

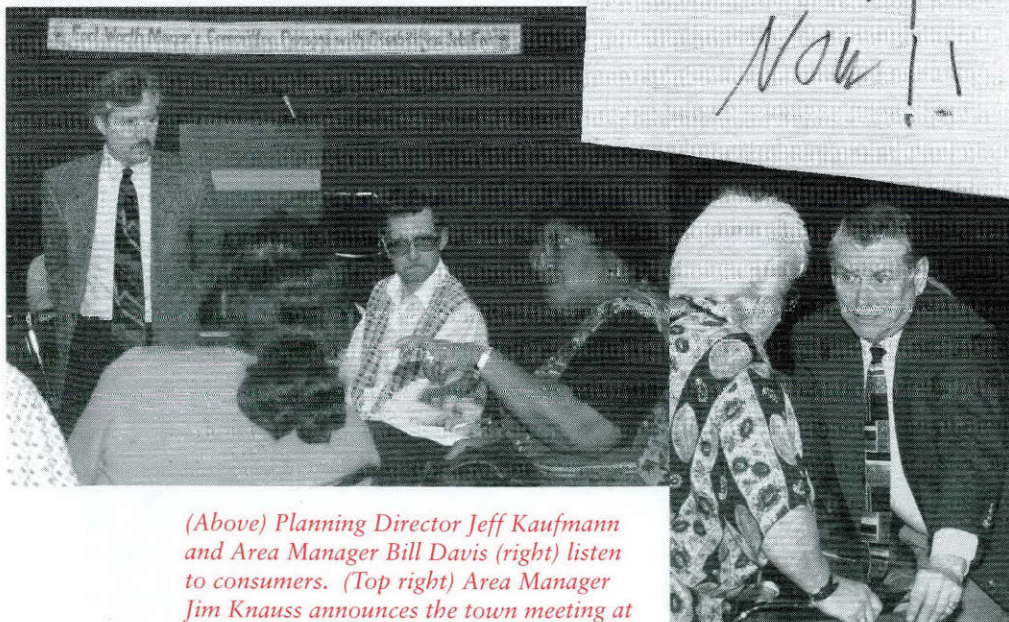
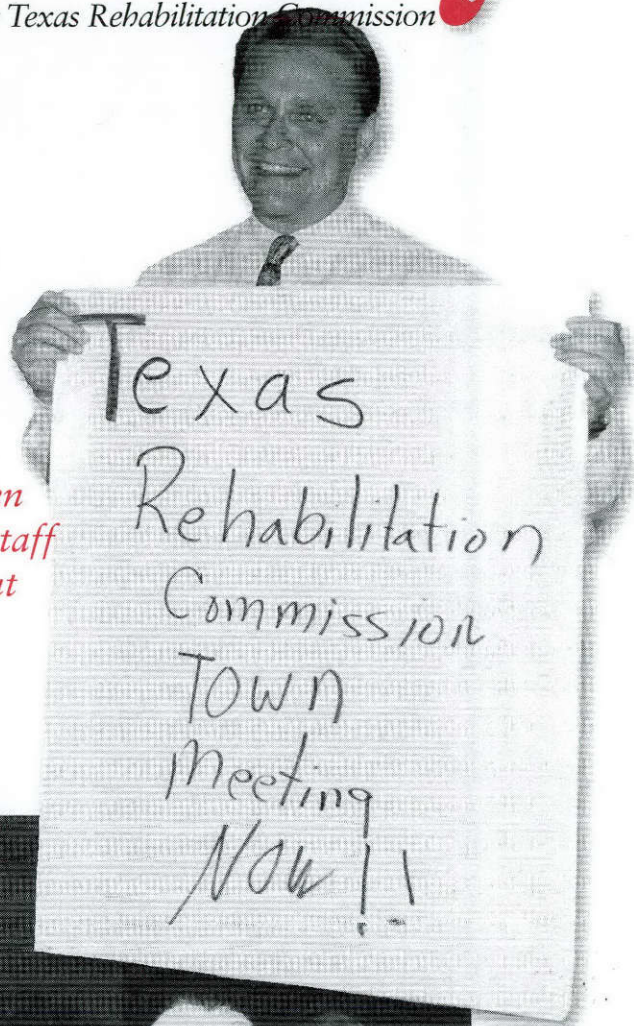
Vol. 20 No. 5 May 1997

trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission

In town meetings held across the state – from Alpine to McAllen to Fort Worth – TRC staff gathered valuable input from consumers.

