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# trc today

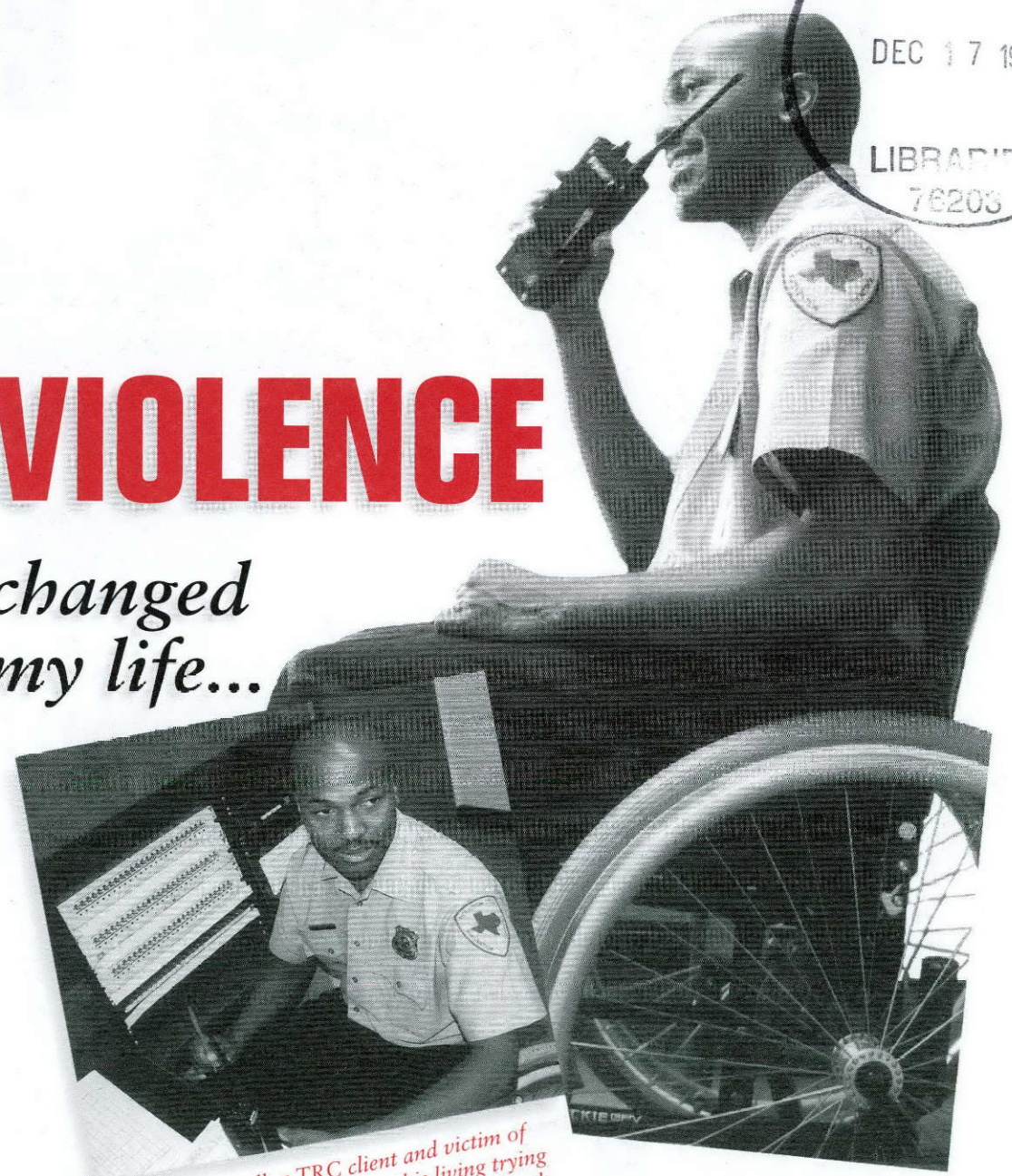
An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission



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## VIOLENCE

*changed  
my life...*



*Rodney Bell, a TRC client and victim of violent crime, now makes his living trying to steer troubled teens onto the right path.*

# trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission

Texas Rehabilitation  
Commission  
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, Texas 78751-2399  
Vol. 20 No. 10 October 1997

## Rodney Bell's smile is contagious

It's the one thing about him that hasn't changed during the last decade. We all hear stories about crime in the news every day, but most of us hear them, think about them a few moments and then go on with our daily lives. But crime is something Rodney knows far too much about. As with most crimes — there's a criminal and there's a victim. On his way home from his construction job one afternoon, the life Rodney once knew was gone instantly when an assault left him partially paralyzed.

In Rodney's case, the attacker was never caught or punished. The victim lost a career in construction and woke-up as a quadriplegic with an uncertain future. "I didn't have any idea what I could do with this injury," said Rodney.

But, that changed when Rodney met his counselor, Beth McNabb of Houston West Field Office. He credits TRC with getting him back in the workforce and Beth for being there every step of the way. "I feel warmth when I'm with her," said Rodney. "She has a big heart and thanks is just a small word, but I really appreciate her for being my friend, not just a counselor."

That was 1989. Now, fast forward to 1997 and you will find a man making a difference in the lives of troubled students. As a school security guard, Rodney now spends his days checking students for weapons and making sure they're attending class. The presence of metal detectors indicates crime and violence are always a threat at the at-risk Houston school where Rodney works. "I like working with the students and giving them some guidance. I try to teach them how to trust and respect others and that there is always a victim to crime," said Rodney.

Rodney volunteered for three years at the school until they had the budget to pay him. Now, he's a valuable staff member. "He's an ideal employee and a terrific role model," said principal Paul Hancir. "Violence is what changed his life, now he's teaching others avoid it."

## New Merit and Promotions Policy

*"Although there are tighter limits and guidelines to follow, we will continue to do what we can for our employees... That commitment will not change."*

Nearly every employee has spent all their TRC career supported by a payroll system that has remained relatively unchanged since it was implemented in 1961. This year, the 75th Legislature produced sweeping changes in this system that will affect each and every one of us.

First, the legislature gave us Salary Schedules A, B and C and added a Step 9 to give agencies more flexibility and opportunity in administering salaries.

But there now also exists a 1.7 percent cap for merit salary increases and promotions that will not exceed the total amount of money spent for all salaries in Fiscal Year '97.

"Due to this, we will have more people eligible for merit increases than we possibly have money to give. In addition to this, promotions are now counted against this cap, which stretches the money even further," says Commissioner Arrell. "What this means is that managers will have to manage. Decisions will be based on who is most deserving."

In the past, TRC has been a state leader in the number of merits and promotions given, with the Commission awarding salary increases yearly to at least one in three employees during the last five years. Even with the new limits, TRC will attempt to be a leader in this area.

"Through the years, TRC has valued its employees and we've shown this through merits and promotions," adds Arrell. "Although there are tighter limits and guidelines to follow, we will continue to do what we can for our employees. That commitment will not change."

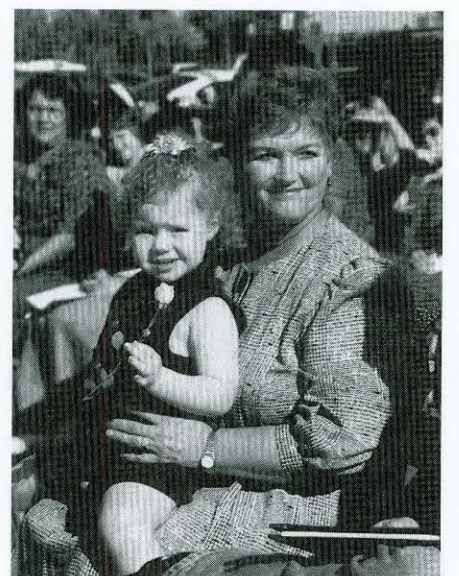
Managers are now sharing this new policy with their staff, so that all can be aware of the new changes in policy and procedure. In addition, Regional, Central Office or DDS HRM staff can answer any questions staff might have.

