



TRC TODAY
a newsletter for
employees of the
Texas Rehabilitation
Commission

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INSIDE

LEGISLATIVE
fast track 2

DDS
Circle of
excellence 3

MAX ARRELL
10 years
as commissioner 4

DDS
Automated
workstations 6



Back to the classroom

TRC client and school teacher Terry Richards had never been seriously hurt in her life. Having been a gymnast, she prided herself on her balance. That made the fall on the waxed floor and the resulting serious back injury all the more the difficult to accept.

For two years, Richards, a single parent of six children and veteran of 14 years in the classroom, was out of work and lacking confidence to return.

"When I first met her," says Employment\Marketing Specialist Ernie Centeno, "her situation was a mess... I realized that the first thing I had to do was give her a sense of hope."

He gave her more than hope... he gave her confidence by telling her what she wanted to hear, "You are going to heal." Heal she did, and returned to the classroom with the help of physical therapy and a special orthopedic chair.

Centeno, one of the pioneers of the return-to-work project in San Antonio, sums it up with conviction. "I am a guide... clients like Terry

Continued on page 7

SPECIAL ISSUE

SPECIAL ISSUE

A bill to watch

Senate Bill 195 by Ratliff (H.B. 621 by Vowell) establishes a comprehensive medical rehabilitation fund (previously known as the Florida Bill) for persons with severe spinal cord and brain trauma injuries from fees assessed from DWI and other driving offenses. This fund is expected to reach \$13.5 million during the first year, with 10 percent of that being returned to counties as a collection fee. The State Association of County Judges has enthusiastically endorsed the measure.

The remaining money will fund the comprehensive Medical Rehabilitation Program of TRC, providing security in an uncertain funding climate. SB 195 is referred to Criminal Justice Committee and HB 621 is referred to the Human Services Committee.

The Legislative Reference Library offers current bill status by calling (in Austin) 463-1251 or (in Texas) 800-253-9693. They give the status of up to 10 bills per call by bill number, author or subject.

Legislative session starts on fast track

During the first weeks of one of the fastest moving legislative sessions in recent times, TRC and other state agencies have already reached later phases of the legislative process.

Presenting testimony before both House and Senate committees, Commissioner Arrell reminded legislators that TRC is operating at a minimum acceptable level of funding and that TRC clients have nowhere to go if services are reduced.

The appropriations bill in the House, H.B. 10, initially called for a 10 percent average reduction for most of TRC

programs. However, the House Human Services Subcommittee for Budget and Oversight restored most of TRC's programs during markup hearings in its recommendation to the full Appropriations Committee.

The House Human Services Subcommittee for Budget and Oversight recommended moderate and positive increases in program levels, and restored lost funding for personal attendant care and independent living services, during markup hearings in its recommendation to the full Appropriations Committee.

Upon the Senate Finance Committee's request for agencies to address hiring policies, Arrell suggested that the hiring of people with disabilities also be a part of the inquiry.

Sen. Montford, chair of the Senate Finance Committee, agreed and sent a letter to other agencies asking them to come prepared to discuss the hiring of people with disabilities in their testimony.

The first bill signed by Gov. Ann Richards, S.B. 111, called for a 1 percent reduction in state spending for all agencies during the present fiscal year.

Expected to save an estimated \$139.5 million, the measure will eliminate state employee merit raises until the end of the fiscal year.

The 1 percent budget reduction will have little impact on agency operation because federal money makes up the majority of TRC's operating funds. The hotly debated alternative to S.B. 111 demanded a spending and hiring freeze—a disruptive effect on providing services to clients.

Another section of S.B. 111 requires the Legislative Budget Board to conduct operational audits of all agencies. These audits will determine budget and spending practices, which many observers say will lead to a one year state appropriation.

ADA-Texas

TRC's in-house resource team responding to needs created by the Americans with Disabilities Act, now has a "1-800" number for quick access to the latest ADA information in Texas.

Members of the business community, consumers, trade associations, state agencies, and TRC employees – virtually anyone needing information or assistance with ADA issues – can take advantage of this resource.


Along with the latest ADA developments, resource referral and assistance, the toll-free number will provide a calendar of ADA-related events across Texas.

The toll-free ADA-Texas line will be open during regular business hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For handy reference, cut out this number and keep it close to your phone:

For information
CALL
1-800
442-9502

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT



ADA

TEXAS

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

DDS releases new Circle of Excellence

DDS announced the recipients of the 2nd annual Circle of Excellence awards.