TRC LISTENS!



(Above) Planning Director Jeff Kaufmann and Area Manager Bill Davis (right) listen to consumers. (Top right) Area Manager Jim Knauss announces the town meeting at the Tarrant County Job Fair in Ft. Worth.

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Texas Rehabilitation
Commission
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78751-2399
Vol. 20 No. 5 May 1997

Town Meetings held around the state

Casual, conversational and comfortable. That was the format used to get consumers, advocates, rehabilitation providers and others to talk to TRC in town meetings held around the state during April. Radio, television, newspapers and Internet announcements invited Texans to take part in town meetings held in McAllen, Fort Worth and Alpine. TRC staff attended the meetings and listened while community members told us how we are doing and helped develop solutions and areas to focus on in the future.

Participants divided into small groups and worked with facilitators to consider issues and specific questions for discussion. Each subgroup then presented their ideas to the larger group. The open format also allowed for any participant to testify in front of the entire group.

The friendly format proved successful with more than 200 participants throughout the state. "People are more comfortable speaking up in small groups, and that's definitely a key to getting good information," said Kaye Beneke, assistant commissioner for Consumer Affairs.

"The group participation allowed everybody in the room to be involved," said Johnny Weddington, facility specialist for Region V. "This is the best thing that we have done to get information from our clients, service providers and the general public. We got everybody in the room involved in the concerns of VR."

A cross-section of people in McAllen identified concerns about a growing population and lack of employment opportunities. McAllen participants also produced a consensus statement to advocate for public transportation for people with disabilities while Alpine residents commented that TRC needs more exposure in the community for the good work that we do.

Held simultaneously and in an adjacent location, the Fort Worth Annual Job Fair encouraged high attendance at the Fort Worth town meeting. Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex participants said TRC needs additional area offices and encouraged us to seek more funding to reduce eligibility processing time and the number of clients on a counselor's caseload. They also asked that we do away with waiting lists for independent living services.

Information collected in town meetings will be used to develop TRC's strategic plan and a variety of other reports and plans, and for requesting funds from the Legislature.



Danny Salinas with Taco Cabana (top) and Gena Swett. "I've met a lot of great people here and this is better than any restaurant specific job fair I've ever been to," said Salinas. "I didn't come here today expecting to get so many qualified applicants, but I've already met a dozen people that are great applicants." (right) Jennifer Massey TRC VRC in the Ft. Worth Field Office with TRC client Tommy Torres. Torres, who has been working part-time with UPS, hopes to get a full-time position.



Job Fair Excites Clients and Employers

Partnership! It is more than just working with clients. It also means working with other provider organizations, local businesses and employers. The 1997 Annual Tarrant County Job Fair is an example of partnership in action.

On April 16, the Fort Worth Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities, in partnership with TRC, IAMCARES & PWI, Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth, Easter Seal Society of Tarrant County and several other organizations sponsored the 1997 annual job fair. Fifty-six employers participated in the event which drew over 480 hopeful attendees.

"This is a great opportunity to introduce employers to a population of qualified applicants that is virtually untapped in the job market," said Kathy Blood, RST in the Fort Worth North Field Office. "It also helps us reach out to more individuals than just TRC clients."

"We are excited to offer a variety of services this year," said Gena Swett, program specialist in the TRC Metroplex Regional Office. "Because we do this in conjunction with other organizations, we share the expense and can offer a variety of services to get great results," said Swett. Applicants could participate in skills assessments and make copies of their resumes and applications.