## Ken Vogel Memorial

Austin TRC staff took an hour out of their work day on Oct. 1 to commemorate Kenneth Vogel with a living memorial. "Ken was a people person," recalled Commissioner Max Arrell. "We have never had and may never have again somebody with the enthusiasm and integrity of Ken Vogel. He not only was my colleague, he was my friend and my advisor. I know you all miss him. So do I."

Kenneth Vogel, who was executive deputy commissioner of TRC, died December 14, 1996, in a hunting accident. Many lives were touched by Vogel in his 26-year career in TRC which started as a counselor in San Antonio. He also worked as program officer in Region VII, regional director in Region IV, assistant deputy commissioner for Programs, and deputy commissioner for DDS. He was appointed as executive deputy commissioner on July 10, 1996.

Vogel's widow, Mickey, children and grandchildren were on hand to dedicate an oak tree and plaque at the DDS building, 6101 E. Oltorf. "This memorial is very special," said Mickey Vogel. "It is planted in the earth so it will be nurtured and will continue to live. It will mean something very special to me, our children and grandchildren. There is an old Indian legend that as long as your name is said out loud you still live. This memorial will allow Ken's legend to live on."



*Ken's wife, Mickey, with granddaughter Alyssa at the service.*

## TRC Personnel Directory goes online!

By Nov. 1, you will be able to look up co-workers names and phone numbers by region and office in TRC's new online personnel directory. You can find the directory on the TRC Net Home Page. One great benefit of the online directory is that information will be updated daily so if an employee changes offices or positions, this information will reach you much sooner than relying on the old printed versions.

The Personnel Directory will be based on new USPS (Unified Statewide Payroll/Personnel System) data. As this system is new, we are still verifying and correcting information. If you happen to see incorrect information, please give feedback via the data correction link that will be available at the bottom of each office page.

## The best just got better

The 4.0 release of the Rehab Services System on Oct. 6 implements numerous RSA mandated changes to the VR process. Most notable changes are the requirement to maintain employment for 90 days prior to successful closure and the requirement to have IWRP amendments signed by the client. Counselors will also notice a "Warning Message" when closing a successful case if the hourly earnings are not equal or greater than minimum wage.

SPELL CHECK is here! The 4.0 release also includes other user-requested enhancements including the capability to "spell check" case notes before saving them. After saving your spell checked notes, click the print icon to view the new format for printed case notes. The header contains all the relevant client demographic information, and the print is in a much more legible font size. Other enhanced prints include the Profile Print and the Area Manager Budget Monitor Print.

For CRS Program users, the 4.0 release implements a completely redesigned Waiting List featuring columns for region, area manager, and caseload number. All other fields were reformatted for legibility.

"The biggest changes were based on law," says Jackie Feinberg, project manager for the new system. "It is a big release with a lot of changes in it, but most of the reaction has been very positive because the new system features automatic completion of some of the action items." There were a total of 112 changes made to the RS System in the 4.0 release. You can get more details on these changes on the Rehab Services Bulletin Board or the IntraNet Release page.

### THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS OR UNITS RECEIVED 12 MAXIMIZERS

#### REGION 2

Alicia Berry  
Frances Bowen  
Jan Boyd  
Bill Davis  
Melba Haynes  
Susan Hemphill  
Melissa Herndon  
Barry Hill  
Rosla Hocker  
Joy Lombas  
Regina Lowenberg  
Sharon Miller  
Gracie Roberts  
Jean Ross  
Carolyn Shultz  
Cindy Suarez  
Gena Sweatt

#### REGION 3

Janice Ging  
Chryse Jerome  
Mary Sturman

#### REGION 5

Gloria Alderette

## The Year 2000 is upon us

As the year 2000 gets closer, many predict that the greatest immediate impact of the new century will reside in the smallest of items — the computer chip. And it goes far beyond computers. Yes, when we roll over into the double digit 00 year, experts predict trouble for thermostats, microwaves, cars, pacemakers, and other numerous items that contain computerized parts.

