

News & Views

★ Texas Rehabilitation Commission ★ A Human Energy Agency ★

Vol. 6, No. 10

October, 1984

TRC Gets Nod from Sunset Staff

The Sunset Advisory Commission staff has recommended to the Sunset Commission that the Texas Rehabilitation Commission be continued.

The recommendation was made at a public hearing held Sept. 11 in Austin.

"The outcome is what we've expected," said TRC Commissioner Max Arrell. "I think the hearing went very well."

Sunset staffer Susan Grotevant reported that if TRC were discontinued, the state would lose about \$50 million a year in federal money and the disabled people of the state would lose the services TRC provides.

The Sunset Advisory Commission periodically reviews all state agencies and recommends to the Texas State Legislature whether or not the agencies should be continued.

Grotevant said TRC was "generally well run" and "generally operated in an efficient and effective manner."

The Sunset staff did, however, make some recommendations and suggest some alternatives.

One possibility outlined was transferring the Crippled Children's Services Program from the Texas Department of Health to TRC. Sunset staff said TRC and the children's program both serve disabled children aged 16 to 21 years. Combining the programs would eliminate this overlap.

Several people who testified at the hearing said that if this transfer was made, it would be an appropri-

ate time to remove the outdated and negative word "crippled" from the name of the program.

The alternative suggested by the Sunset staff which received the most opposition from those who testified was that of transferring the functions of the Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons and the Council on Disabilities to the Health and Human Services Coordinating Council.

Pat Pound, representing herself, said she would be "afraid the governor's committee would get lost" if this change were made.

Bobby Simpson, executive director of the Austin Resource Center for Independent Living, said putting the Governor's Committee under the Human Services Council would "put disabled people back 10 or 15 years."

"It would be a slap in the face, a putdown to disabled people," he said.

Simpson said the Governor's Committee, with its direct link to the Governor's Office, is a well-run program that provides the visibility and support disabled Texans need.

The Sunset staff also brought up the issue of whether TRC should start a program to serve people with catastrophic spinal cord injuries or closed-head injuries.

Grotevant reported that people often are not able to pay the high cost of treatment after such an injury. As a result, they may be

placed in a nursing home where they remain for the rest of their lives.

If TRC could finance the cost of comprehensive rehabilitation treatment for some of these people, they could avoid going to a nursing home and eventually lead productive lives.

All who testified on the creation of this program supported it.

The Sunset staff said another policy that could be considered is including vocational rehabilitation as a benefit under the Texas Worker's Compensation Act.

Right now, the Act specifically excludes vocational rehabilitation. If this service were covered, it would save TRC about \$2 million per year in state and federal vocational rehabilitation money.

Continued on page 3

Lindsey Charged

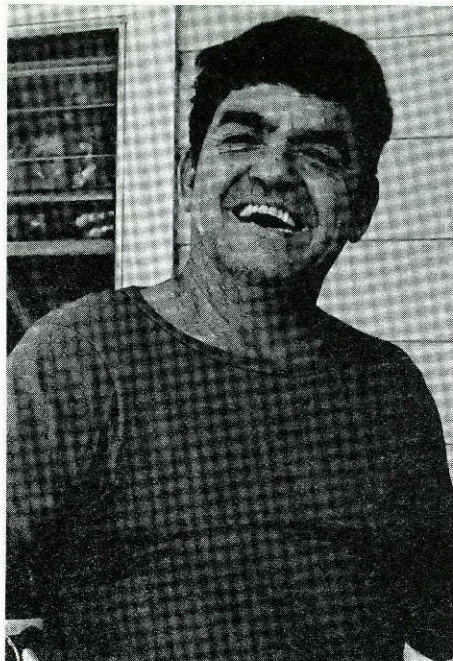
On Sept. 7, former TRC employee Lola Lindsey pleaded guilty to diverting checks from TRC clients into her personal bank account.

She was sentenced to 10 years of probation and restitution of \$13,100.

Lindsey worked in TRC's Dallas Rehabilitation Institute Field Office as a rehabilitation technician.

The checks should have been forwarded to Central Office for deposit as state funds.

Client and Computer Team Up



Casey Eckols, nicknamed "Handsome," said he'd like to be in business for himself someday.

by Connie Villec-Nemmers

Outside the quiet hamlet of Iredell, there's a small house with a neatly laid brick sidewalk and tall shade trees. Half grown kittens lounge on the front porch and back stoop. A mound of earth in the side yard marks the root cellar.

The scene is quintessentially rural.

But if you walk up the ramp leading to the front door and step inside, you'll find a contrast. The latest Apple computer equipment sits on a desk next to the kitchen table.

The man who is learning to operate the computer is Casey Eckols, a TRC client whose counselor is Tom Brock of the Gatesville Field Office.

Eckols, who has cerebral palsy, is being trained to do bookkeeping and payroll work at home on the computer which TRC purchased for him.

He types with his thumbs and uses an aid to insert floppy disks into the computer's disk drives.

