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trc today

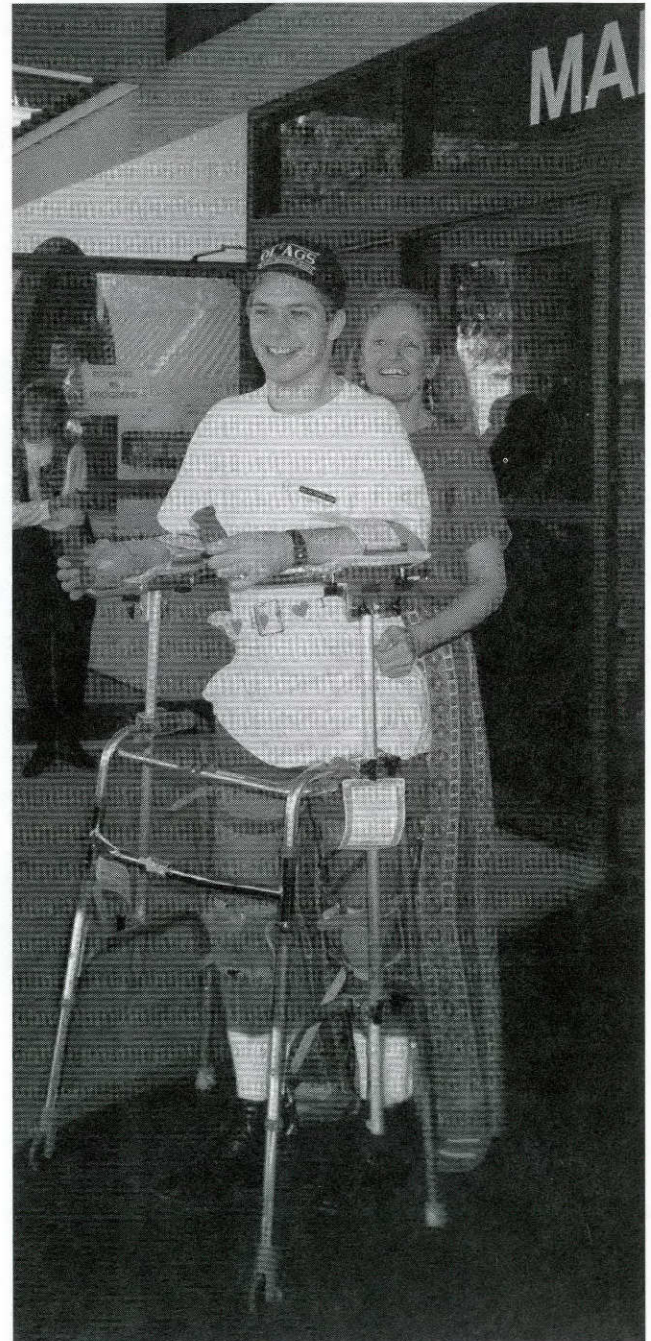
An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission

*“I was
22 years old
and thought I
was invincible.*

*When my head hit
that rock in the water,
I never felt so
helpless. But,
since that moment,
I never felt
so helped.*

*My friends, family,
community and
TRC have helped
me tremendously, I
wouldn't be continuing my
therapy if it wasn't
for TRC. They
have been a big
supporter.”*

Tobin Boenig



Tobin, who is quadriplegic, and physical therapist Kerstin Fosdick accomplish his goal to walk out of Warm Springs Rehabilitation Hospital

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Texas Rehabilitation
Commission
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78751-2399
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Setting Unrealistic Goals ... and getting there

Setting goals was a way of life for 23-year-old Tobin Boenig. That is why it was natural for him to set goals for his recovery last May when he had an accident that left him paralyzed from the neck down. But Tobin didn't expect that it would be so difficult to reach those goals.



Tobin Boenig

On May 18, 1996, just 10 days after Tobin graduated from Texas A&M, he and his buddies were celebrating with a barbecue and river party near his parents home in Marion, Texas. Tobin had been floating on a raft in water about four feet deep. He snoozed for a moment and awakened hot from the sun.

