

Vol. 20 No. 9 September 1997

# trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission

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An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission

Texas Rehabilitation  
Commission  
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, Texas 78751-2399  
Vol. 20 No. 9 September 1997

## Help is just a phone call away!

**D**id you ever call a customer assistance line only to get an automated response saying, "Thank you for calling, please press 1 for -, or press 2 for -, or ..." If you use a telephone it has probably happened to you, and it can be exasperating! Well, that's not what you'll get when you call the TRC Inquiries line.

Something missing with many help numbers today is a live person answering the telephone. At a time when even some crisis hot lines are automated, Commissioner Arrell insists that a "live person" answer TRC's Inquiries line. "Many government agencies are using automated telephone systems," said Arrell, "but I still believe the human touch is important. I want TRC to be different. It is amazing how many problems are diffused just because someone is there to listen."



Claire Vogler has worked in the Inquiries Unit since it began in 1988.

Originally intended to give TRC clients an optional resource to call when they have questions about a decision, the Inquiries Unit averaged about 68 inquiries a month its first year in existence, 1988. Nine years later, the two unit staff members, Claire Vogler and Sanjuana Vicharely, respond to over 1,200 inquiries a month.

Executive Assistant Commissioner Mary Wolfe supervises the unit and says one reason for the volume is customer service. "Claire and Sanjuana have been complimented by clients, vendors, legislators and advocates throughout the state because of the per-

sonal touch and genuine, sensitive response they give each caller," said Wolfe. "I am proud of what TRC stands for and I believe Claire and Sanjuana epitomize customer service."

No doubt about it, TRC Inquiries gives customer service, and it's accessible. A toll-free telephone number is provided in the TRC Guide for Applicants, published in telephone books throughout Texas, and listed in a nationwide 800 directory.

But this telephone line is not just for TRC clients. Even when a caller is not eligible for TRC services, they won't hear, "We don't do that." A TRC-developed computerized information system (Winstar) provides a broad database of information that allows Claire and Sanjuana to provide accurate information and quick referrals to appropriate resources.

"Our calls run the gamut," says Vicharely, who has been in Inquiries since December 1995.

"Only 3 to 5 percent of our calls are complaints. Many of them are questions about services covered by other agencies and they want to talk to someone who can answer their questions." Sanjuana also said they assist clients in cutting through red tape, refer to managers or program specialists to verify policy interpretations, give general information on eligibility criteria and refer individuals to other resources when they have needs TRC cannot meet. The prevailing attitude is to help and to resolve any conflict or misunderstanding at the lowest level which is back to the counselor and area manager.

At any given time when you walk into the unit at Austin



Sanjuana Vicharely talks to an incoming caller.

Central Office, you'll likely find Claire or Sanjuana with telephone on their shoulder and hands on the keyboard. You may hear them answering questions but encouraging a client to get back in touch with their counselor. "Our purpose here is to facilitate communication between field staff and applicants or clients," says Vogler, who has been in the unit since its inception. "We try to put clients back in contact with the field staff who can best help them. At times all a person wants is someone to listen. We may not know all the answers and

sometimes all we can do is listen, but at least the customer knows there is someone at the other end of the line who cares."

### Call TRC Inquiries:

1-800-628-5115 (Voice and TDD)

See our online edition for a list of

frequently asked questions -- and the answers

## TRC Today goes online

**I**t's here and it's better than ever, so check it out! *TRC Today* is growing to serve you better and now staff can find us on the TRC Net where everything is happening. Our online edition adds a new dimension to our printed version of *TRC Today*. We will be able to update our stories twice a month, giving you more immediate and timely news. Here is just some of what you'll see when you visit our site.

The same great features you read about every month in our printed version of *TRC Today* will be there, but you'll also get what Paul Harvey calls "the rest of the story." With space so limited in the printed newsletter, we often have to omit some interesting information in feature articles. But in the online version, you will get a chance to read more of that detail.

One of our most popular columns is Letters, Letters, Letters. In our online version we will be able to publish them all. So, send us your letters and get your kudos online for everyone to see.

It will be easier than ever to tell us what you think. There is a button designed for feedback so you can give us your ideas, tell us what you like — and don't like.

Of course, we will continue to bring you our popular printed version every month for some of our retirees and staff who don't use the Internet.

Take a minute and visit us on the TRC intranet, <http://www.trcnet/trctoday/online.html>. But, be careful ... It can be addictive!

## TRC clients keep popping up everywhere

A trip to the grocery store, the bank or other errands can land you in the path of someone this agency has helped.

And that's just what happened to El Paso Counselor Sandra Williams when she recently met Richard Mason. Williams met Mason several months ago when he was speaking to a support group for children with hearing impairments, and she was impressed with his accomplishments. In a conversation with him, she learned that TRC had helped him obtain his first college degree over 25 years ago.