"I see lot of opportunities here. It's only 9 a.m. and I already have an interview scheduled for tomorrow," said TRC client Kevin Maxwell. "I am anxious to meet an employer here that will actually give me a chance to work for them."

Employers were excited too. "We've had a steady flow of people here today," said Sandy Young, employer representative with APAC. "We have several openings, and we've gotten names of some very qualified applicants today that we will probably hire."

Participating employers were asked to have real jobs to offer. One applicant landed a position at the job fair. A week later 11 more had been interviewed and hired into permanent positions, and approximately 50 job interviews were scheduled. Final figures will not be available until July, but results are expected to be higher than last year. In 1996, 13 TRC clients got permanent positions as a result of the job fair.

"What we are seeing here is just the icing on the cake," said Bob Marx, TRC regional director. It's a result of working in partnership with a lot of other organizations all year long — and the payoff comes now when we actually see that it helps people with disabilities go to work."

“The IL counselors do a real good job, especially considering the degree of severity of the people with which they work, ... and the survey certainly supports that belief.” – VERNON DEMENT

Focus on Quality

You have heard it before and the client satisfaction surveys have supported it — TRC VR counselors do good stuff! With a 94.5 percent satisfaction rate from our clients in 1996, it is obvious we are doing something right. But how are we doing in some of our other TRC programs?

In 1992, the Quality Task Force asked that same question. They decided to look at quality and client satisfaction in the Independent Living (IL) program. A subcommittee was formed and the work began.

“We basically went through the same steps that the Quality Task Force went through for VR,” commented Vernon Dement, program specialist for the IL program. “The conclusions we reached ran almost parallel to what had occurred in the VR quality process. It was painstaking but validating that we arrived at many of the same decisions almost independent of one another.”

The subcommittee worked diligently to define quality in IL services. Unlike VR, success is not determined when a client goes to work. Because of the severity of the disability of most of the people they work with, the 10 IL counselors in Texas focus on helping their clients live more independently. That could mean a person with a severe disability has a better quality of life: they are able to live more independently in an apartment; they are able to access

needed community services such as public transportation. It may simply mean that person has higher self-esteem because they can prepare their own breakfast, even answer their own telephone, or do their own shopping.

“Having reached a quality definition, the subcommittee drafted a handbook comparable to the VR quality bluebook and developed an IL client satisfaction survey,” said Terry Smith who heads up the Quality Task Force. “In 1994 — two years earlier than originally projected — the IL client satisfaction survey was tested, and by 1995, everything was in place and the real benchmarking began.”

Two years later, IL clients tell us that VR is not the only program in our lineup of services that is doing a good job. Out of 688 potential respondents, 422 interviews were completed, a response rate of 61.3 percent. Here is what IL customers had to say.

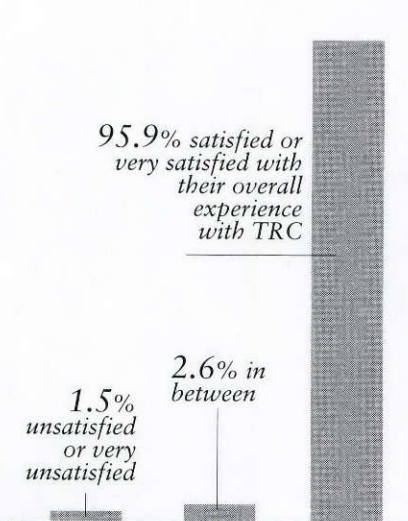
97.7% said that they were treated courteously by TRC staff;

96.6% said that their TRC counselor listened to them;

95.9% were very satisfied or satisfied with their overall experience with TRC;

95.5% gave their IL counselor a good grade.

“The IL counselors do a real good job, especially with the degree of severity of the people with which they work,” said Dement, “and the survey certainly supports that belief.”



