

News & Views

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Dart Resigns Under Presidential Pressure

Justin Dart has resigned his post as commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration at the request of President Reagan.

Dart's "statement of conscience", read before a House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Select Education, characterized the Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services as "... afflicted by profound problems in management, personnel and resource utilization." Sources say this statement, which departed from prepared remarks approved by the Education Department, prompted Dart's dismissal.

Dart's appointment to the RSA post 15 months ago stirred hope in the disabled community for a brighter day for federally-administered rehabilitation programs.

Dart's term, however, has been plagued by in-fighting between the RSA and OSERS spurred on, many observers say, by numerous managerial restrictions placed on Dart by his boss, Madeleine Will, assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services.

At the November 18 House subcommittee hearing, Dart described significant lapses in RSA's ability to formulate regulations governing recent amendments to the Rehabilitation Act.

The controversy within OSERS is cited by many observers as the main reason for the delayed start-up of several programs covered in the amendments designed to increase opportunities for people with disabilities.

The presidential decision to



Justin Dart's appointment as commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration "... filled a major leadership void in America's disability and rehabilitation community," according to a letter written to the president by Paul Dzedzic, president of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

dismiss Dart prompted a ground swell reaction in the disabled community. Disability groups and advocates nationwide launched telegram and phone campaigns directed at the White House protesting the move and calling for a thorough review of the situation while demanding a reconsideration of the president's decision.

In a letter to President Reagan, Paul Dzedzic, president of the Council of State Administrators of

Vocational Rehabilitation, remarked, "We are shocked, profoundly saddened and even angry at this great loss of opportunity and waste of talent."

The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities and disability advocacy groups around the country are gearing up for simultaneous, mid-December rallies at RSA district offices in protest against Dart's ouster.

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Wheeler Leaves Legacy of Caring and Conviction

Former TRC Deputy Commissioner Doyle T. Wheeler died December 10, after a long battle with cancer. Wheeler, 61, retired from the Commission in March 1985, after 30 years of service. He remained active as a consultant and volunteer for various Dallas-area disability advocacy groups as long as his health allowed.

Commissioner Max Arrell, described his long-time associate and friend as "a true gentleman" and a "man who had strong convictions about the abilities and potential of disabled people."

In 1955, Wheeler joined the vocational rehabilitation division of the Texas Education Agency as a supervisor in the disability determination unit. His career growth tracked the agency's growth, through the time TRC became an independent state agency, until his retirement.

In a "News & Views" interview shortly before he left the agency, Wheeler cited his participation in the Commission's advancements in serving severely disabled people among his proudest accomplishments. He was particularly excited about extended rehabilitation and independent living programs—and their potential for severely disabled people.

The family has asked people who wish to honor Wheeler's memory to contribute "to any group that helps disabled people."

Doyle Wheeler was presented a western cut leather coat at his retirement party in March 1985. His preference for smart, western-style suits contributed to many people's impression of Wheeler as a "real Texas gentleman".



Counselor Expectations Change January 1 TRC Moves to Weighted Closures

The TRC emphasis on successful "26" closures (clients put back to work) won't change, but the system of counting those closures will.

Beginning January 1, 1988, the Commission will adopt a method of "weighting" closures based on a point system in which all counselors must meet a quota of 72 points. Successful "26" closures on clients classified as having catastrophic disabilities will mean three points to the counselor closing the case.

Closures on clients classified as severely disabled will bring two points, and on closures for clients with non-severe disabilities, the counselor will get one point. The count will be retroactive from October 1, 1987.

According to John Fenoglio, deputy commissioner for programs, the 72-point quota is based on FY 1987 TRC counselor production numbers in each of these three categories. A study of these numbers rendered an

average caseload expectancy of 72 points.

He points out that specific counselor assignments in restricted circumstances will require help from managers in meeting the quota.

"It's a very basic beginning to some method which will recognize the differences in working with a diversity of disabilities," says Fenoglio.

"Managers will expect staff to make recommendations for a better system as long as they don't create one so intricate that the tale wags the dog," states Fenoglio.

During the first year, the University of Texas LBJ School will help TRC develop a measure of quality for the new point system—one which won't be reflected in paperwork. Instead, it could be measured using the client's perspective of his/her particular experience with the vocational rehabilitation process.

