

TRC TODAY

TRC TODAY is a newsletter for the employees of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

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Tres Sansom is living proof that attitude and encouragement go a long way toward rehabilitation. When he broke his neck while diving into a swimming pool, his prognosis was bleak — the chances of using of his arms and legs were slim.

Tres Sansom says it's the encouragement and support of his family and friends that made the difference in his recovery. "They haven't allowed me to be down for more than a couple of days at a time," he says. "Each time, they help me find a revelation that makes me happy to be alive."

His family, however, claims that it's Tres' own determination that should be commended. "They warned us about stages such as anger, depression and withdrawal that Tres would go through when coming to grips with his disability," says Judy Sansom, his mother. "So far, he hasn't experienced any of those things."

More likely it's the combination of all the above with a strong dose of community help from their church and TRC that is helping Tres reach his maximum potential. Church members from First Baptist Church in Wylie gave of their time and labor in building an accessible bedroom, bathroom and office for Tres that was ready for him when he was released from the rehabilitation hospital.

Judy Sansom said it felt like a miracle when they found that Tres was eligible for TRC services and that Larry Hughes was to be his counselor. "Larry, having gone through a similar situation years before, has helped us deal with this situation. He's just been terrific," says Judy.

TRC paid for his hospitalization after the insurance ran out and purchased special equipment for

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Tres four-wheeling behind younger brother Phillip.

Photo by Judy Sansom

The DREAM hasn't changed



High-steppin' in Lubbock

Photos taken by Gloria Barron



The victorious Amarillo volleyball team

In June, Region I held a three-day training conference for employees. "The whole conference from the theme to the awards banquet to the training sessions was employee driven," says Mary Valentini, regional director. "We made this conference optional to the employees and we had about 97 percent participation."

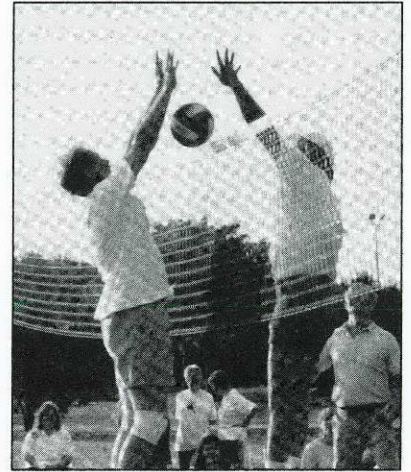
Is DRIVING ... driving you crazy?

If so, you should think about joining or organizing a van pool. Some industrious employees in DDS and Central Office take advantage of the Capitol Metro Program and don't worry anymore about traffic, where to park, and the stress of driving IH35. They also save money on gas, are friendly to the environment and avoid a lot of wear and tear on their vehicles.

The van is leased by a subsidiary of Chrysler to a driver. The driver gets free use of the van for *Vanpool* and personal use — the only thing to pay for is gas for personal use. Capitol Metro absorbs much of the cost of the lease and all other costs such as maintenance and insurance. The cost for persons riding is \$10 a month in the Austin area.

Anyone wanting more information about this can call 477-RIDE. A minimum of 10 passengers is required to qualify for getting a van.

Adapted by an article written by Carol Sander, DDS Public Information



The highpoint of the event, however, was the traditional volleyball tournament. Quite a bit of hype preceded it with offices vying with one another for the regional championship. "The competition between teams starts happening way before the conference," says Valentini. "It was a fun way to build up team spirit." The Amarillo Supervisory Unit won first place and second place was a tie between the Lubbock South and Odessa Supervisory Units.

El Paso Central grabbed third place but not because of their skills — rather for their crazy t-shirt uniforms. All the shirts had nicknames printed on them that suited the employees such as Holy Roller, the Beast and Cardiac Kid.

"Be warned — the Amarillo Volleyball Team is now an invincible juggernaut! Our skills, determination and almost psychotic self confidence will lead us to victory."

