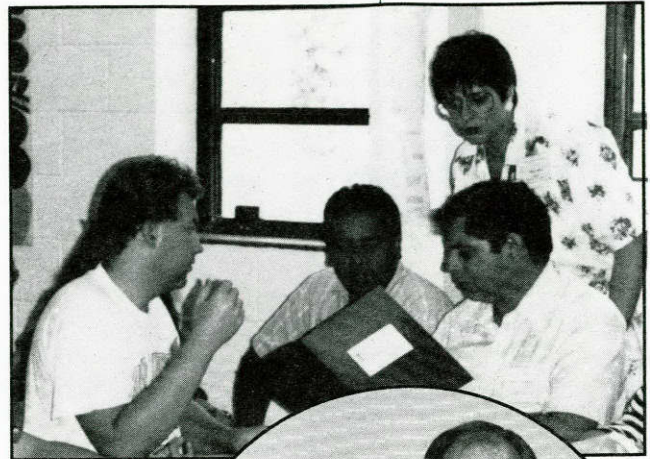
"And we are there for them if they need us."

Another reason for success is the commitment of the program's staff. Gonzales does not treat her job like an eight-to-five. She makes herself very accessible to clients, even giving them her home telephone number.

Her hard work has been noticed. She recently received a Special Recognition Award from TEXAMI (Texas Alliance for the Mentally Ill) given for implementing and maintaining a rehabilitation program for people with mental illness.

The program does not end when the job is found. Carlos Medina, program placement officer, continues to check on the working client at least twice a month to provide extra support. If a client starts having problems or feels that they can no longer function in that job, they are welcomed back into the group until they are ready to try again.

Pride was written on everyone's face who spoke of New Beginnings — from Hooge to Gonzales and her staff to the clients themselves. "They teach new skills, meet our needs and show each of us respect, all in a loving way," said one client. "They have given me hope."



Above— Clients working together. Below— Adele Gonzales, project coordinator with Norman Hooge, TRC counselor.

Regions Meet

HB 7 Updated

...we have not taken a back seat and waited for things to happen . . . we have been intimately involved in every phase of development.

--Max Arrell



For the first time ever, employees from the six regional offices met in Austin. The purpose — to give the field an update on changes brought about by important recent legislation.

"This meeting is more to tell you what has not happened," said Commissioner Max Arrell in opening remarks. "We want to ease anxieties and give you some valuable information that you can take back to the field."

Among the topics discussed were the strategic plan, uniform regional boundaries, client service delivery, the client access pilot program and co-location. In-depth information was given during presentations which were followed by question and answer sessions with the Commissioner, who spoke openly and candidly about each issue.

"What I want you to know is that, in all of these areas, we have not taken a back seat and waited for things to happen," says Arrell. "We have been intimately involved in every phase of development. I feel good about where we stand right now."

Uniform Regional Boundaries

In early June, Richard Ladd, new commissioner of Health and Human Services, announced the selection of 11 uniform boundaries for Health and Human Services. "This does not mean we are going to divide up into 11 regions," says Arrell. "Aside from minor adjustments, it will not affect people out in the field or disrupt services. All this means is that we will standardize reporting, planning and budgeting according to these regions for the new commissioner."

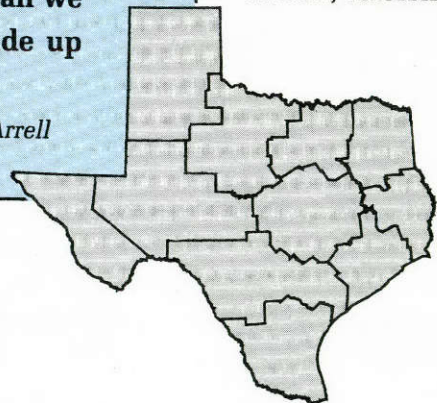
Client-Service Delivery

Although, there has been much talk about the "generic counselor," the implementation of this concept is greatly limited in vocational rehabilitation at this time.

"The law protects us," says Arrell, referring to

This does not mean we are going to divide up into 11 regions

--Max Arrell



the Rehab Act. The act says that for a state to receive federal funds, there must be a designated unit or agency with a full-time director that provides its services. This agency must be responsible for administering the vocational rehabilitation programs and have a full-time staff devoted to these services.