"We want to see if there are measurable characteristics which can tip us off as to the quality of the program," says Fenoglio. "Maybe a survey completed by clients would help."

Historical rehabilitation literature contains volumes written on weighted closure systems. Fenoglio believes more hasn't been done about it because opponents can always produce an example which eludes the rule.

Depending on where a client lives, his/her educational and family background and available community resources, a person with an amputated foot could be harder to place in a job than a person who is a quadriplegic.

Difficult closures often have nothing much to do with the disability, but more to do with a client's background and environment.

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Top Employees Announced at Board Meeting

"I don't feel that I deserve it," says Anna Marie Posey, counselor in the Victoria Field Office, of her newly won Top Employee of the Year Award.

Hers was one of two Top Employee Awards presented at the November TRC Board meeting in Austin. Posey won in the salary groups 12-20 category while Sandra McKinley, clerical supervisor in the Disability Determination Division at the Central Office, received the award for salary groups 2-11. Posey's modesty is characteristic of each of the hard-working, dedicated TRC employees who have won the Top Employee Award since its beginning in 1985.

Board Chairman Jerry Kane cited Posey for her extensive work in promoting TRC services in Lavaca and DeWitt counties largely through a bi-county, interagency council, which she founded, to share information about services available to people with disabilities.

In her total commitment to serving disabled Texans, Posey is a member of various local, state and national rehabilitation organizations.

Likewise, McKinley was noted for her accomplishments and leadership as a TRC team member in Disability Determination. "Everyone hopes to win this award," says McKinley, "and I was pleased to have been chosen." Her knowledge of that program has made her an invaluable resource for disability examiners, providers and the general public alike. Always searching for better ways to do her work and make her unit more efficient, McKinley maintains positive relationships with co-workers, claimants and her staff.

These two top employees were chosen from a field of 16 Outstanding Employee Award winners from TRC offices around the state (see the October issue of "News & Views").

Commissioner Arrell Gets RSA Award

TRC Commissioner Max Arrell was recently honored by Justin Dart, commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, with the RSA Commissioner's Distinguished Service Award.

At the October annual conference of the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, Dart presented Arrell with the award citing his history of contributions promoting independence and quality of life for people with disabilities.

"Receiving the award was certainly an honor," says Commissioner Arrell, "but it is even more an honor to receive it from the man I consider to be the most outstanding advocate for people with disabilities in the nation today."

Sandra McKinley (left), clerical supervisor in the Disability Determination Division, and Anna Marie Posey, counselor in the Victoria Field Office, are the 1987 TRC Top Employees of the Year. Together, they have given a combined total of 25 years of quality service to the Commission. Posey has been with TRC for eight years and McKinley for 17 years.



Transitions

Bob Dann, former area manager in the Dallas Northwest Field Office, was recently chosen as area manager in the Fort Worth Field Office North.

Effective December 1, **Anita McIntyre** became the counselor for the deaf and hearing impaired specialty caseload at the Easter Seal Office in Fort Worth.

Jeanne Rutan, counselor in the San Antonio Field Office South, has assumed the Independent Living Services caseload in that office while **Ruben Reyna**, counselor in the Brenham Field Office, will transfer into the general counselor position in the San Antonio South office.

Emeterio Pelayo, has moved from his counselor position in the Houston East End Field Office to fill the general caseload counselor position at the San Antonio Field Office Central.

Flora Williams, former rehabilitation technician, died November 16, 1987. Williams retired from the University of Texas at Arlington Field Office in 1981 after 11 years with TRC. She was first hired as an interviewing clerk in 1970.

He's Retired But He Won't Quit

Retirement is no time to rest. At least, that's what Phil Grabbe believes.

One of the things he enjoys doing most is what he did best as a counselor, helping people with disabilities.

After almost 18 years as a TRC counselor, Grabbe retired from the Grand Prairie Field Office in 1984. But, he's still going strong, spending a lot of time fishing, puttering around his shop at home and inventing gadgets for the Autistic Treatment Center in Dallas to help TRC clients better work on job contracts.

Dennis Kutach, ERS counselor in the Goodwill Industries Field Office in Dallas, remembered Grabbe's skill with his hands. When a problem arose at ATC which slowed down production of hangers used to hold mattress springs while being painted, Kutach called Grabbe for some help only a devout handy-man could provide.