"You go back to the '50s and 60s to get to the root of the problem," says John (Jed) Davis, associate commissioner for Automated Services. "On these old mainframes, storage space was at a premium so everyone looked at economics and shaved off the first two digits of the year. As technology moved into the manufacturing of computer chips, we kept doing the same thing. Now no one really knows how this will affect us because there are so many different pieces of equipment that rely on computer chips that run off time based calculations."

Davis states an IBM study that puts the cost of fixing this

problem in Texas state agencies at about \$200 million. But he also says that TRC is in very good shape for this due to some smart moves and good planning. "TRC began moving to an open-systems environment in 1990 and helped ourselves considerably. Due to this, we are not going to have the same amount of problems many other state agencies are facing."

TRC's normal planning cycle for upgrading servers, desktop computers, notebook computers, and software will take care of much of the problem as these new items will be four digit year complaint.

There will be no wait to the last minute. TRC has already started the process for upgrading the servers. And the fact that Rehabsys will not be affected puts us one more step ahead of the game.

### New e-mail

Employees will start to see the change-out of office file servers and software starting in January with the upgrade to a new electronic mail: Microsoft Exchange. "It is not significantly different," explains Davis. "There will be some differences, but if you know how cc:Mail operates, you should not have trouble moving to this new system."

Although there is a three-month timetable for completion, the old and new system will work together so there will not be a loss of communication. Old e-mail files will convert into the new format, but Davis recommends that employees clean up their archives so needless translation will not need to happen. HRD is also gearing up to provide training on the system.

### Next October

Servers and e-mail are the first of several upgrades many TRC staff will see in the upcoming years. Current plans call for enhanced computers that will use Microsoft Office starting Oct. 1998. You will be reading more about this change in the year to come.

## DDS staff work hard — play hard!

**V**iva! It was Diez y Seis de Septiembre and DDS staff celebrated with a grand fiesta. Arts and crafts, exhibits, music and food complimented a program that honored all Hispanic cultures.

Dr. Neil Foley from the Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Texas gave a keynote speech that was topped off by mariachi music from Mariachi Guadalupano Charready, Los Potosinos. "We hope to create an annual Hispanic celebration similar to the Black History celebration," said Ester Anguiano, chair of the Hispanic Cultural Events Committee. "We started small this year, but hope to invite all Austin TRC staff next year. The following year we hope to reach out to other agencies. The next year, who knows?"

But, back to work ... With SSA compelling over 60 percent of the workload to be handled in the last half of the year, TRC DDS entered the final stretch of the fiscal year at full speed. Sweeping changes and

additional work stemming from welfare reform legislation made it a tough race, but DDS employees ended the year with 230,000 clearances. Because of next year's projected heavy load, a new disability examiner class was hired on Sept. 22. New hearing officers are being hired for temporary assignments.



Some of the Diez y Seis committee (l to r) Herlinda Sanchez, Amelia Mendoza, Nancy Arista, Dora Gonzalez, Ana Matthews, S.J. Canales, and Lori Broccoli.



Ester Anguiano, and Herlinda Sanchez dressed for the occasion.



Ruben Guerrero and Gloria Galindo visit with guest speaker Dr. Neil Foley (center).

### Letters . . . Letters . . . Letters . . . Letters . . .

#### *Commissioner Arrell received the following letter from the daughter of a client:*

When my father and mother came to your organization, they were at a loss on what to do with my father's hearing problem. The insurance program my father currently has with his company does not cover hearing disabilities. I knew there was some way that my father could get help, and sure enough I found you.

I cannot express my appreciation to the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for helping my father in a time of need. He has been slowly losing his hearing now for several years and is fifty percent hard of hearing in both ears. Now after all these years my father will be able to hear more clearly.

Again I cannot thank you enough for everything the organization has done to help my family in a time of need. ...