Fourteen examiners received the awards. Nominees were judged on established standards of timeliness, accuracy and production.

The circle was particularly challenging this year, down in number of examiners from 32 to 14, because the standards were harder to achieve as workloads increased dramatically.

"We believe that the Circle of Excellence is truly a selective and singular honor for those who achieve it," says Carlos Valdez, assistant deputy commissioner at DDS. "This level of performance assures that we are helping people with disabilities in Texas."

"Our business is filled with surprises, from year to year," says Deputy Commissioner Les Albrecht. "We will be reviewing the criteria for selection each year to anticipate needed changes and still maintain a high level of excellence in performance."

The recipients will receive a certificate, plaque and a letter from Commissioner Arrell. Eligible award winners will also receive a merit raise

Congratulations to winners of the DDS Circle of Excellence awards.

DDS Circle of Excellence award winners	Unit 11 Bettina Brewer	Unit 35 Julie Casner Robert Grayson	Unit 40 Bob Edwards Thelma Garcia- Crew	Unit 60 Rebecca Kelley
	Unit 12 Linda Conaway	Tommie Lee Molly Lovett Glenda Pack	Unit 50 Joe Whitlock	Unit 91 Bruce Pruitt
		Jim Reeves David Sandefur		



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Commissioner celebrates 10 year anniversary



Max Arrell, TRC's commissioner of the 80s and beyond.

"Where do you want to be five years from now, young man," asked J.J. Brown, of a new counselor more than 30 years ago.

"I want your job," the young man replied.

Brown, the first director of vocational rehabilitation in Texas, hired that counselor, a college intern in Houston, in 1961.

Since that day Max Arrell has worked his way up the ranks at TRC, developing experience in all facets of agency programs and operation.

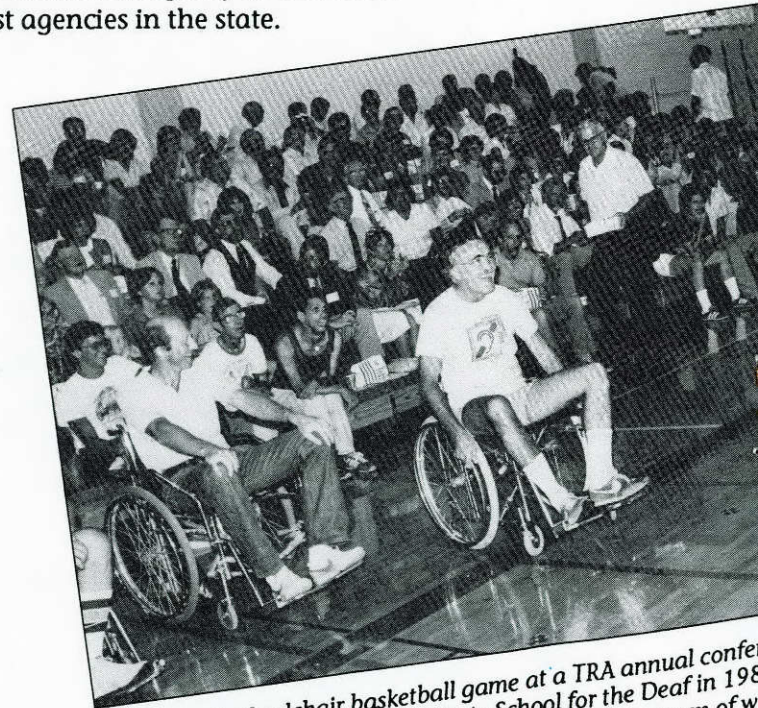
He got the job he wanted. On March 25, 1991, Arrell celebrates his 10th year, and more than 30 years in state service, as commissioner of TRC.

Since Arrell's arrival at the job, the agency has grown from a division of the Texas Education Agency to one of the largest agencies in the state.

Besides leading T of expansions in ser Arrell has been a ke ces of change. He do respond to adversity effectively.

Goal setting and cardinal characteris force behind many enabled vocational break the mold of m and reach out to pe abilities in Texas.

In response to am Rehabilitation Act o tional rehabilitation maintain productiv Arrell's guidance, th severely disabled cli



A wheelchair basketball game at a TRA annual confer the State School for the Deaf in 198 "competed" against a team of w Houston and Au

RC through a series
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an observer of the for-
developed plans to
and opportunity

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medical rehabilitation
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e percentage of
ents served in Texas



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6. TRC administrators
wheelchair athletes from
stin to a packed crowd.