"All I did was roll off the raft into the water to cool down," said Tobin. "Next I knew, I was face down in the water, and when I tried to turn over, nothing moved." Tobin's raft had drifted into shallow water, and as he slid down to cool himself, he hit his head on a rock. The blow caused a spinal-cord injury that left him paralyzed from his neck down.

Tobin's buddies rushed to his rescue. Fortunately, one was familiar with CPR and knew to keep his neck straight. Also, a doctor among the spectators on shore helped. Tobin was rushed to the hospital where doctors told him and his family that he would probably never walk again.

"That just won't happen," Tobin thought. Having just completed his

college degree, he was ready to begin a new career with IBM. In the next few days Tobin realized that this was very serious. "I figured I just had to come up with a plan. That's what I did in everything else in my life and it had always worked. So I made a plan and set my goals," said Tobin.

On May 31, Tobin was transferred to Warm Springs Rehabilitation Hospital in Gonzales, Texas. "The first thing Tobin said was 'I'm going to walk out of this place in four weeks,'" said Kerstin Fosdick, physical therapist at the hospital. "I thought, hmmm, I've got my work cut out for me." Six months later on December 12 — with a little assistance — he walked out of Warm Springs Hospital.

Fosdick and Tobin worked hard to make that happen. "You owe it to your patient to give it 100 percent," said Fosdick. And 100 percent it was. At times the physical therapy (PT) sessions had them both sweating.

"It was a combination of Tobin's determination, both of our bullheadedness and the family sup-

port to take up the slack that has helped Tobin achieve his goals. We joke about setting totally unrealistic goals, but we are making progress one day at a time. It's funny, we've actually met some of those unrealistic goals," said Fosdick.

Tobin learned to set goals from his parents. Setting lofty goals had won him many successes in the past, including being elected as student body president at Texas A&M and a job at IBM in Dallas.

He has applied his

goal-setting attitude to his recovery. "My main short-term goal right now is to start my new job at IBM," said Tobin.

"Though it will be a year after I was originally scheduled to go to work, I want to walk into my new office on June 10, 1997."

Tobin still struggles with quadraplegia, but works at his PT at least five hours a day, five days a week as a Warm Springs outpatient. On the weekends, you'll catch his Dad loading equipment into his pickup and taking it home so that friends and family

can help Tobin with his PT at home. "It's a we thing, not a me thing," said Tobin. "I've got a lot of people helping me."

Lynn Scheske, Tobin's TRC counselor, says that Tobin is the ideal client. "He is TRC at its best," says Scheske. "Tobin is phenomenal, and it has been a real thrill to see him reach his goals."

Tobin shared with us that he has another goal — to be elected to the U.S. Congress. I believe he will reach that goal some day, and we can all say, "We knew him when ..."

Reauthorization!

As many of you know, Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act is scheduled for this session of Congress. On Feb. 26, the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education, Training and Life-Long Learning, chaired by Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-CA), held its first public hearing on Reauthorization. As you may recall, issues such as consolidation with other job training programs, pushing control of the VR program down to local levels and the use of vouchers may surface during Reauthorization.

Every day as public rehabilitation professionals, you see first hand the benefits of VR for those we serve. And, you know the program better than most. You have a unique opportunity to discuss key issues in a way that others can't.

The following are "talking points" that can be used by professionals, consumers and disability advocates if asked by persons interested in Vocational Rehabilitation and Reauthorization. They give consistent information so that education efforts can build upon a central voice and focus on critical needs:

Vocational Rehabilitation is a 75 year old state/federal partnership that has been very successful in helping people with disabilities become employed and independent in their communities.

The Rehabilitation Act MUST be reauthorized — keeping the integrity of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in the following areas:

- The goal of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is **EMPLOYMENT**. The focus on this outcome must not change.
- Highly-trained rehabilitation professionals are critical to the success of delivering services.
- Keeping a separate organization that is responsive to the needs of people with disabilities in each state ensures accountability.
- Involvement of consumers in all critical decisions affecting their own plan of rehabilitation improves the quality of services and its outcome.

A reminder: It is important to make a clear distinction between your role as a rehabilitation professional and as a private citizen. As a state employee:

- You **CAN'T** use state time or any state equipment, including agency letterhead, e-mail, faxes, copiers and computers.
- You **CAN'T** impose your views on other employees or require their participation or support.

