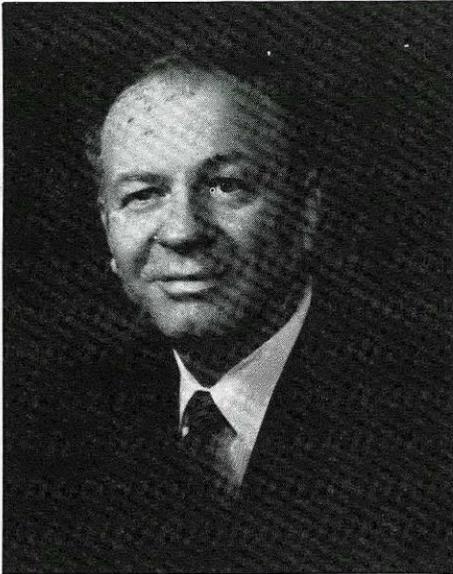


REPORT



TEXAS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
4800 North Lamar, Austin, Texas 78756 512/459-2500

Vol. IV, No. 4 December 1987



Lewis R. Timberlake, CPAE

"I have informed the Governor that I am honored by the opportunity, awed by the responsibility, and challenged by the need."

Commission Gets New Chairman, Member

Governor William P. Clements has appointed Lewis R. Timberlake of Austin as the new chairman of the Texas Commission for the Blind. A member of the Commission since 1985, Timberlake is a unique motivational speaker who serves as a visiting lecturer and management consultant for various corporations in the United States. Timberlake is a native of Stamford, Texas, who logs approximately 200,000 miles each year in his quest to help others through seminars, speeches, and training programs.

He has served as president of the Texas Law Enforcement and Youth Development Foundation; president of the Texas Historical Foundation; president of the Texas Jaycees; and has extensive experience as a state campaign manager for two men who have successfully sought the office of Governor of the State of Texas. Timberlake is the recipient of the highest honor to be given by the National Speakers Association, the coveted CPAE. He replaces William C. Conner of Fort Worth as chairman of the Commission. Mr. Conner had been chairman since 1979.

Governor Clements has also appointed Leahray S. Wroten of McKinney to a six-year term on the Commission. A former executive with Electronic Data Systems in Dallas for 17 years, Wroten has extensive experience in administrative management, finance, and marketing. The Denison native attended her first Commission meeting in November.

OCR Issues Key Ruling

The United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights has concluded its investigation of a complaint filed against the Texas Commission for the Blind in May of this year. The OCR complaint alleged that the Commission discriminates against blind individuals in the application of hiring, promotion, demotion, evaluation, compensation, and disciplinary policies, practices, and procedures.

In a letter to Executive Director Pat Westbrook, the OCR indicated that based on the data gathered and interviews conducted during the investigation, the Texas Commission for the Blind is in compliance with Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The OCR has ruled that the Commission does not discriminate against blind employees.

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At Issue: Diabetes and Blindness

A Word from the Director

The calendar year has come to an end, and in looking back over what transpired late in 1987 the coming year will be one that will require close monitoring of rehabilitation issues at the national level.

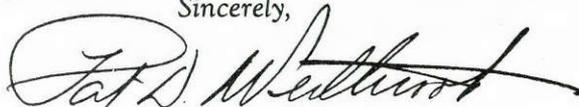
The new federal regulations as a result of the 1986 amendments to The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 have finally been published and are under the federal review and comment period now prior to final adoption. Our staff is busy reviewing the regulations for their impact on blind and visually impaired Texans.

By now, most of our readers will have read much about recent events in Washington that resulted in the forced resignation of Justin Dart, Jr. from his post as Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. A former Texan well known to all of us here in the rehabilitation field, Dart has been a staunch advocate for the participation of disabled individuals in matters that affect them. The demonstrations and outpouring of protests from the disabled community and rehabilitation professionals attest to the displeasure with which his resignation was met nationwide.

I was pleased to receive the communication referred to elsewhere in this issue from the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights in which they conclude that the Texas Commission for the Blind does not discriminate against its blind employees. The investigation on this charge was the most exhaustive the agency has ever gone through with OCR.

We are looking forward to 1988. The year is full of opportunities for public participation in our local and statewide forums. Make plans now to voice your ideas. If you are unsure of what is going on in your area, please call.