Arrell, with Justin Dart, Jr., then commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration in Washington D.C., at a parade in Dallas to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

increased to nearly 80 percent as reported in 1990.

Looking back at the services offered when he started working at the agency, Arrell said, "It is hard for many to imagine that the scope of our programs and services has changed so much. Many of our typical clients might not have been considered for services only a few years ago."

In the early 80s a national movement for consumer involvement threatened many rehabilitation professionals who were uneasy about empowering non-professionals to make changes in the rehabilitation system. Arrell capitalized on this consumer interest by forging a partnership in advocacy between consumers and professionals in Texas. He opened nominations for the TRC Consumer Advisory Committee to consumer groups to strengthen and improve this partnership.

In 1986, before public forums were required by law, he conducted public meetings throughout Texas to involve

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ago.*
||

consumers in developing new programs or improving old ones.

Lawmakers also benefited from this partnership. "When our consumers and clients go with us to meet with legislative committees, the legislators see that they are real people with real problems. I wouldn't have it any other way," Arrell said.

He noted that much of the agency's success in the last session resulted from consumer participation and commitment to TRC programs.

The Commissioner's management style, "walking about," has endeared him to all levels of agency employees and afforded him direct insight into the working ways within the agency.

He regrets that this first-name rapport with employees is more difficult to maintain because of the agency's growth. "Since 1981, we have replaced more than 2,000 employees, which is a lot for one man to keep up with," he said.

Continued on page 8

Awards

TRC Service

FEBRUARY 1991

Region I

20 years:

Harvey M. Bailey

Region II

10 years:

Laura A. Marquez

20 years:

Jerry L. Hickman
Paul Baganz, Jr.

Region III

10 years:

Greg Jamison

Region V

15 years:

Ann M. Ohlson

20 years:

Irma Mancinelli
Enrique Yharra
Gloria Cortez

25 years:

Sharon Sattler

Region VI

15 years:

Anne K. Murphy

20 years:

Patricia Renick

DDS

10 years:

Amparo Longoria

Central Office

10 years:

Curtis Behrends

20 years:

Cecile Mourte

Some things must be believed to be seen

There is a lot of excitement brewing at DDS these days.

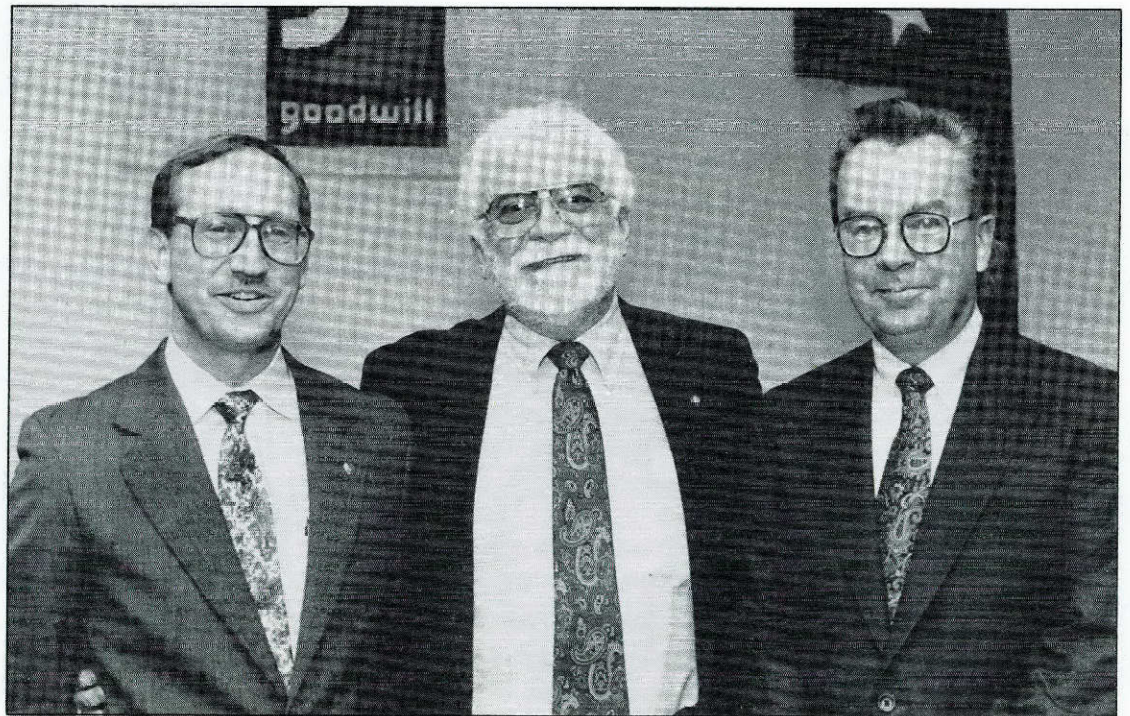
Automation - that boon to productivity via the terminal or computer that many of us have come to rely upon - is heading straight for DDS. It is called ADEW, for Automated Disability Examiner Workstation, and it is going to change some lives.