Waco area manager Richard Jurek designed a wooden guide that fits on Echol's keyboard. It helped him steady his hands when he first began using the equipment.

"I hope to find work and be independent," said 49-year-old Eckols. "I really enjoy working on the computer."

Eckol's trainer is Quata Wilkerson, who runs her own bookkeeping service in nearby Hico. She donates her time and expertise to help Eckols learn to operate the computer.

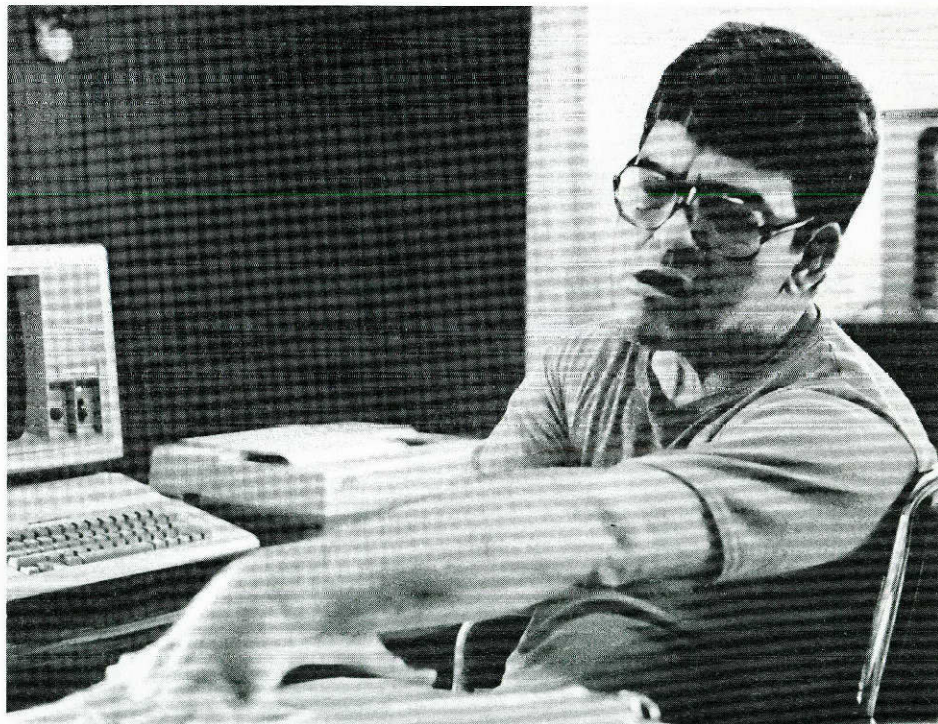
"He still has several things to conquer," Wilkerson said. "But I've been surprised he is able to do as much as he does. He has the desire. I like to see someone who wants to learn."

Eckols said he would like to be able to work as much as possible. Brock said the income would be very important to him and his mother, with whom he lives.

When he isn't training on his computer, Eckols is busy with gardening, reading, music and church activities. He and his mother built the brick walkway in front of their house. Eckols, who uses a wheelchair, positioned some of the bricks with his feet. Using parts from an old lawn mower, he designed a cart he uses to pick up leaves in the yard.

His dream is be his own boss.

"Someday I'd like to have a business of my own," he said. With a smile, he added, "And I'd hire handicapped people."



Writing with pen and paper is time-consuming for Eckols. The computer and its printer, obtained with the help of TRC program specialist Ted Thayer and Waco area manager Richard Jurek, eliminate the need for handwriting. Here, Eckols chooses a disk to insert in one of the computer's drives.



LETTERS



The following is excerpted from a letter written by Mary Ann Board, director of social work services at Permian General Hospital in Andrews, to Sara Schwiening, area manager of the Odessa Field Office.

"I would like to express my appreciation for the fine services I have received from TRC in the past several months. Although I was sorry to see Luana Warden leave, George Calhoun (counselor in the Odessa Field Office) has taken her place admirably. There has been no delay in services while trying to fill the vacant position, and you are to be commended for this."

The following is excerpted from a letter written to Austin Regional Director Jack King by client Buford McWright.

"It isn't often I feel moved to write to thank any type of governmental agency, but your people in San Marcos (counselor Virginia Bosman and secretary Baudelia Arredondo) have helped me so much with so little bureaucratic tape that I would feel ungrateful without acknowledging their aid and support."

Austerity in Spending Called for in 1985

Texas state agencies have been requested to place — as much as possible — a moratorium on hiring personnel, cease all spending for capital equipment and stop all construction projects if building has not yet begun.

This message comes from Jim Rudd, chair of the Appropriations Committee of the Texas House of Representatives, and Gib Lewis, speaker of the House.

Though Lewis and Rudd state the measures are requested, and not required, they said it is apparent in planning the next state budget that fiscal years 1986 and 1987 will be a different story from past biennia.