#### *The following is a letter from a client to Commissioner Arrell regarding the services he received at the Victoria Field Office:*

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to the Commission and the Victoria office for their invaluable assistance to me as a client. Throughout my "tour of duty," I was treated with the utmost courtesy and professionalism by the Victoria staff and especially Joey Crow.

Joey always went the extra mile for me; he obviously thought of me as more than a client, and treated me as a friend. When time permitted, he even talked sports and family with me, and was always there when I had a problem or question. Attaining my B.A. and M.A. degrees would NEVER have been possible without Joey and the TRC.

Mr. Arrell, you, your Commission, and your Victoria people have my eternal gratitude. Once again — my sincerest THANK YOU!

#### *Mary Valentini, regional director for Region I, forwarded this letter of appreciation she received from a client:*

Just to let someone know that your agency is truly appreciated not only in our town of Pecos, Texas, but throughout the area. The no hassle attitude of Mr. Ruben Franco leaves nothing to be desired. There is not a single being that does not know him out here and the fine work that he does on behalf of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, truly a human energy agency which we all appreciate.

Our hats are off to your agency and Mr. Franco. Keep up the good work in helping the disabled get back to work.

### Across the State

#### *Welcome Aboard*

Jean Batot, disability examiner  
Bywater, Judith, disability examiner  
Luis Loera, disability examiner  
Ruben Cano, disability examiner  
Milton Powell, disability examiner  
Sandra Quarles, disability examiner  
Sandra Deleon, disability examiner  
Nelda Whitlock, disability examiner  
Michael Arredondo, disability examiner  
Jacintha Cowan, disability examiner  
Darryl Harris, disability examiner  
Ruthita Harris, disability examiner  
Sandra Herbst, disability examiner  
Robbin Hosek, disability examiner  
Martha Unland, disability examiner  
Paula Bilton, disability examiner  
Elaine Mittel, disability examiner

#### *Retirements*

Gayle P. Mullins, supervisor of disability services technician, 28 years of state service  
Robert L. Ballew, counselor at the Corsicana Field Office, 29 years of state service  
Wanda F. Connaway, RST, Brownwood Field Office, 25 years of state service  
William W. Brown III, counselor, Beaumont Field Office, 27 years of state service  
Patricia K. Axe, disability examiner, 21 years of state service  
Elaine Jennings, counselor, Irving Field Office, 30 years of state service  
George D. Bailey, counselor, Dallas Southeast Field Office, 28 years of state service  
Rod Sturman, program specialist, Austin Regional Office, 26 years of state service  
Dottie Taylor, RST, Dallas Southeast Field Office, 28 years of state service

#### *Deaths*

Margarito Martinez, counselor at the Sam Houston State University Field Office, passed away on Sept. 22, 1997. Martinez had worked with TRC for nine years.  
Dr. Paul Goetz, SAMC psychiatrist with DDS, passed away Sept. 1, 1997. Dr. Goetz started working with DDS in February 1986.

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# trc today

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## State Service Awards October 1997

### 10 year

Theresa Caldwell  
Gwen Campbell  
Barbara Castillo  
Elvira Castro  
Charles Clikeman  
Mark Cognetti  
Terry Edmond  
Susan K. Farias  
Margo George  
Leslie Hendren  
Francie Jean Hendrick  
Victor Kendall  
Teri D. Lanford  
Pamela McKinney  
Richard Moseley  
Phillip W. Roddy  
Linda K. Shaw  
Leo Snell

### 20 years

Deborah L. Anderson  
Rosla Hocker  
Sue Holloway  
Ogden Frazier Jr.  
Laurie Mears  
Debbie Orear  
Linda Thielepape  
Guadalupe Zook

### 25 years

Woody Crouch  
Reta P. Davis  
Mike Jones

### 30 years

Janis Fisher

### Additional September Awards

Dennis Dunlap - 30 years  
Doug Harrison - 30 years  
Jerald Stewart - 35 years

### 15 years

Pauline Agulefo  
Ricardo Arispe  
Marlene Davis  
Kathy S. Kelley