Recently the Social Security Administration approved funding for ADEW. ADEW took three years in the planning justification stage. In January 1991, it became the top priority for TRC Automated Services Division.

Dan Eudy, chief of Automated Services for DDS, summed up the vision for this improvement in a kick-off meeting, "We are convinced of the potential for this project. No magic carpet will take us from here to there. It will be done by hard work and a cooperative work spirit and by designing around the work needs of the examiner."

VISIONS just happens to be the name chosen for a newsletter which will track and report the progress of ADEW. Stay tuned, we will get back to you with more details.

Bob goes out in a "blaze of glory"



Bob Blase, (center) the first chairman of TRC's Consumer Advisory Committee, retired after 32 years of service with the San Antonio Goodwill Industries. Blase, who began a TV career as "Captain Bob" in the 1950s children hour, brought perpetual motion to his duties at Goodwill. His energy has "blazed" many a trail in advocating for rights and services for people with disabilities. Also shown are Jim Brown, (right) the new president of San Antonio Goodwill Industries and Terry Smith, (left) regional director of TRC Region V.



Region IV

Arnold Barrera, area manager in the Rosenberg Field Office, became the new program director for Region IV effective March 1.

Chris Hilliard was selected for the RST position in the Houston West Field Office. Hilliard was formerly in the Dallas Central Field Office.

Region V

Richard Smith, operations director - administrative services at the San Antonio Regional Office, was one of the first TRC employees to be called to active duty. Smith is an officer in the Air Force Reserves.

Ernest Centeno, marketing/employment specialist in the San Antonio Workers' Compensation Field Office, was honored with a farewell reception at the San Antonio Northeast Field Office on Jan. 25.

Marcial Zamora, area manager, announced the selection of Norma Linda Saenz as a counselor in the Harlingen Field Office. Saenz worked for the Texas Commission for the Blind before joining TRC.

Region VI

Vicki Coles, counselor in the Dallas Central Field Office, presented a check to the Union Gospel Mission in Dallas. The gift was an expression of goodwill from the staff of Dallas Central Field Office to the less fortunate during the holiday season.

Mary Heitman, counselor in the Garland Field Office, retired Feb. 28, after 16 years of services with the commission.

Linda Mitchell, counselor in the Dallas Southwest Field Office, was selected as the 1990 Counselor of the Year by the Dallas area Goodwill Industries. Congratulations to Linda Mitchell!

Ismael Melgoza, counselor in the Dallas Northwest Field Office, provided technical

advice and contributed his time to the AIDS Services of Dallas. Because of Melgoza's services to the AIDS facility, TRC was honored as the Service Provider of the Year when it was presented with the Phil Morrow Memorial Award at the AIDS Services of Dallas Annual Awards Banquet on Dec. 16.

DDS

Vance Simpson was selected to fill the Civil Rights Compliance Specialist position. Simpson was previously with the Texas Youth Commission.

Central Office

John Ribble, assistant deputy commissioner for AID, announced that George Schneider had returned to the Automated Services Division on Feb. 1 to fill the database administrator position.

Roger Levy announced that Wendy Brown is the new administrative technician under the Tech=Ability Grant.