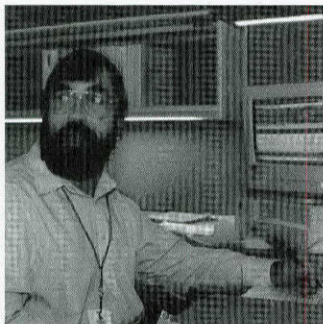
DDS/Rehab Services

Work together to hire people with disabilities

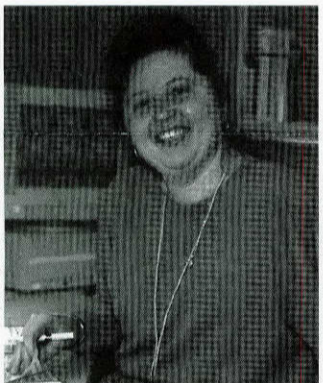
There is a joint venture going on between TRC DDS and Rehabilitation Services (RS), and the goal is to increase the number of TRC DDS new hires who have disabilities.

"The plan," said Deputy Commissioner Dave Ward, "was to set an example in hiring people with disabilities. We felt the best way to do this was to work together with Rehab Services. After all," says Ward, "We are Texas Rehab — we are in the business of placing people with disabilities into employment."

Public witnesses in legislative hearings stated that the state does not have a very good record on hiring people with disabilities. But TRC is not new to this concept. Four years ago, DDS Mail Services Supervisor D. Larson and Goodwill Services placed people with disabilities in the mailroom at DDS. "That initiative has been such a success we wanted to actively recruit more people with disabilities into DE positions," says Ward.



Gene Kile



Cynthia Loynes

Last summer at the grand opening of the new DDS building TRC Board members initially suggested that it would be an ideal place for people with disabilities to work. Executive Deputy Commissioner Kenneth Vogel and Deputy Commissioners Dave Ward and Joellen Simmons met with staff and crafted a plan. The plan established an intern program that would open up opportunities for TRC clients. The new "VR intern" program, unlike the already-established academic intern program, considers "life experience" as a qualification. A job description was developed, and the program was off and running.

When the spring semester began on Jan. 23, 1997, two out of the five participants in the intern program were VR clients. "I am very happy to be here," said Gene Kile. Gene has spastic cerebral palsy and worked 10 years as a social worker providing direct services. He said he needed to work but could not return to that type of employment.

"This program was a perfect opportunity for me," said Gene. "I am getting a good overview of exactly what DDS does. I am learning to initiate cases, helping to determine them and learning about medical listings."

Cynthia Loynes had been working with her VR Counselor Judy Marvel to find more suitable employment. "When Judy called me about this position, I was excited," said Loynes. "I like working here very much. My function is similar to a DE-1 position. I help develop cases for certain DEs, do 25-day follow-up, set up CEs and basic types of things you do with initial cases."

The training Cynthia and Gene are getting now will equip them to be very competitive when a new DE class starts. "It's a win-win plan," says Ward, "for the interns and TRC."

DDS employee walks for MS



Gayle Guffey, right, shown with daughter Amanda, was recently featured in a newspaper article with the Austin American-Statesman for participating in the MS Walk on March 1. In the article, Guffey credited TRC with having a good track record in hiring people with disabilities and offering her an opportunity for a better lifestyle.

Gayle Guffey, disability examiner at DDS, is walking to a new beat these days. Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) 15 years ago, Guffey says walking wasn't always so easy for her.

"At one time, I had to walk with a cane and I was blind in one eye," said Guffey. This is the second year Guffey has walked the three- or six-mile walk for MS in Austin. "Last year," said Guffey, "I walked across the finish line with someone dressed like a turtle. The best thing is that I made it across the finish line and everyone cheered."

Guffey got involved in a project on health issues for women with MS sponsored by the National Institute of Health. She has been asked by the UT School of Nursing to be a consultant on the project directed at educating women with MS on the importance of a healthy diet, exercise and stress management.