"In Florida, where they tried the generic counselor idea, the matter went all the way to the Supreme Court," says Arrell. "In the end, federal law prevailed. In my conversation with Ladd, he was clearly well aware of the Rehab Act and what must be done to receive federal VR monies."

Client Access Pilot Project

Three sites have been chosen for the client access project: Greater Dallas Metro, Lubbock County and Schleicher County. These projects will be testing co-location, a centralized client-intake and a coordinated information/referral system of available services.

TRC did not send out any proposals to be included in these projects. "We did not feel it was advantageous to be involved in this," says Arrell. "However, we do want the field cooperating and supporting these people as much as they can."

Co-location

HB 7 required a study of the feasibility of co-location of services.

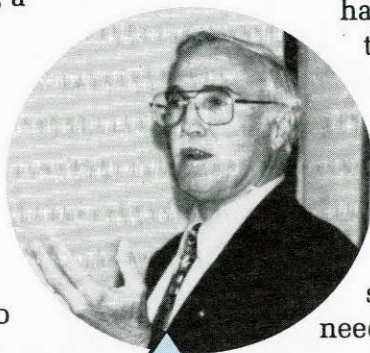
Three criteria must be met for co-location to be further considered: it must enhance client access, there must be no additional cost and it would have to improve the efficiency of service delivery.

Initial findings show that co-location will not meet all of these criteria. In addition, there are other factors against this taking place. "We have repeatedly asked consumers whether they want a one-stop shop," says Charlie Harrison, deputy commissioner. "The answer is overwhelmingly NO."

"Office space is a very political issue," adds Arrell. "And we will not give one inch on the criteria of accessibility for our clients."

In closing remarks, Commissioner Arrell summed up the meeting, "I will not lull you into a false sense of security. I cannot tell you what will happen five or 10 years down the road. What I can tell you is that I think we are in good shape at this moment."

"The field has done a tremendous job. We have the best service delivery system in Texas. What I need you to do is keep up with the day-to-day operations and take care of your business. In return, my commitment to you is to protect the integrity of our programs and make sure we keep our good standing with our customers and the leadership of Texas."



We will not give one inch on the criteria of accessibility for our clients

--Max Arrell

May 1992 Service Awards

Region II 10 years

Doris Hickerson

Region III 10 years

Leticia Casares

15 years

William Parker

Elodia Joyce Flores

Sue Mosley

Region IV 15 years

Helen Lake

Nico Castillo

20 years

Bernadette Tovlin

25 years

Jim Muhlhauser

Region V 10 years

William Floerke Jr.

20 years

Lillian Dupnick

Gary Simpson

Region VI 15 years

Sylvia Spears

DDS

10 years

Patsy Ann Scruggs

Ora Ben

15 years

Jessie Wilborn

20 years

Dan Eudy

Dennis Awbrey

35 years

Sue Arledge

Central Office 15 years

Gwendolyn Guyton

**June 1992
Service Awards**

Region IV

15 years

Rosa Broussard

Region V

20 years

Joe Rodriguez

Region VI

15 years

Linda Campbell

DDS

10 years

Alma Sehion

Sarah Burns

Sonia Rocha

15 years

Warren Napier

20 years

Leonor Hernandez

Verdell Williams

Central Office

15 years

Roger Levy

Roy Larsen

20 years

J. G. Flowers III

James Shaw

Region I

Kelly Yarborough was selected as counselor for the El Paso Central Field Office. She was a job-readiness trainer in Austin and is very active in community disability issues.

Margaret Williams Robinson, an active advocate for people with disabilities, died May 30, 1992. An Amarillo resident, she was appointed to the board of directors of the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities by Gov. Ann Richards.

Robinson was past president of Coalition of Texans with Disabilities and served on the board of the Independent Living Council of Texas.

Region III

Hilda Lerma, counselor, transferred from Corpus Christi and will be assuming the caseload previously served by Douglas Gullickson. She will have the responsibility for general caseload referrals with emphasis on MRs in the North Austin Field Office.

Martha Parker, counselor, transferred from Houston to the North Austin Field Office and will be assuming the caseload previously served by Al Guerrero. She will have responsibility for general caseload referrals as well as serving Burnet and Llano counties.

Judson Anderson was selected as counselor for the Angleton Field Office. He brings several years experience in working with brain injured and deaf/hearing impaired individuals. His caseload will consist of 50 percent general and 50 percent deaf/hearing impaired clients in Brazoria County.