"I'm a 'piddler,'" says Grabbe. "In the past I did a lot of engineering work like modifying computer tables for accessibility and such things as that."

The bed frame company, contracting with ATC for hangers, needed small lengths of wire to be cut and bent to make the hangers. Measuring the wire was the problem because most of the workers did not have this skill.

Grabbe rose to the occasion and designed a wire cutter for the workers which could measure, cut and bend the wire in one short process. The invention doubled hanger production at ATC.

That was the first project Grabbe worked on for ATC. More projects would come in the following months. He now makes regular visits to the workshop to see if there is anything he can "rig" for them.

"I think it's wonderful," says Karin Kliemann, workshop manager. "He's been a real asset; I wish we could

get more contracts to benefit him and us."

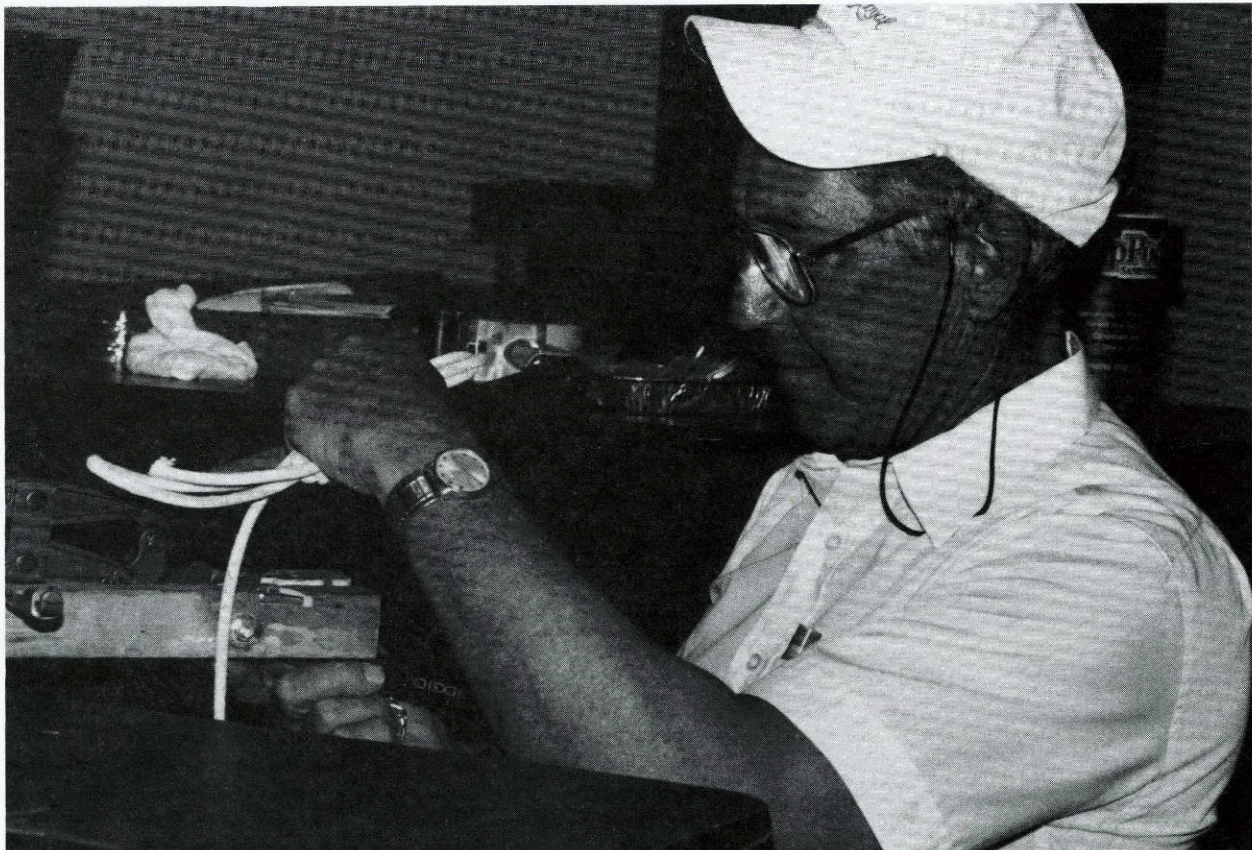
Why is Grabbe willing to give part of his hard-earned retirement for these folks?