On March 1, Guffey celebrated a remarkable six-year remission. "It has been six years since I have had to use drug therapy to manage my disability," said Guffey. She attributes her remission to a better lifestyle and says that TRC has contributed to that effort. Guffey began a weight loss program about a year ago and has lost 46 pounds. She attends Weight Watchers classes on her lunch hour and works out in the employee exercise room before she heads home in the evening.

Guffey says that she has experienced TRC from two sides — first as a VR client and now as an employee. "The word 'disabled' sometimes makes a person feel very limited," said Guffey. "It is important to have an employer that is understanding of your disability. I don't even have to leave work to carry out my weight loss program. That makes me feel good about what I can do."

MAXIMIZERS

REGION IV

Laura Rone, RST in the Houston Central Field Office, was the first person in her unit to reach the max. She has set a new record by receiving 34 maximizer awards since December 1996. Congratulations Laura!

Vernon Hickerson, ILS Counselor in the Houston Central field office has received 15 maximizers.

REGION III

Both Lori Brown and Carolyn Alvarez in the South Austin Field Office reached 12 maximizers for the second time

DDS - AUSTIN

Kay Tiemann from Unit 3 at DDS earned 12 maximizers.

Nora Sanchez from DDS Program Operations Directorate 04 received 12 maximizers.



Laura Rone



Carolyn Alvarez

African Americans and Civil Rights:

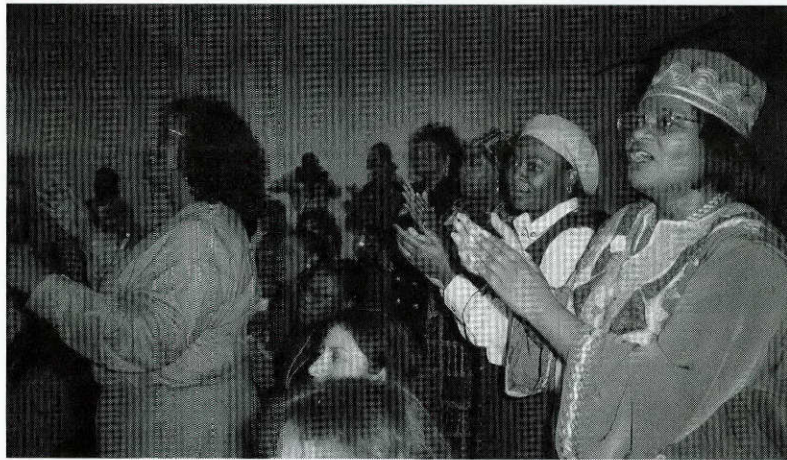
A Reappraisal

... was the national theme for this year's Black History Month celebrations in various fund raisers and events statewide. In Austin, a multi-agency event featured song, dance, poetry and an insightful keynote address by Jimmie Brown, civil rights attorney, commander in the United States Naval Reserves and active member of the community. The program was dedicated to Kenneth W. Vogel, for his support of TRC and the multi-agency Black History Program during his years of management with the Commission.

"I will not permit someone to discredit another merely because of his/her race or color. I will not permit a world where my children cannot play and operate with yours. There is no reason for that," said Brown in this speech. "They don't know about disrespecting another individual until it's taught. So I think it very simple — do not teach it."



Top- Jenel Robinson, DST in Unit 03, dancing in the program; right- keynote speaker Jimmie Brown with Diana Alexander, BDS employee; bottom - crowd gets into the action.



Across the State

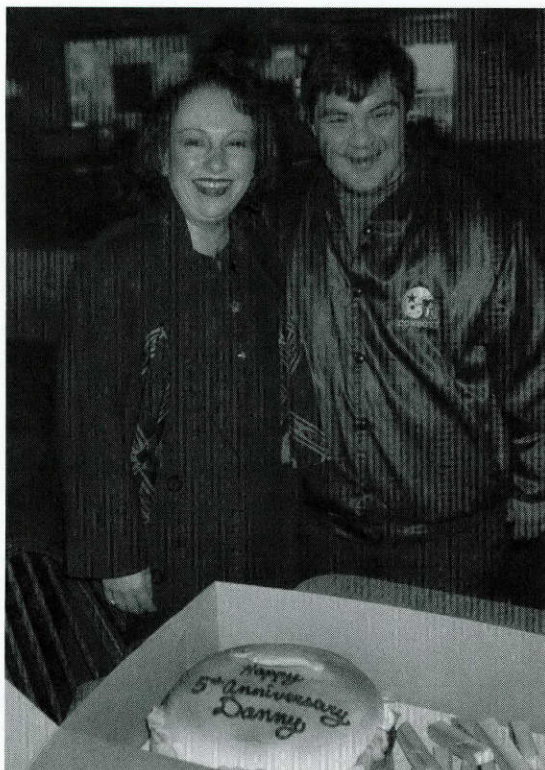
Welcome Aboard!