They were right, it did.

"Hasta la vista, baby"

For some of you, it may be vacation time -- permanently. TRC has about 300 employees eligible for retirement and the new incentives passed by the 73rd Legislature may be too good to pass up.

To be eligible for these retirement benefits, you must fall into one of these categories:

- age 50 with 30 years of service,
- age 55 with 25 years of service,
- age 60 with 10 years of service.

The retirement incentive bill, also known as Senate Bill 81, allows a retirement incentive of 2.25 percent service credit to all eligible retirees. This service credit is .25 percent more than before. So, for example, if your monthly salary is \$2,000 and you've worked for 20 years, your retirement checks would be for \$900 (45 percent of your salary) where before it would have been for only \$800 (40 percent of your salary).

To take advantage of the incentives, a person's needs to retire at the time they become eligible.

Senate Bill 1181 includes the allowed transfer of credit between retirement systems, the repurchase of previously withdrawn service (partial and installment), the TRS participants to transfer to ERS, doubling of the sick leave credit and the one-time lump sum payment to current retirees.

While some TRC employees will be watching grandkids, others will be watching sunsets in far away places with their new free time. Here are what a few employees told us that they will be doing.

JIM CURD, presentations specialist in PIO/Media Services, may be moving to Nashville to work at a model airplane company. Model airplanes are Jim's hobby so he is looking forward to this new job. As Curd says, he'll "play with model airplanes and get paid for it."

PAT GIBBS, a medical relations officer at North Texas DDS, says that she will "do volunteer work with some needy sources, continue support with TRA, and try to keep in touch with everybody."

LLOYD AND HILDA DUNCAN, husband and wife disability examiners, will take their retirement vows together. Duncan says, "we will start traveling, but we haven't made up our minds yet where to go."

LINDA HALL, director of publications, has high ambitions for her retirement,

"We're going to Alaska for the rest of the summer, next we're going to New York, Connecticut and the Smithsonian. After that we'll come home for a change of clothes and then off to the Grand Canyon for some water rafting. After that we'll go to France, get a boat and sail around the world!"

BRYAN FORRESTER, training officer in the Dallas Regional Office, differs from Linda in that ... "I'm going to take it real slow for 10 or 12 years and then figure out what my next career will be."

DELVIN SPARKS, program specialist, summed up his retirement with a quote, "Hasta la vista, baby!"

It seems that the retirees will have no trouble filling up their days after TRC, but we'll miss 'em!



Some will be watching grandkids while others will be taking in sunsets in far away places.

June 1993 Service Awards

Region II

10 Years

Carol Gorman
20 years
Russell Howard
Gene Lane

Region III

25 years

Ray Fenton

Region V

10 years

Rebecca Gallegos
Peggy Meiners
Andrew Sicotte
15 years
Maizelle Currans
Art Longoria
20 years
Russell Mahoney
Antonio Ocana, Jr.
Doroteo Sandoval
Irma Sierra