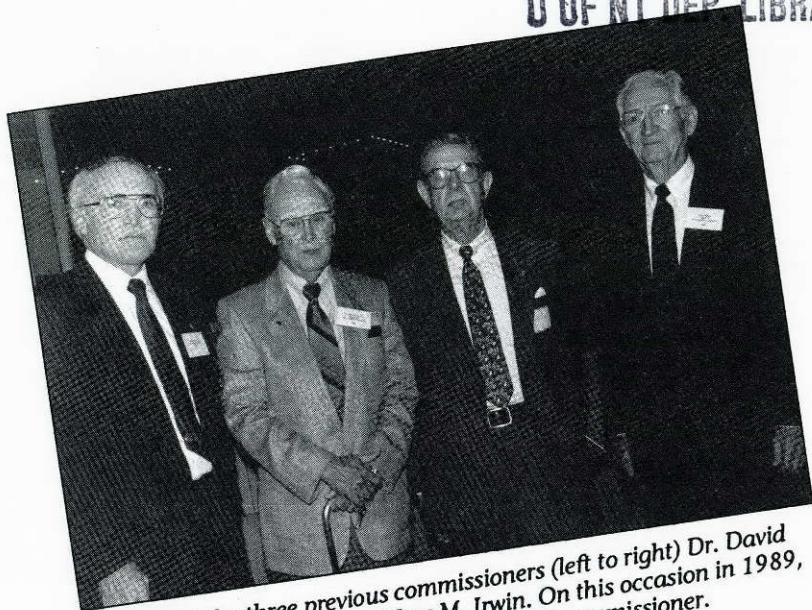
Teacher *continued from page 1*

are looking for someone to take over and tell them, firmly but kindly, what they can and can't do. That is the key to their rehabilitation."

Richards is now a teacher at the Serna Secondary Alternative School. The campus consists of a student body which cannot handle mainstream school programs. At first glance, that would seem a difficult assignment for a teacher with a bum back. Is she worried about further injury that would end her childhood dream of being a school teacher?

"Not really," she says. "I am a better teacher, more in tune to the needs of the students, more sensitive and aware, and I understand fear in others much better now."

Editor's Note: If you have items of interest in the various TRC regions (including DDS and Central Office), such as local awards, press coverage, conferences, meetings or other TRC-related activities which could appear in Regional Notes, please submit them for consideration to "TRC Today" c/o the Public Information Office.



Arrell with the three previous commissioners (left to right) Dr. David Wade, W.K. Harvey, Jr., and Jess M. Irwin. On this occasion in 1989, Arrell surpassed Irwin as the longest tenured commissioner.

Anniversary *Continued from page 5*

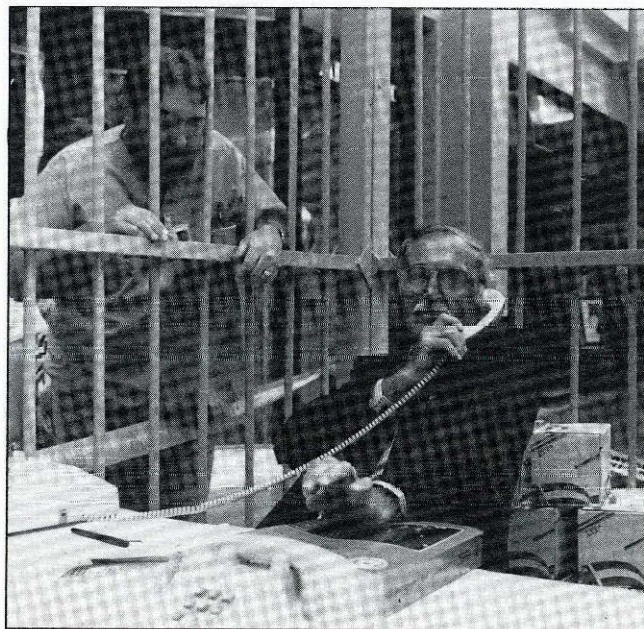
He has taken a special and intricate interest in Disability Determination Services through negotiations with the Social Security Administration and advocating for positive change in the DDS work environment. "I have tried to be the DDS commissioner and underscore the importance of DDS in the continuum of services at TRC," he says. "I may be as well known at all levels of DDS as anywhere in TRC— and that's no accident."

One of Arrell's proudest accomplishments and an appropriate culmination of 30 years in the rehabilitation field is the Brown-Heatly Building. "Many people don't realize that we began planning for a barrier-free building as early as 1968,"

he noted. "It has finally happened and it is only fitting that the TRC Central Office should be housed in such a model of accessibility."

He now turns his attention to the needs of DDS employees and a new building to serve them and their clients.

"If I could sum up my first 10 years as commissioner," he says. "It would be that we are no longer just the VR agency in Texas. We are becoming, in the eyes of the legislature and the people of Texas, the primary state agency to serve the needs of people with disabilities. That will become even more important in the 90s as we further diversify our continuum of services."



DDS Examiner Tom Rutledge sympathizes with Commissioner Arrell during his plea for bond money to release him from the "Jail-a-thon" fundraiser for the Austin Crimestoppers program.

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COMMISSION**
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