Sylvia Hardman, legal examiner
Ernestina Howell, HRD resource technician
Keith Gibbs, regional transitional specialist
Michelle Martinez, RST
Laurence Pauciello, counselor
Kelly Wages, RST
Shanna Blackwell, RST
Valerie Brock, RST
Sharon Burnett, RST
Darrell Collins, counselor
Robert Cortez, counselor
Rani Davis, counselor
Carrie Delisse, counselor
Mechele Doyle, RST
Nita Haliburton, RST
Baseemah Hasan, RST
Lorenza Hernandez, RST
Katrina Holliday, counselor
Phyllis Holsinger, RST
Carol Sue Jarrett, counselor
Connie Juarez, RST
Susie Keenum, RST
Johnny Martinez, counselor
Kathy Murphy, counselor
Robert Peterson, counselor
Claire Talley, counselor
Beth Garcia, RST
Jennifer Luehring, counselor
Louis Siedlecki, counselor
Joan Van Houten, RST
Nicole Williams, counselor
Lashonda Smith, RST
Susan Boisvert, RST
Valerie Hooge, counselor
Gloria A. Lopez, RST
Felipe Martinez, counselor
Michelle McCall, counselor
Velinda Reyes, counselor
Rosa Rodriguez, RST
Umekia Callihan, medical records technician
Lendol Kile, administrative support technician
Cynthia Loynes, administrative support technician
Barbara Peacock, medical records technician

Retirements:

Glenn Hall, VR Counselor in the Houston West Field Office, retired on Feb. 28, 1997 with 23 years of state service.

Five years and going strong!



Patsy Breckenridge and Danny Bueno.

ERS client Danny Bueno just completed five years of employment at Whataburger in Corpus Christi, working in the kitchen. His coworkers and job coaches celebrated the event with a cake shaped as a Whataburger with jalapenos on top (that's the way he eats them) and sugar french fries.

Danny was referred to TRC as a last resort when others felt his disabilities were too severe to place him in sheltered workshops. "We found Danny a job in the community with supports," says his ERS counselor Patsy Breckenridge. "This same job has lasted five years and he is considered a valuable member of their team."

Supervisor Robert Walker considers Danny a quality employee and said that when health inspectors visit the restaurant, Danny is not a worry because he is 100 percent efficient in proper work procedures.

Danny is an avid Cowboys fan. He loves going to church on Sundays and just came back from a three-day retreat. He loves to read the paper every morning before coming in to work. And most of all, he loves his job — so much so that he was unhappy the restaurant was closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

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Address Correction Requested

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Shayla Fleshman, Editor
Prissy Pense, Writing & Photography
Susan Antoniewicz, Design

State Service Awards - March 1997

10 Years

Rafael Garcia
Renee Brumfield
Suzanne Baxter
Emma Rodriguez
Dena Poulter
Daneen Machicek
Valerie King

15 Years

Julia Montoya
Loretta Feggens-Moriole
Bernadine Garner

20 Years

Ofelia Hoelter
Rolando Garza
Kay Munoz
John Aultman
Thomas Beck

25 Years

John B. Morgan
Hermin Perez
Kay Chee

30 Years

Ben King

Special Recognitions:

Congratulations to Ty Tulloch, VR counselor in the Killeen Field Office, for being elected as the 1997 vice chair of the Bell County Judge and Commissioner's Committee on People with Disabilities.

Our very own Jennifer Hall, assistant commissioner for Civil Rights, spoke at the Jan. 22, 1997 luncheon for Austin Executive Women in Texas Government. Hall spoke on "Interpreting Civil Rights Legislation for the Workplace." — Good going Jenny!

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