Sincerely,



Pat D. Westbrook
Executive Director

It is estimated that 5,000 new cases of blindness occur each year in this country as a result of diabetes. Blindness is 25 times more common in diabetics than in non-diabetic persons. Some estimates indicate that more than 700,000 Texans have suffered from personal and economic hardships caused by this disease. In an attempt to better identify the special needs of diabetic clients and enhance the coordination of agency services for this population group, the Commission has employed Robin Martin as a Diabetes Program Specialist.

A former client of the Commission, Martin has extensive experience in the area of diabetes. She has been actively involved as a member of the board of the American Diabetes Association and has served as an education program coordinator with the Association.

In her new role Martin will be working with agency counselors, teachers, and caseworkers to identify proper referral sources for diabetic clients. She will also consult with staff regarding the impact of diabetes on a client's rehabilitation program and will work with other service providers to develop, improve, or expand services beneficial to diabetic clients. Martin will also serve as a trainer for other agency staff.

"Since the creation of the Texas Diabetes Council by the 68th Legislature, the Commission has been involved with other agencies and organizations to find better ways of developing and implementing a program for diabetes education, treatment, education, and training. We are committed to the development of a program that will address all these issues as they affect the lives of persons we serve," says Pat Westbrook.

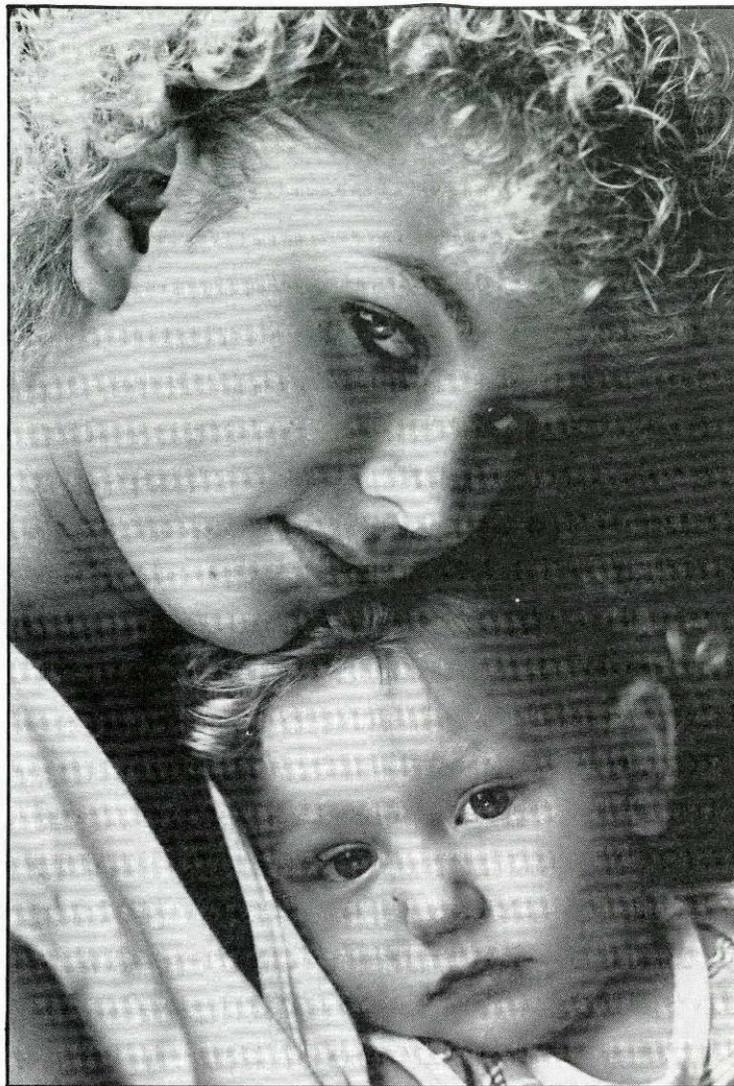
Awards Honor Top Employers

The recipients of the Commission's 1987 Employer of the Year awards have been selected: Lamar University, Beaumont (state category); IRS-Dallas District (federal category); KKUB-AM, Brownfield (private category); and General Dynamics, Fort Worth (private category). Now in its seventh year, the employer awards program was developed to recognize those employers who have worked with the Commission to extend employment opportunities to persons who are blind and/or visually impaired. More than 30 nominations from throughout the state were considered by the agency's governing board this year.

