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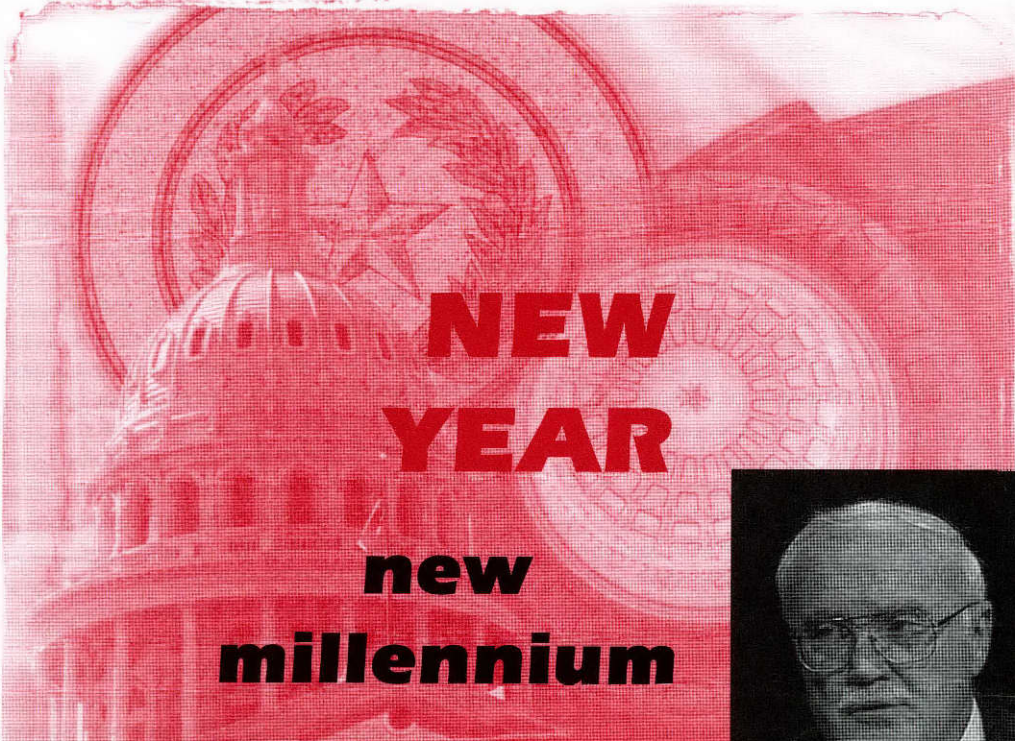
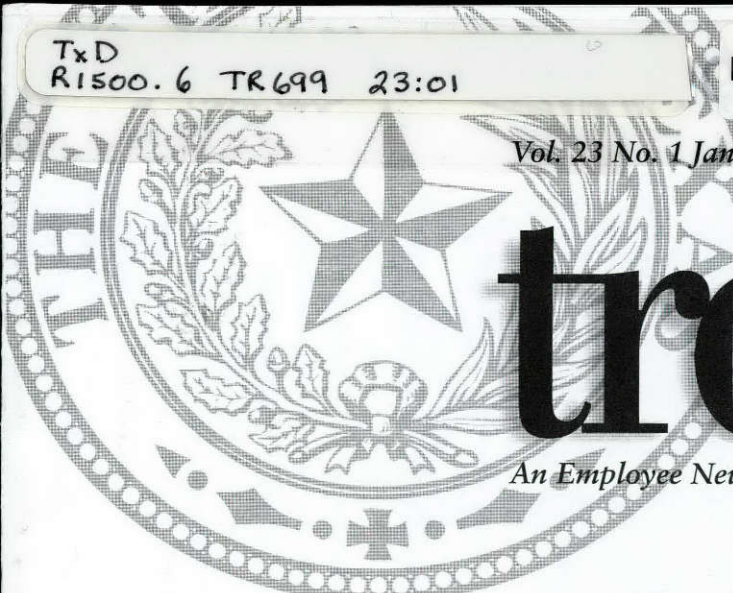
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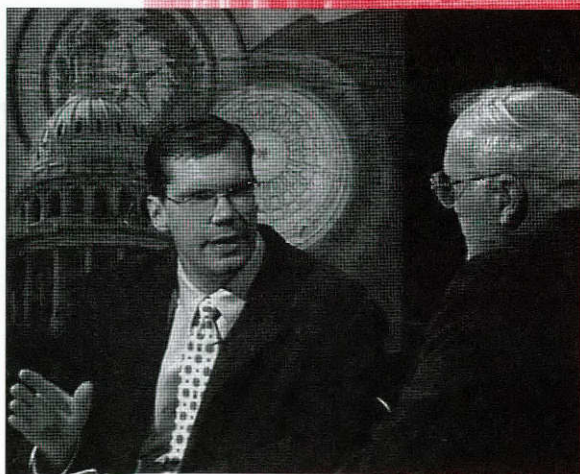
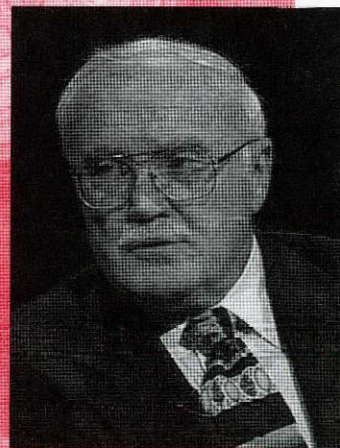
Vol. 23 No. 1 January/February 2000

trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission



**NEW
YEAR**
**new
millennium**



**new
message**

trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission

Texas Rehabilitation
Commission
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78751-2399
Vol. 23 No. 1 March 2000

Commissioner Arrell outlines focus for new millennium

After clearing the Year 2000 milestone, TRC's automated resources were safe and secure and ready to move forward. TRC began the year with a strong message from the leadership. A new "Conversation with the Commissioner" videotape outlines Commissioner Arrell's key themes for all staff.

On this videotape "Conversation with the Commissioner"

Commissioner Arrell shares his views on many issues affecting TRC and its services, including:

- Changes in our daily operations and their effect on our delivery of client and applicant services;
- Issues relating to the budget and employee compensation;
- Issues resulting from the "Sunset" review of the agency including statewide changes in monitoring, training, and regional conferences.

Commissioner Arrell discusses in this videotape certain operational changes and the importance of accountability for all staff. Changes in some TRC policies and a greater emphasis on monitoring are directed at ensuring greater accountability for decisions and performance. Indeed, accountability has been a key message in training sessions, conferences, and meetings throughout the agency.

Accountability and oversight are nothing new in TRC, but the agency is following through with recommendations made by the Sunset Commission during the last legislative session. The Sunset Commission report emphasizes monitoring and accountability in a significant number of their recommendations for TRC. These recommendations have been passed into the state law that governs TRC and its operations.

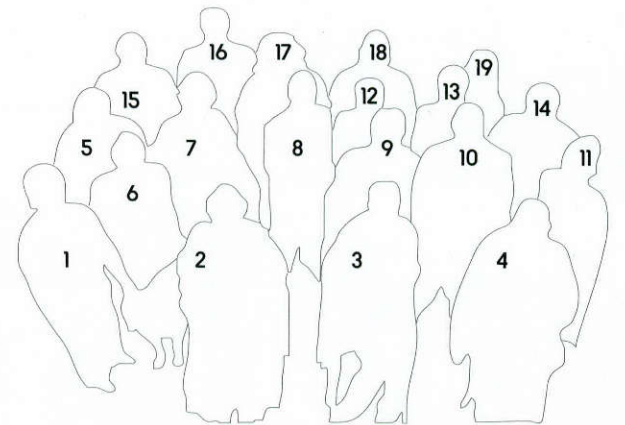
TRC's emphasis on accountability will serve the agency well for the upcoming periodic on-site monitoring that will be conducted by the TRC's federal partner, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). In the next few months, a team from RSA will conduct town meetings and visit TRC to ensure compliance with the federal requirements for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. RSA is conducting these reviews on several state VR agencies, TRC being one of them. Based on these reviews, RSA provides technical assistance to improve the quality of VR services and establishes corrective action plans, if necessary.