Mason, who is hearing impaired, has lived in El Paso for only two years, but he has already made quite a difference in the community. As landscape engineer for the Texas Department of Transportation, he has brought color and style to El Paso highways. Now, distinctive designs and vibrant hues of gold, tan, blue and purple greet drivers on their way through the city.

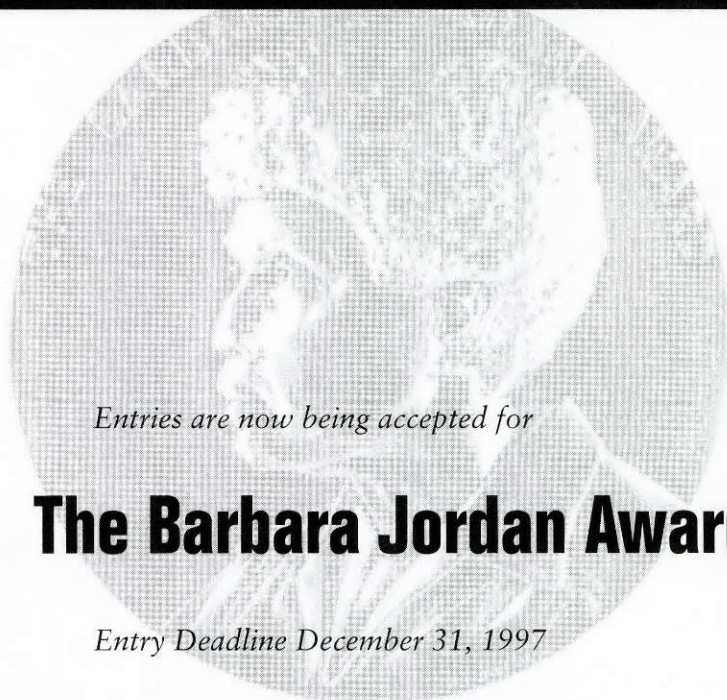
"There are about 28 shades of gray on El Paso highways and we're trying to change that," says Mason. "Color is soothing and might have a calming affect on drivers."

"Richard brings us an element that was missing," says Eddie Sanchez, a district engineer who works with Mason. "Engineers are not taught to be creative, but structured. Richard brings a perspective that wasn't there before."

So the next time you're in El Paso, take a look around. The work of TRC clients is everywhere. In Mason's case, you'll see it on the highways and byways around town.



Richard Mason on the job: upper photo at his drawing table; lower photo in front of one of his creations.



Entries are now being accepted for

## The Barbara Jordan Awards

Entry Deadline December 31, 1997

The Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities will recognize outstanding contributions by Texas public communications media to eliminate attitudinal, social and physical barriers and to encourage accurate and progressive portrayals of people with disabilities. The Committee requests entries for consideration of awards in the categories of Television, Radio, Print, Audio/Visual, Photojournalism, Public Relations, Employment and Special Contributions. Each entry must have been released between January 1, 1997, and December 31, 1997, and each entry will be judged on specific criteria related to both content and production.

For information and entry form, contact:

Texas Governor's Committee on  
People with Disabilities  
P.O. Box 12428, Austin, Texas 78711  
512-463-5740 (voice)  
512-463-5746 (TDD)  
Internet: ccounts@governor.texas.gov

3/26/98

Awards ceremony hosted by the Fort Worth Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities.

THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS OR UNITS

RECEIVED **12** MAXIMIZERS

DDS

Denise Beck  
Arnold Bratland  
Sherri Eddy  
Lynda Garcia  
Art Lara  
Bill Lewis  
Barry Marshall  
Jim Parmar  
John Peca  
Donald Primm  
Mary Ann Rackley  
Gloria Rodriguez  
Liz Romero  
Penny Schubert  
DDS Unit 15

REGION 2

Mary Lou Burris  
Roseanne Crawford  
Juanita Cron  
Petricia Davis  
James Duff  
Pat Farrell  
Michelle Henninger  
Judith Hollis  
Jo Anne Hull  
Karen Joplin  
Susan Judd  
Karen Lafon

REGION 2 CONT.

Steve Levendakes  
Laura Marquez  
Betty Miller  
Marion Walkner  
Leslie Wright

CENTRAL OFFICE

Russell Smith



## Pearsall Field Office Grand Opening

**R**egional Director Terry Smith (left) and Commissioner Vernon Max Arrell (right) assist Sen. Judith Zaffirini (center) at the Aug. 7 ribbon-cutting and grand opening celebration for a new TRC Pearsall field office. The new office, located at 504 East Colorado Street in Pearsall, opened on May 1. "Reaching out to those who need our services is a primary goal of this Commission," says Commissioner Arrell. "By opening this new field office, we hope to make our services more accessible to people with disabilities in Frio, Atascosa and LaSalle counties." In FY 1996, TRC served approximately 208 persons with disabilities in these counties and helped 50 people with disabilities become competitively employed.