Formal presentations of the specially designed plaques will take place during the month of December with Board members Robert K. Peters, III of Tyler and C. Robert Keeney of Houston presenting the awards on behalf of the Commission. Each nominee for this year's awards received a special certificate and a letter from Executive Director Pat Westbrook.

"These awards offer the Commission an opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for the fine efforts of employers in Texas who have worked with our staff across the state in a manner which enhances the agency's employment assistance efforts and offers qualified blind individuals an opportunity to secure gainful employment and independence," says Westbrook.

PHOTO CREDIT: Wichita Falls Times/Record-News



Eighteen-year-old Beth Wright enjoys a quiet moment with Alton, her 16-month-old son.

"You've Got To Be Confident"

Three years ago Beth Wright learned she had retinitis pigmentosa (RP), a hereditary, progressive retinal degeneration in both eyes. Persons with RP usually experience night blindness, followed by loss of peripheral vision, progressing over many years to tunnel vision and, finally, blindness.

"I can see everything right in front of me, but nothing to the sides," she told *Wichita Falls Times/Record-News* reporter Alden Brown during a recent interview. "I've never had peripheral vision."

Through the assistance of the Commission, Wright is learning to cope with RP. She is working on her general equivalency diploma (G.E.D.) and is receiving instruction on the use of a cane. She plans to enroll in a junior college and take courses that will prepare her for an office job.

"My counselor tells me to be confident," she says. "You've got to be so confident an employer can't ignore your qualifications."

EDITOR'S NOTE: For more information on RP contact the Texas Association of Retinitis Pigmentosa (TARP), P.O. Box 8388, Corpus Christi, Texas 78412-0388, 512/852-8515.



Ann Manning shows some of the tools of her trade which she uses to help people relax and feel more productive.

PHOTO CREDIT: El Paso Herald-Post

Therapist Takes a "Hands-On" Approach to Her Profession

According to Ann Manning, massage and exercise greatly influence the way a person thinks and feels. "I feel like it's a way a person can heal himself — getting in touch with one's own body is self-healing," she says. During a recent interview with *El Paso Herald-Post* reporter Stephanie Graves, Manning, who is a massage therapist, offers some thoughts about her approach to life. "It's not what happened to you, it's your attitude that's important. I don't think the handicapped should be treated any one way more than anyone else. They should focus on what they want to do," she points out.

Manning, who is visually impaired, sees about fifty people during her 40-50 hour work week. Through the efforts of the Texas Commission for the Blind she was able to receive training in massage therapy at a school in Fort Worth. The El Paso resident says massage therapy is her first paying job. "I love it and I wouldn't want to do anything else."

To Ann Manning, life is a story not about obstacles, but about challenges. "There's no doubt about it," she says, "The main thing is knowing what you want and adjusting your priorities."

NOTES OF APPRECIATION

"...my heartfelt thanks for the help I was given for my eye surgery...for the kindness you all have shown and the financial help that was given by the Commission. God bless you."

(Excerpts from a letter to Odessa District Office staff members ANN MARIE DUNN and DOYLENE LAND.)

"Since Jennifer can't talk and she really can't comprehend the extent of your generosity, I thought I would tell you thanks for her. If it hadn't been for you she would probably still be ill and still be pretty uncaring as most kids would. I really do thank God for people like you."

(Comments from a parent to VHC Caseworker NORMA SAENZ in Harlingen.)

"...I can see as never before. I have a job and thanks to you...a much happier life...You are one terrific lady!"

(Comments from a client to Lubbock VR Counselor JERRI PRICE.)

REPORT is an official publication of the Texas Commission for the Blind. It is available free of charge to any individual requesting to be placed on the mailing list. News articles should be forwarded to the Public Information Office, P.O. Box 12866, Austin, Texas 78711 or call 512/459-2612. This newsletter is available on tape upon request. Toll-free number is 1-800-252-5204.