Beginning in the next few months, RSA staff will initiate the periodic on-site monitoring review by arranging meetings with state VR agency personnel, State Rehabilitation Council members (the RCT, in Texas), Workforce Investment Act (WIA) partners, the Client Assistance Program (CAP) staff, and others interested in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

The RSA review team is expected to ask questions about a number of issues, some of which are: (1) Informed Client Choice in the VR program; (2) implementation of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)—the plan that sets forth the educational goals for rehabilitation professionals; and (3) Workforce Investment Act (WIA) implementation throughout the 28 Local Workforce Development Boards and the workforce centers across the state.

Governor appoints new RCT members

The Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) met Jan 27-28 to welcome newly appointed members. Anticipating the appointments from Gov. Bush to be made in April 1999, several members continued to serve on the Council even though their terms had expired. "The Governor's Office did an outstanding job appointing the new members and they are an enthusiastic and participatory group," said Anne Brown, Chairperson for the RCT. "We are looking forward to working with TRC to better serve the disabled communities of Texas."



■ Photo Identification: 1-Anne Brown (chairperson) with Josie her service dog, 2-Susan Junek, 3-Kimball White, 4-Larry Gardner, 5-Ettalois Johnson, 6-Sue Ford, 7-Dr.

Susan Blue (Vice Chairperson), 8-John Weeks, 9-Sharon Miller, 10-Willie Harris, 11-Donna Stahlhut, 12-Dawn Bosley, 13-Janice Sam, 14-Malisa Janes; 15-Commissioner Arrell, 16-Leo Ramos, Jr., 17-Susan Rose, 18-Mario Gonzales, 19-Barbara Ritter (RCT Staff).

Not pictured: Frances Armstrong, Robert Hawkins, Jonas Schwartz, Rena Ventura-Jackson.



TRC employees
of the year were
selected and
recognized in
a ceremony at
Central Office
in October.

GROUP 1 – Juanita Cron

Juanita Cron, an RST II in the Dallas Northwest field office, was honored for her willingness to share her talent and knowledge with others. Cron leads by example and her participation in volunteer activities often leads others to join in. She looks for ways to help and is often called upon to translate with Spanish speaking people. Clients ask to talk with her because she is so helpful. She treats every client special and that is obvious by the way they respond to her.

In the community, Cron teaches English as a Second Language, (ESL). In Feb. 1999, she actively worked to get approval of the Dallas Public School Board to pay for teachers to work evenings at different school and church campuses. Cron is a woman who actually does "empower people for life."

Empowering People for Life

This year's winners are:



■ From left to right: Cathy Davis (DDS), Juanita Cron (Dallas Northwest F.O.), and Randy Smith (CO).

GROUP 2 - Cathy Davis

Cathy Davis, a dedicated and conscientious employee at DDS Austin, has the reputation of doing whatever is necessary to get the job done, even if the job is not hers. In addition to her daily assignments, Davis finds time to help others. She served as a mentor when the new computer system was implemented at DDS, but her assistance did not end there. Other staff members ask her for help because she is friendly, approachable and explains in terms that others can understand.

Davis truly believes that sharing what she learns makes the agency stronger and helps everyone do a better job. She developed a new approach to helping staff learn the new computer equipment— a computer training program she calls "TechnoFriday." Every Friday (time and workload permitting), the staff gather to learn a function of their PC's they would not normally use. With the success of each project, the employees gain more self-confidence as well as marketable skills that enhance opportunities for growth and promotions.

GROUP 3 - Randy Smith

Randy Smith, Information Specialist in the Central Office PIO, is a straight shooter who enjoys super working relationships. Other staff often gather around his monitor to see the impeccable technical work and creative designs he creates. Sometimes, among the pearls, there are limitations we need to hear about. We know they are real because we are working with someone whose technical competence is beyond question. Just as important, Smith shines as a communicator, with a calm, open, professional style.

As a professional role model, Smith is at the top. It's everyday business for him to help with multi-media packages. Wherever there are limits, Smith is often there, pushing the envelope. He frequently finds new and different ways to display that tired old information. One administrator said that "Smith invigorated the information in a mission-critical presentation with classy digital photos by taking a short trip through the capitol complex with a camera, and the presentation was a home run in the big league."

New DE Class



■ See our online edition for names of the new DE's.