"A stark picture will face us if economic conditions remain unchanged, and if current state programs and revenue sources generally are kept intact," the two House

leaders said in a letter to TRC Commissioner Max Arrell.

"In that case, existing spending levels, excluding all construction and capital outlays, could barely be maintained. Insufficient revenue would be available for any substantial salary increases, inflation adjustments or service expansions paralleling a growing state population."

Arrell said new counselor and clerical positions planned for fiscal year 1985 have been postponed indefinitely and any job vacancies that occur will be carefully reviewed before being filled.

"We are also taking a close look at planned fiscal year 1985 capital expenditures to see if any purchases might be deleted or postponed without disrupting our services to disabled people."

Advocacy to Run CAP

Advocacy Inc. of Austin has been selected by Gov. Mark White to run the Client Assistance Program (CAP) for Texas.

The CAP, authorized by the 1984 Amendments to the federal Rehabilitation Act, will provide information and serve as ombudsman to disabled people who are clients or applicants for services under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

All states are required to establish CAPs by Oct. 1, 1984.

A state's failure to do so will result in loss to that state of all federal rehabilitation services funds allowed under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Advocacy, a non-profit corporation associated with the State Bar of Texas, will receive \$347,669 to carry out the program.

Gov. White has appointed TRC Commissioner Max Arrell to chair a project advisory committee to oversee and make recommendations for administration of the CAP.

TRC Green Light

Continued from page 1

Other recommendations made by the Sunset staff were to:

- Require that at least two of the six TRC board members be disabled people, and;
- Specify the Consumer Consultation Committee of TRC in law, and amend the statute to lower the consultation fee made to members of that committee and TRC's Medical Consultation Committee.

Medical Consultation Committee members are paid \$150 a day for meetings and Consumer Committee members are paid \$100. The Sunset staff suggested a \$50 per day fee for both groups.

Several people who testified said lowering the fee for the consumer group would limit the number of disabled people who could afford to take time away from their jobs to attend committee meetings.

★ Applause

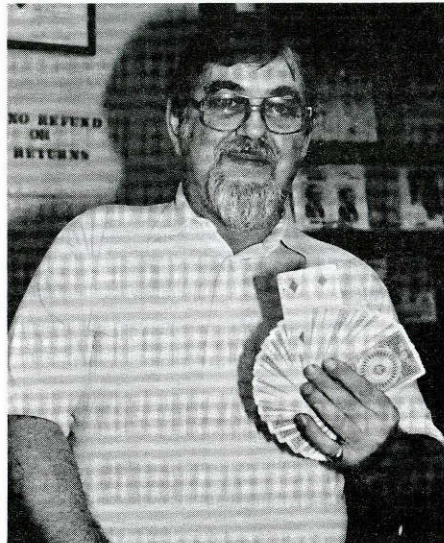
Candace Shawd, TRC client in Houston, was given the Lewis A. Leavitt Award for Outstanding Graduate from Houston Community College. Shawd is a client of Lea Wawrykow, counselor in the Houston West Field Office.

The following TRC employees recently have gotten press coverage for TRC: **Richard Jurek**, area manager in the Waco Field Office; **Dixie McLeod**, counselor in the Beaumont Calder Field Office; **Anna Posey** and **Jean Pierce**, counselors in the Victoria Field Office; **George Calhoun**, counselor in the Odessa Field Office; **Les Austin**, counselor in the Dallas West Field Office; and **Ione Priest**, area manager of the El Paso Field Office Central.

General Mills recently broke new ground by using a photograph of a wheelchair athlete on boxes of Wheaties. Pictured is **George Murray**, who has won the wheelchair division of the Boston Marathon twice and was the first wheelchair competitor to finish ahead of the leading foot runner in the Boston Marathon.

Carol Ann Champion, TRC psychologist in the Harlingen Field Office, and **Dora Huston**, former director of the Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, were nominated to the Texas Women's Hall of Fame.

Former TRC client **Wayne Raeke** was named Handicapped Worker of the Year by the Harris County Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. Raeke was nominated by **Ann Green**, TRC counselor in the Houston West Field Office.



Transitions

Larry Smith, TRC counselor at the University of Houston Field Office, has been transferred to the Houston Texas Institute of Rehabilitation and Research Field Office.

Carol Whitcraft, TRC assistant deputy commissioner for research and development, was appointed by Gov. Mark White to the Governor's State Executive Development Advisory Council.

Sharon Thomas, secretary in the Houston East End Field Office, saved the commission a lot of time, money and headaches by allowing TRC to take an extra \$.52 in withholding tax from her August paycheck. By doing so, TRC was able to avoid mixing 1984 funds with 1985 funds – and able to avoid lots of extra paperwork.



TRC News & Views is published by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for distribution to its employees and retirees throughout the State. Inquiries may be addressed to **Kaye Beneke**, Public Information Office, Texas Rehabilitation Commission, 118 East Riverside Drive, Austin, Texas 78704; or telephone (512) 445-8745, (Tex-An - 887-8745).

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