Lewis R. Timberlake, Chairman
Pat D. Westbrook, Executive Director
Rolando Garza, Editor
Jean Wakefield, Editorial Assistant



IN BRIEF

- Thanks to the efforts of native Texan George Covington, blind and visually impaired persons will soon be able to more fully enjoy a visit to this nation's capital. Covington is putting together a series of three-dimensional maps that will make Washington "one of the world's most accessible capitals." The first map lays out about 18 of the city's most heavily trafficked blocks in braille and raised images. Using Covington's maps, visitors will be able to find their way around the city's major monuments, the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, several federal agencies, museums, and subway stations. Covington, who has been legally blind since birth, also plans to provide maps to the White House, the interior of the Capitol, and the city's subway system.
- Patients with certain corneal diseases may be able to see more quickly and experience less trauma to the eye thanks to an improved method for the removal of cataracts. According to Dr. Richard Lee, a faculty ophthalmologist with the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, the procedure, called dry endocapsular cataract extraction, "means less cell loss and less trauma to the cornea." The procedure also provides the best chance for saving the cornea, or at least delaying any need for a cornea transplant for several years.
- Older persons who need medical eye care can call **1-800-222-EYES**, the toll-free helpline operated by the National Eye Care Project. Eligible callers will receive a referral to a nearby physician and an ophthalmologist. This is a project for older persons (65 years or older) who need eye care, but cannot afford it.
- The American Council of the Blind will award eight scholarships to outstanding blind and visually impaired students in 1988. All legally blind persons admitted to academic, vocational, technical, and professional training programs at the postsecondary level for the 1988/89 school year are encouraged to apply. Applications are available from the ACB national office, 1010 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20005. All completed applications and supporting documents must be postmarked by no later than April 1, 1988.
- In 1988 the National Federation of the Blind will award \$67,000 in scholarships to 25 outstanding blind students. All awards will be made on the basis of academic excellence, service to the community, and financial need. For more information, contact Peggy Pinder, Chairman, NFB Scholarship Committee, 814 4th Avenue, Suite 200, Grinnell, Iowa 50112. Applications must be received by March 31, 1988.
- "World News Today" is a new braille magazine which contains general news articles, recipes, and feature stories. For more information, write to World News Today, P.O. Box G7S, Alamo, CA 94507.
- "Voter '88" is a program designed to register 1,000,000 new Texas voters prior to March 8, 1988. "Voter '88" will register Texans at the workplace, airports, hotels, bus stops, restaurants, nursing homes, and schools. Voter registration materials will also be available at every Texas Commission for the Blind office throughout the state.

BEP Goes To Jail

The Texas Commission for the Blind has taken over the Austin Police Department. Well, not really. Actually, the Commission has entered into an agreement with the City of Austin whereby a totally blind individual will operate a full-service cafeteria at the Austin Police Department. Through the agency's Business Enterprises Program (BEP), clients have an opportunity to manage food service and vending facilities in public and private properties in Texas.

The BEP facility at the Police Department will also offer vending concessions and food service for inmates. A typical dinner at the facility consists of a meat entree, green vegetable, buttered roll, dessert, and beverage.

According to one APD employee, customers are looking forward to more complete, balanced meals. One administrative jailer commented, "I think the prisoners are going to be eating pretty good."

The Business Enterprises Program has more than 130 food service operations throughout the state, including 39 in Austin.

**TOLL-FREE
Client Assistance
Information**

1-800-252-5204

"LADY" GOES TO SCHOOL

Throughout the year agency staff are invited to classrooms across the state to talk to students about a wide range of topics, including how a blind person uses a dog guide to get around and function in daily living. Recently, Betty Huffman, Coordinator of Consumer Affairs for the Commission, and Vivian Carson, O&M Specialist/Field Representative with Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc. in California, had an opportunity to speak to a group of students at Doss Elementary School in Austin. The following are some of the comments received by Betty from students after the presentation. (EDITOR'S NOTE: "Lady" is Huffman's dog guide.)

Dear Mrs. Huffman,
 thank-you for bringing Lady.
 It was very interesting.
 I have never seen one before.
 It was a lot of fun.
 Dogs are really neat.
 My dog got hit by a car his
 name was snowball.
 I enjoy have a seeing eye dog
 here.



Love Heidi
 Doss school

Dear Mrs. Huffman,

Thank you for bring Lady we I
 really enjoyed her. She was very
 interesting. Does she bark? Can she be
 rough? I already know she can be
 gentle! Can you think of what Lady
 looks like blind like you are?

Love
 Jeffrey Lake
 Doss school

Nov 23, 1987
 Dear Mrs. Huffman,
 Thank-you for coming
 you and lady have teached
 me a lot. And what would
 happen if you and lady were
 in a fire? I forgot to ask.
 lady is very strong and quit.
 Do you and lady like jazz?
 I am sorry that you are blind

Love,
 Leah Tappart
 Doss school

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