The largest disability examiners (DE) class assembled at one time at TRC-DDS graduated on Oct. 7. The class incorporated 40 new DE's into the DDS workforce, filling vacancies created when a substantial number of people retired or were promoted. "These vacancies all hit at the same time," says Perry Watson, HRD director at DDS. "We generally have 20-25 vacancies to fill when we start a new class. But, this time, we had over 40 vacancies and we started another class on Dec. 1 to fill more vacancies that have come up since we hired this group." Watson said they accommodated the extra trainees by doubling the size of the main classroom and adding one computer training room to the existing two rooms. "Timing was perfect," continued Watson. "This class immediately followed the computer conversion we completed last spring so we had the extra room already set up to enable us to train everyone at DDS at the same time. Watson says things should go back to normal with the next DE class.

Across the State

Retirements

August 1999

Jesus Franco, 30 years
Mae Goffney, 31 years
Sharon Corry, 15 years
Rogelio Gonzalez, 10 years
Mario Martinez, 29 years
Gilbert Bermea, 25 years
Carol Hilton, 5 years
Dennis Awbrey, 27 years

September 1999

Paul Baganz, 26 years
Carmen Benavides, 5 years
Elliott Arnold Boyles, 25 years
Nancy Hulce, 25 years
William C. Moseley, 26 years
Brenda Myers, 22 years
Jim Tom Nichols, 23 years
Gloria Strickhausen, 26 years
Richard Sutherland, 31 years

October 1999

Carolyn Morrow, 14 years
Suzanne Brunt, 29 years
Sue Wagner, 13 years
Pilar Galvan, 14 years
Barby McCarley, 31 years
Beverly Gajewski, 20 years

November 1999

Jan Colston, 13 years

December 1999

Kathleen C. Jones, 27 years
Ron W. Erwin, 24 years
Reuben M. Taniguchi, 28 years
Freddie M. Glenn, 25 years
Peggy Stewart, 18 years

January 2000

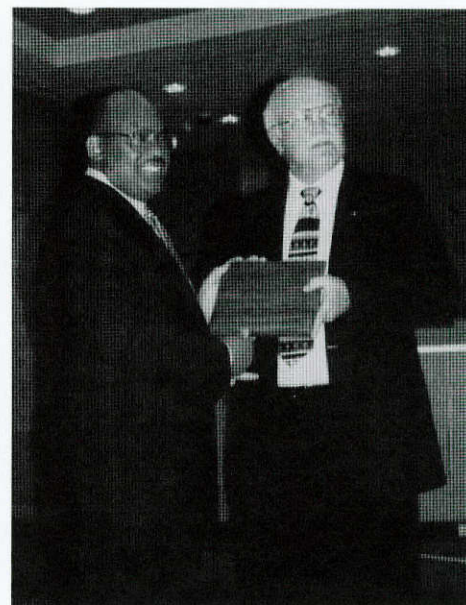
Elmer Blankenship, 30 years
Nancy L. Corley, 21 years
Betty Eli, 21 years
Donald Grohman, 29 years
Ronald P. Gulley, 22 years
Martha N. Pogue, 27 years
Zephyry Suzette Skinner, 27 years
Grace L. Roberts, 26 years
Billy Tumlinson, 27 years

February 2000

Carole Carsey, 5 years
Mary C. Garner, 27 years
Buena V. Henry, 27 years
Linda H. Shaw, 27 years

Welcome Aboard – Please visit our online edition for a list of newcomers to the agency.

Maximizers – A list of employees earning 12 Maximizers will also be online.



Arrell receives award from Social Security

Commissioner Arrell (right) received the Regional Commissioner Citation from Social Security Administration Regional Commissioner, Horace L. Dickerson, Jr., (left) at the Dec. 9, 1999 TRC board meeting. “Max has done an exemplary job,” said Dickerson. “In all categories — productivity, cost efficiency, accuracy — Texas is always at the top. During my three-year tenure at SSA, I have been very impressed with the commitment and high level of support that we have received from Commissioner Arrell. This citation recognizes his leadership in fostering a cooperative spirit in federal-state relations.”