"It's sort of a feeling of helping people," Grabbe reflects. "When you do a decent job, you feel good about it."

As the interview for this article progressed, Grabbe found another problem to solve for the ATC workers. He helped some of them find a way to count and store decorative studs—part of another workshop contract. He showed them how to perform the task much quicker with an ice cream stick than with their fingers.

"I love solving problems," says Grabbe. "If someone tells me I can't do something . . . watch out!"

After watching him "piddle" around the ATC workshop, you're convinced nobody will attempt to tell him that.



Phil Grabbe, retired TRC counselor, can always find something to do around the Autistic Treatment Center in Dallas. Here he makes an adjustment on the wire cutter he invented for the workshop which doubled production capacity on one work contract.

Counselor Expectations

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Fenoglio holds that under the weighted closure system, exceptions to the rule can be made up for through intensive, involved VR counseling.

"Our point system is a final product and it's fair," says Fenoglio. "It has the opportunity to be much better than the old system in that we invite the staff to excel."

He refers to a feature of the new point system which rewards TRC counselors who aspire to and achieve excellence. Under the reward program, counselors choosing to may sign an expression of intent to shoot for 150 points during the fiscal year, almost 80 points beyond the quota.

Those counselors choosing to sign up for the attempt will receive certain assurances. First, the 150 point mark of excellence will not go up. If they fail to reach the 150 point mark, there will be no consequences as long as the 72-point quota is met.

Also, if they reach 150 points,

auditors will not be sent in as a result. Nor will auditors be prevented from examining the caseload as part of a random, routine check.

There are several incentives for counselors to commit to and reach the 150-point mark of excellence.

Those counselors' names will be placed on a plaque in the lobby of the new Central Office building in Austin. They will be invited to a one-week, Commission-paid training inside the continental United States. A list of training for this purpose will be published at a later date. Officials anticipate that meetings of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and the National Rehabilitation Association will be among the training opportunities offered.

Other benefits will accompany these for counselors reaching 150 points such as calling cards which recognize their efforts toward excellence.

Fenoglio stresses that the quota under the new system will remain stable. In addition to helping develop a team approach to vocational rehabilitation, TRC officials want the new system to recognize people's efforts by focusing on quality, not numbers.

MILESTONES

November 1987

Region I
15 years: Barbara Ballard

Region II
15 years: Thomas M. Cook
Walt Chamberlain, Jr.
Wanda F. Ely

Region III
10 years: Roxanne I. Rios
Virginia J. Bosman
15 years: Nancy N. Oatman

Region IV
10 years: Boyd L. Henry
Larry K. Smith

Region V
15 years: Andrea Rivas
Nancy E. Murray
20 years: Carlos J. Gutierrez

Region VI
20 years: Charles Wasson

DDD
10 years: Billye F. Austin
Lorene H. Sessler
20 years: Donald E. Hensz

Central Office
15 years: Jim Shaw
20 years: Delvin E. Sparks

POINTS of INTEREST

Dale Place, deputy commissioner for administrative and support services, has formed a task force to develop a staff development plan which will make sure all TRC employees are trained to use the menu of applications currently available on personal computers within the Commission. The plan will include commonly used applications as well as uses for more specific tasks. Chaired by Tom Word, director of Staff Development, the task force has two objectives: 1.) to create training which promotes a basic understanding of TRC's mainframe and microcomputer system structure, and 2.) to develop a training plan for specific uses in individual positions.

The American National Standards Institute, Inc. recently revised its architectural standard. It is called "Specifications for Making Buildings and Facilities Accessible to and Usable by Physically Handicapped People." The price for a copy of ANSI A117.1 is \$8 plus \$2 for handling and shipping from ANSI, Order Department, 1430 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10018.

LETTERS

Following is a portion of a letter received in the Commissioner's office from client Mandie Edwards concerning her counselor, Linda Shaw:

"Please be advised that I will no longer need your services as I have been gainfully employed at this time with prospects for the future. 'Thank you' for the help is such a small thought for what your services did for me. Not once was I treated as 'something' instead of 'someone' by Mrs. Linda Shaw and her support staff. Sometimes with a disability you have to work harder or change course, then it becomes ability."