Region V

On May 26 - 28, employees met for the Regional Conference in San Antonio. Employees attended various workshops and during the Employee Recognition Banquet, James L. Jackson, executive deputy commissioner, was keynote speaker and "spark plug awards" were given by field office managers to employees who show vitality on the job. The final day wrapped up with a style show and keynote speaker, Dr. Guadalupe Quintinnila.

**THANKS
We needed that!**

Through her efforts, Becky Anglemyre, medical service coordinator for Region IV, resulted in St. Luke Hospital refunding a whopping \$25,814 to TRC with another \$23,000 arriving soon.

Good work, Becky!!!

Region VI

Betty Irwin, rehabilitation services technician in the Dallas Southwest Field Office, retired after eight years with the Commission.

DDS

Wendell Elkins, disability hearings officer at the Dallas/Fort Worth Office of Disability Hearings, retired after 22 years of service with TRC.

Central Office

David Cohen was selected as program specialist for Information Analysis. Cohen has been with TRC since 1987, primarily at the Baytown Field Office. He has an exceptional educational background in research methods, statistics and environmental design which will assist him with his new duties.

Mike Brevel has been appointed as acting director of Special Services.

Kathy Cumberland joined the ranks of TRC as the new secretary in Media Services. Cumberland brings a number of skills ranging from the graphics arts to writing.

If you need them, they will come . . .

Tuesday morning started like any other in the DDS mailroom ... the arrival of several bins of mail. But this morning would be different.

The mailroom was short staffed and not prepared to deal with the usual high volume of incoming mail. The bottleneck was very predictable, but what happened next was not.

By noon, a board meeting of examiners in TADE caught wind of the situation and decided to offer their assistance. Word reached Unit 70 of the crunch of paper in the mailroom and they decided to donate a little of their time and energy.

By the end of the day, word was all over the building, prompting response from the curious and those anxiously awaiting their mail. At the close of business on Tuesday, people from all parts of DDS had volunteered to pitch in and push the mail.

On Wednesday, more than 40 people had reported to work or had already volunteered to bail the mailroom out of its problem.

"In 22 years at TRC, I have never seen anything like this." says Dee Larson, mailroom supervisor. "The mailroom is often thought of around here as the pits ... people

just don't usually want to work in the mailroom."

Don't tell that to the lady singing "Day-O" while tossing mail in several different slots, or the entire Unit 70 clerical support staff attacking a new stack of mail like hungry vultures. They seem to be enjoying themselves - even in the mailroom.

When volunteers were asked what they were doing here, some typical responses were:

"They needed us."

"Hey, we're Unit 70 - we understand"

Mr. Jackson, the DDS administrator, put it succinctly, "It is a marvelous thing to see people work so hard in volunteering to help out."

Unit 70-- making it happen in the mailroom as they do in their unit.



Teacher *continued from page 1*

wanted to be like everyone else. Garcia worked with Kineta on these issues and, at the same time, prepared her for the SAT exam and helped make career choices.

When Bridge-Canderos went to college in the Valley, Garcia worked closely with her and the university on accessibility issues. TRC also helped arrange for an Amigo scooter to give her more independence.

Kineta's hard work and buoyant attitude has paid off. She recently completed her first year with the San Benito School District. She is also a newlywed. Her new dreams are to travel and to get her doctorate eventually.

This summer, Bridge-Canderos and her husband, who is a paraplegic, are vacationing in the Cayman Islands. When asked about accessibility problems they might run into, her response is "We'll deal with it when we get off the plane."

TEXAS FIESTA EDUCATIVA

On Friday, **August 28 and 29**
at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on the Riverwalk in San Antonio, this bilingual, bicultural conference will focus on the special needs of Hispanic persons with disabilities and their families. The primary goal of the conference is to offer Spanish speaking persons with disabilities, parents and family members as much information as possible about services and resources in the Spanish language.

Texas Fiesta Educativa promotes the interaction of parents and professionals involved with persons with disabilities from all across the state to ensure that all eligible individuals receive services. Topics include legal rights, ADA, specific disabilities, community services and special education.

The registration fee for the two-day conference is \$80 per family and includes two continental breakfasts, reception, lunch, child-care all day Saturday and entertainment. For more information, contact Jose Rodrigues at (512)922-3595 or Veronica toll-free 1-800-223-4206.

1992 CONFERENCE

TRC *Today*

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