TRC mourns deaths of two employees

Jim Talley

Program Specialist, Jim Talley in Austin Central Office, passed away on Jan. 3 after complications from double pneumonia. Talley worked as a VR trainer and counselor with New Mexico Division of



Vocational Rehabilitation prior to coming to TRC in 1993. He was well respected and dedicated his life to helping persons with disabilities and others who were less fortunate. Talley was a great role model for persons with disabilities, advocating for civil rights and working to ensure access to technology needed to help the disabled lead productive lives. He made many contributions to the disabled citizens of Texas, especially in Rehabilitation Technology. He will be greatly missed by those whose lives he touched.

Pam Eaker

The First Responder Team has a new automatic external defibrillator (AED) that will be dedicated to a beloved friend and co-worker, Pam Eaker, who passed away on Dec. 13, 1999. Eaker, a member of the First Responder Team for two and a half years, died from complications from a motor vehicle accident that occurred on Dec. 10. She was a 17-year employee of TRC.



The First Responder Team provides interim care to the 950 employees at DDS in Austin and is often called upon to help employees keep track of blood pressure and other medical conditions. (see our March/April 1999 issue). An AED is used to deliver an electrical shock to the heart (defibrillation) when someone experiences sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) and it is the best treatment to restore an ineffective heart rhythm. Responders will take the AED on all emergency calls as a standard procedure, whether a situation is initially considered a cardiac call or not. Funds to purchase the AED came from donations made by staff at the Health Fair Committee Drawing and Silent Auction, from Health Fair presenters, and TADE.



State Employees can now participate in a “DISASTER LEAVE PROGRAM.” Did you ever want to help disaster victims? You can do your part to help others by joining the Ready Texans Team and the American Red Cross.

Ready Texans are state employees who have become certified American Red Cross disaster volunteers after completing a minimum of three 3-6 hour courses. State employees are eligible to receive up to 10 days a year of disaster leave (with supervisor approval) to help victims of disaster around the state.

For more information on becoming a Ready Texan, call your local Red Cross chapter or visit their website at www.redcrossaustin.org.

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trc today

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State Service Awards -October, November, December 1999

10 years

Anna Abraham
Renee Barraza
Sharon Davis
Lucy Endermark
Shelley Fields
Marc Garcia
Jeffrey Gigliotti
Ruby Gonzalez
Wanda Hall
Cynthia Jackson
Cheryl King
Dorothy Loeper
Lee Neef
John Norman
Steve Ogunsanya
Rosalinda Ortiz
Nelda Padilla
Karen Parshall
Marva Patterson
Linda Payne
Linda Robinson
Deborah Soares
Vernoica Spalek
Patricia Steuben
James White

15 years

Robert Alcala
Nancy Arista

Madeline Barnes
Judith Blackburn
Christina Brannon
Yolanda Cabrera
Cynthia Ellison
Diana Flood
Deborah Ledesma
Martina Lopez
Sonya Magness
John McCann
Henry McDonald
Wanda Moses
Juanita Navarro
Kenneth Olson
Jesus Quiroga
Kris Robbins
Marie Sanchez
Ann Sanchez
Rebecca Spradley
Dorrie Wade
Elberta Wilson
Patricia Woods
George Wynne

20 years

Bonnie Anderson
Wayne Bogan
Rebecca Boyce
Donna Buchanan
Sharen Drews

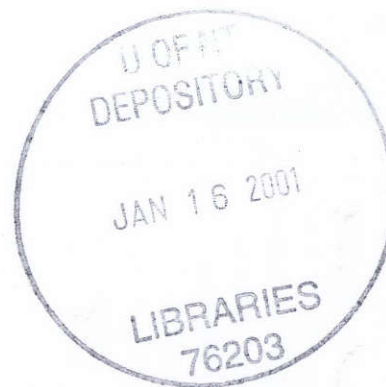
Debra Godina
Jo Hull
Linda Matthews
Theresa Nipps
Charles Segrest
Stephanie Slattery
Shirley Spencer
Alice Vasquez

25 years

William Branch
Carolyn Burelsmith
Rosemary Calk
Kathleen Chatmon
Baldemar Gonzalez
Charlotte Hill
Judy Hoffman
Jeanie Ming
June Nauert
Concepcion Navarro
Refugia Sanchez

30 years

Brunilda Garcia
Robert Grayson
Annie James
Gary Mobley
Barbara Swift



■ Cover Photo Left: Bryan Jones, Director of External Affairs, interviews Commissioner Arrell.