Client Satisfaction with TRC

For Dedicated Service



Deputy Commissioner Dave Ward (right) presented an award to Mickey Vogel at the Social Security Administration/Disability Determination Services Management Conference in San Antonio on March 19. The special award was given in remembrance of Kenneth Vogel for his dedicated service to the SSA/DDS Program.

Across the State

Welcome Aboard

David Harris, counselor
 Kimberly Black, administrative technician
 Walter Ford III, systems analyst
 Katherine Rury, budget analyst
 Esther Jimenez, secretary
 Raymond McNeil, counselor
 Rosalind Moran, RST
 Elizabeth Torres, RST
 Taseia Armstrong, RST
 Rae Jean Bolton, RST
 Cathy Lynn Olive, RST
 Kara Lynn Roberts, RST
 Phyllis Anne Wilkey, RST
 Aubrey Duncan, counselor
 Melinda Dye, counselor
 Kristina Gilbert, counselor
 Joan Harris, counselor
 Linda Johnson, counselor
 William Otto, RST
 Cecelia Robinson, counselor
 Betty Straughan, RST
 William Windham, Jr., counselor
 Annie Zuniga-Saldivar, RST
 Jeanette Alarcon, DST
 Stephanie Hatchett, DST
 Anthony Penn, telecommunications specialist
 Vy Pham, network manager
 Gladys Smith, DST
 Linda Thielepape, DST

Retirements

Robert E. Garner, training officer for Region II, retired March 31, 1997, after nearly 23 years of service.
 Jan Mallett, planner, for the Texas Planning Council for Development Disabilities, retired March 31, 1997.
 Sue Harris retired March 31, 1997, with nearly 20 years of service. Harris was a secretary with the Lufkin Field Office.
 Also on March 31, David B. Stanley, counselor at the Angleton Field Office, retired.

Deaths

Linda Roberts, RST in the Dallas Northwest Field Office, passed away on April 17. Linda had worked with TRC for almost five years. She will be missed.

Correction to last month's edition Oops! - Last month we welcomed Karen Beard on board as a management technician. She is a planning assistant.

These employees reached 12 Maximizers in April:

Bobby Benefield Dallas Northwest F.O.	Veronica Spalek Kenneth Bowen Victoria Field Office
Sharon Miller Dallas Northwest F.O.	Sellie Moore Management Audit - Central Office
Roy Smith Dallas Northwest F.O.	

Hands of Mercy

Anyone who has enjoyed a good therapeutic massage can attest to its benefits. But for an increasing number of people with disabilities, they are finding added benefits such as more mobility and less pain. Ask Pam or Kevin Conley.

Husband and wife, and business partners, the Conleys share another aspect of their lives — they both have multiple sclerosis. As a matter of fact, MS is the reason that they met and why they chose the business they are in — massage therapy.

The Conleys met through the MS Society. Both were divorced and learning to adjust to a life with a disability.

They started as friends. Kevin was an Annapolis graduate who had spent time in Somalia. Pam had been a public school administrator.

"I encountered massage at the same time I was needing to retrain in a field to suit the disability," says Pam. "I saw that massage worked in stopping my hand tremors. It would be a way to make a living while helping others who were in our same situation."

It took Pam some time to talk Kevin into it. But now they work side by side, in harmony to help relieve others of the devastating symptoms of muscle cramps and pain caused by MS and other disabilities such as cerebral palsy. "Once I got into it, I saw there was a definite connection between what we saw as treatment and massage therapy," says Kevin. "It stimulates blood flow and lymph flow."

TRC helped Kevin and Pam pay for their training. TRC also assisted them in developing a self-employment plan for starting their business — a business aptly named Hands of Mercy. "TRC made a lot of things come through for us that we didn't think could happen," says Pam. To extend their training, the Conleys traveled to California to learn movement

techniques and says their clients could immediately tell a difference.

The Conleys say their next step is offering workshops to help others learn self-massage that can be done daily. "This is one of my big crusades," says Pam. "I'm a person and not a disease. It is easy when a disease so invades your life for your life to become that disease. We recently helped a gentleman with cerebral palsy and he was free of pain for 10 days after the massage."