Baldemar Gonzalez, the vocational rehabilitation counselor who will be working in this field office, is familiar to many in the Pearsall community and surrounding areas as he has been serving the region for many years. The rehabilitation services technician in this field office, Becky Boyce, is also a longtime resident in the area.



## Across the State

### Welcome Aboard

John Bard, administrative technician  
Daniel Trevino, clerk  
Cynthea Williams, RST  
Davida Pope, counselor  
G Kendall Hughes, counselor  
Carolina Karn, RST  
Jeisyn Murphy, RST  
Megan Bennett, counselor  
Barbara Pyle, DST

### Retirements

Clifford Hughes, counselor in the Temple Field Office retired Aug. 31 after working in state service for 23 years.

Lucille Chupik, RST III in the Temple Field Office retired Aug. 31 with 31 years of service with the state.

Nancy M. Davis, systems analyst in Central Office, retired Aug. 31 after working for the state 22 years.

Beverly A. Kimbrough, programmer analyst in Central Office is retiring Sept. 30 with 24 years of state service.

### Deaths



Judy Taylor in the Houston Regional Office passed away on Aug. 18. Judy, who had been with TRC for 23 years, was the regional information technology and training specialist for Region IV. Judy started working at TRC as a clerk/secretary in a Houston Field Office, and in 1974 she moved to the Houston Regional Office. She had many friends in TRC. We will all miss her.

# Ability:

## The Bridge to the Future

With school in full-swing and the 75th Legislature behind us, October and National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) are just around the corner. "This year's NDEAM theme concentrates on two basic truths: the importance of preparing for the future by investing in ourselves today; and the need for employers to focus on the abilities of qualified job applicants with disabilities to meet the increasing need for skilled workers," says Tony Coelho, chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

Americans will be celebrating the progress made in hiring people with disabilities over the past decades. As we celebrate, however, we are reminded that millions remain unemployed and eager to work. The ADA may prohibit open discrimination against people with disabilities, but it cannot enforce fairness. We are each encouraged to expand opportunity. We can change the physical and attitudinal barriers but only by working together and doing everything we can to make others aware of the abilities of people with disabilities.

You can get online information on President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities web page at <http://www.pcepd.gov>. See Education Kit 1997 by clicking on Table of Contents.

Here are just a few ways you can celebrate NDEAM in your area:

- Recognize employers doing an outstanding job in hiring people with disabilities.
- Contact area media to give them the name of a local client or employer that is a living example of what NDEAM is all about. (Be sure to first contact the client or employer to let them know what you intend to do.)
- Visit a business you have not contacted in the past and provide them information on hiring people with disabilities.

If you need assistance with press releases, proclamations, certificates or posters, call the TRC Public Information Office at 512-424-4420.

Texas Rehabilitation Commission  
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, Texas 78751-2399

Address Service Requested

# trc today

TRC Today is published by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for distribution to its employees and retirees throughout the state. We welcome submissions for publication, but reserve the right to edit or screen materials according to newsletter policy. Address submissions or inquires to Shayla Fleshman, Public Information Office, Texas Rehabilitation Commission, 4900 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78751-2399; or telephone (512) 424-4043.

Shayla Fleshman, Editor  
Prissy Pense, Writing & Photography  
Susan Antoniewicz, Design

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## State Service Awards September 1997

### 10 years

Keith Gibbs  
Judy Allen  
Donna Livingston  
Linda Mitchell  
Shirley Thomas  
Winnie Wat  
Marilyn Jacks  
Sharon Menasco  
Marilee Ritter  
Herlinda Sanchez

### 15 years

Arlene Youngblood  
Mary Crawford  
William Sanson  
June Cassard  
James Carter  
Dianna Milligan

### 20 years

Lydia Gamez  
Patsy Robinson  
Edith Miller  
Linda Mitchell  
Mary Ann Senn  
Elaine Coy  
Sadie Holloway

### 20 years cont.

Hazel Johnson  
Wanda Williams  
Margaret Contreras  
Anita Davis  
Juliet Nious  
Edna Roland

### 25 years

Ruben Franco  
Patricia Razo  
Melvin Ross  
Lynda Ball  
Marjorie Brune  
Betty Burgess

### Additional August awards

Jan Ulrich - 10 Years  
Murray Smith - 10 Years  
Bobby Robinson - 15 Years  
Olaya Solis - 30 Years

### Correction:

Oops! In July's issue we listed an incorrect telephone number for the Planning Office. The correct telephone number is 512-424-4682.

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