Commissioner Arrell recently received this note from Gayle Lindsey of Austin:

"I wanted to thank you for services that are being provided to my daughter by one of your counselors, David Stevenson. He has shown compassion, interest and

concern in meeting our unique needs with our daughter. It is very obvious that he is dedicated and honestly motivated to providing the services needed. We are grateful to your agency by showing us your determination to develop Jill's skills through David's guidance and support services."

John Heck, area manager in the Fort Worth West Field Office, received this letter from Speaker of the House Jim Wright:

"A constituent had contacted my office in Fort Worth regarding his brother and was directed to State Senator Bob Glasgow's office. Robert telephoned my staff today with a report which complimented you and your efforts in his brother's behalf. Such compliments should be passed on to you and your staff, and I thought you might like to be aware of them. Thank you for your help in this matter."

★ Applause

These TRC employees recently received press coverage for the Commission: **Gladys Diggs**, counselor in the Amarillo Field Office; **Sterling Ellison**, counselor in the Abilene Field Office; **Dorothy Cooke**, counselor in the Amarillo Field Office; **Linda Shaw**, counselor in the Angleton Field Office; **Al Guerrero**, counselor in the Austin Field Office North; **Alan Craig** and **David Cohen**, both counselors in the Baytown Field Office; **Polly Walton** and **Dixie McLeod**, both counselors in the Beaumont Field Office; **Ruben A. Reyna**, counselor in the Brenham Field Office; **Bob Rankin** and **Stephen Schoen**, both counselors in the Bryan Field Office; **Lan Rainey**, counselor in the Commerce Field Office; and **Nancy Corley**, counselor in the Dallas Field Office Northwest.

More press coverage recipients as follows: **Lester Martin** and **Charles Wasson**, counselors in the Greenville Field Office; **Dan White**, counselor in the Killeen Field Office; **Greg Jamison**, counselor in the Liberty Field Office; **Bill Langston**, counselor in the Lubbock Field Office; **George Moore**, counselor in the Lufkin Field Office; **Elaine Evans**, counselor in the Marshall Field Office; **Michael Collier**, counselor in the Midland Field Office; **Ray Fenton**, counselor in the Nacogdoches Field Office; **Mike Custy**, counselor in the Odessa Field Office Central; **Lorie McQuade**, Counselor in the Richmond Field Office; **Jean Duafala**, counselor in the San Angelo Field Office; **Naomi Marksbury**, counselor in the Tyler Field Office; **Anna Marie Posey**, counselor, **Joey Crow**, counselor and **Ken Bowen**, area manager, all in the Victoria Field Office; **Frank Perdue**, program specialist in the Central Office; and **Commissioner Arrell**.

From the El Paso Central Field Office, Counselors **Frank Castillo**, **Luie Tirres**, **Orlando Garcia**, **Duane Mitchell** and Area Manager **Keith Fulp** all got media coverage for TRC as did **Barbara Ballard**, counselor in the Amarillo Field Office, and **Adrian Cervantez**, area manager also in the Amarillo Field Office.

This unusually long press coverage list reflects the hard work and planning all the field staff put into TRC's 1987 NETH Week activities.

This appears to be the most successful NETH Week campaign we've had. A NETH Week "wrap up" sometime after the first of the year should bear this out. Congratulations and thanks for your support.

Cary Westhause, director of the Texas Advisory Board of Occupational Therapy, recently received an award from the Texas Occupational Therapy Association recognizing her efforts in strengthening the good working relationship between TABOT and TOTA. "It is important to me that TABOT work for and with occupational therapists," says Westhause. "I was very pleased and appreciative."

Dart Resigns

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Meanwhile, the furor surrounding Dart's dismissal has spurred congressional interest in investigating the turmoil-ridden \$1.5 billion program which administers vocational and educational programs for people with disabilities.

Sources say the House Subcommittee on Select Education has asked the General Accounting Office, the investigatory arm of Congress, to begin a thorough investigation of OSERS. While the exact scope of the investigation remains unclear, Subcommittee Chairman Major Owens of New York wants the GAO to begin work immediately.

Look for updates in following issues of the "News & Views" as the situation evolves.



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