Soothing music and loving hands massage and work through the tightness in the muscles of their clients. In the photo: clients Pam and Kevin Conley at work.



Different links ... one great chain

Congratulations to Richard Yahola, VRC in the Sherman Field Office and this year's winner of the 1997 2nd Annual Employee of the Year Logo and T-shirt Design Contest. "The theme is simple but important," said Yahola. "It represents how we are all different and yet connected together by using our unique skills to work for one great common cause. We are held together through our differences, not by how homogeneous we are."

You can support the 1997 Employee of the Year program by buying a T-shirt or cap and by nominating those deserving and outstanding workers around you. Information and nomination forms are available through regional coordinators or on the TRC web site (form TRC-19). Hurry and get your nominations to your regional coordinator by May 30.

Coordinators for your region are:

Region 0 (CO) Ufot Umana	Region 4 Karen Gaede
Region 1 Bill Cahalan	Region 5 Gloria Alderette
Region 2 Jesus Quiroga	Region 9 (DDS) Cynthia Kingsley
Region 3 Nelda Smith	

Letters . . . Letters . . . Letters . . . Letters . . .

VR counselor Carolyn Burelsmith received this letter from a client in Tyler:

"I really appreciate how fast you helped me. The pain was so bad on some days that I could hardly stand it, but because of you, I did not have to wait very long for the paper work. You are such a great person to go out of your way for someone else that you don't even know."

This letter was received from a client about VR counselor Elliott Boyles in the Athens F.O.

"I am very grateful with Mr. Boyles' efficient, quick follow-up to meet all my needs. Not once was I left to wait for government bureaus to crank through their red tape. Calls were always returned and all follow-ups were done within 48 hours. Mr. Boyles did extraordinary record keeping. I

am now working in a lucrative career again. For all the griping about government, this organization is the finest in Texas, and Mr. Boyles is particularly Texas's best."

Karla Moffett, counselor in the Lufkin F.O., received this letter from a client.

"Without your help I could not have made it. It's people like you that makes life a little easier. Once again, thank you so much."

This letter recognizes the team work that VRC Patty Branton, RST Rose Ortiz (Duncanville F.O.) and Purchasing Agent Jim Spiller (Austin Central Office) made with a TRC client.

"Through the efforts of Patty, Rose and Jim Spiller, a computer was purchased and provided for our son to use at college. It was

Mrs. Branton's persistence and desire to help our son that initially persuaded others to provide the financial help to secure and purchase the tools he needed ... I believe my son is finding an increased degree of success because of the efforts of your staff. Keep up the good work!"

Area Manager Jim Knauss received this letter from a client about VRC Carol McKinney in the Plano F.O.

"I recognized the motivation I had lost and felt inspired ... because of her understanding and positive attitude. I hope that in some way you recognize Carol as one of your star counselors and motivators. Her personality, effort and guidance made me choose life instead of suicide, to try instead of giving up -- to hope again."

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State Service Awards May 1997

10 Years

Suzanne Hamilos
Karl Andrews
Jane Fuld
Karen Mitchell
Bruce Gates

20 Years cont.

Helen Lake
Diana Gonzales
Jessie Wilborn
John Ribble
Pamela Chisholm

15 Years

Doris Hickerson
Viola Brown
Sonia Rocha

25 Years

Ruan Moreno
Cissie Dupnick
Suzanne Michels
Dennis Awbrey
Hilario Cobarruvias

20 Years

Gwendolyn Guyton
Nico Castillo

Special Recognitions:

Congratulations to Kay Chee who was promoted to associate commissioner for Administrative Management Services at DDS effective March 1.

TRC Board Chairman Jerry Kane was recently honored in Corpus Christi with a 1997 humanitarian award as "someone who has made a difference to the community through service to others that transcends racial, religious and cultural barriers." The award was presented by the National Conference which is dedicated to fighting bigotry in America.