Region VI

10 years

Sharon Miller
Beth Palmer
15 years
Faye Wootten

DDS

10 years

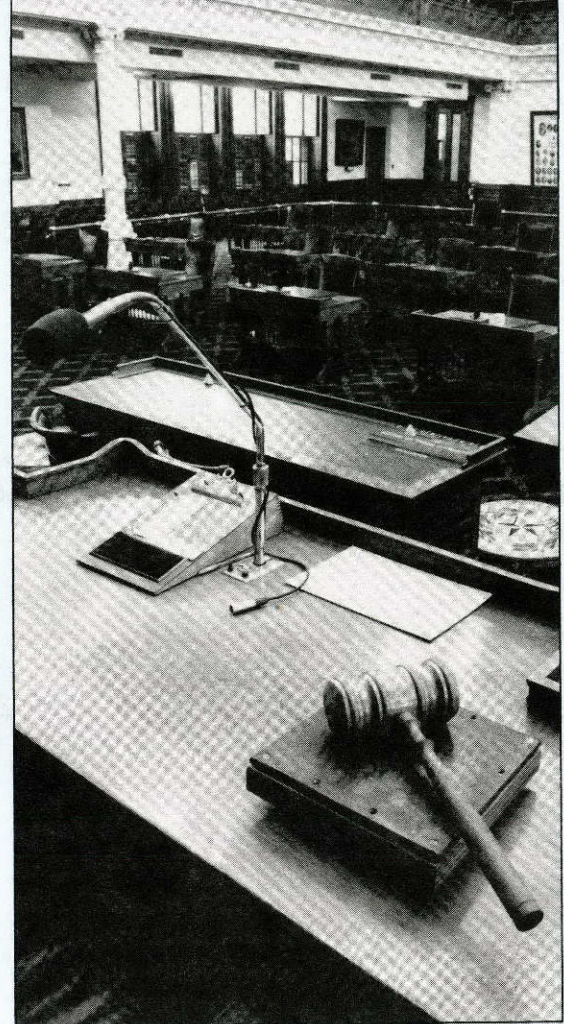
Patricia Farrow
Gary Powers
Rosalinda Rodriguez
Harlen Stewart
15 years
Kristina Cue
Mary Blakely
Phyllis Spoor
Carmen Vasquez
Dana Hoffman
Cheri Kepper
Floradell Lagesse

Continued on page 6

The 73rd

It's a wrap . . .

Legislature



A near miss

The “No New Taxes” session started with such ominous projections as the elimination of three TRC programs and other funding shortages, but, when the dust settled, TRC came out looking pretty good.

GOOD NEWS: There are NO goose eggs (zeroes for those of you who don't know farm accounting) in any of the columns associated with these programs. If you followed the session, you know that at one time the Personal Attendant, Deaf/Blind Multi-handicapped and Transition programs were recommended for elimination.

REALLY GOOD NEWS: State funds appropriated to the vocational rehabilitation program are sufficient to allow TRC to match as much as \$26 million in anticipated new federal dollars over the biennium.

REALLY, REALLY GOOD NEWS: The Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Program received the Legislature's special attention and was the only TRC program to receive funding at the requested level.

Helping hands

TRC had the help of consumers and disability advocates who made their voices heard early on in the session and many feel this had a big impact on the outcome. TRC also had

the help of key legislators such as Sen. John Montford and Rep. Rob Ellis who championed our cause, especially for Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Services.

“Without the help of Montford, Ellis and our consumers, I can assure you that TRC would not have come out of this session in such relatively good shape,” says Commissioner Max Arrell.

Bills, bills, bills

Another key factor was keeping track of the mountain of bills that the Legislature produced. The Senate generated 3,789 bills and the House came in a little under with 2,623 bills. Out of that, TRC analyzed 336 bills and rated them on a one-to-five scale for their possible affect on TRC. About 17 pieces of legislation passed that had a rating of over three—which could mean some notable changes.

“With BATWIN, our staff was able to keep a constant eye on these bills and react fast when things were happening at the Capitol,” says Arrell. “They were superb in giving me and others the information we relied on.”

Bills were varied in nature. From retirement incentives for employees to defining what a disability is in regards to employment discrimination, different pieces

of legislation will have some degree of affect in almost all areas of the Commission. It is still too soon to tell exactly what these changes could be, but be assured they are being carefully scrutinized.

Enabled!

TRC's Enabling Legislation was signed into law May 17. It ...

- "Rededicated" funds for Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services.
- Brought state law in line with ADA and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992.
- Authorized the Commission to share client information with other state agencies (in the spirit of increasing and enhancing services).
- Allowed TRC to obtain criminal conviction records of person who have been offered employment with the agency.
- Established the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council, mandated by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments.

Who got the money?

So, how much did we actually get? The chart that follows shows our current, FY 93 STATE funding level, the state appropriations (a.k.a. general revenue) the Commission will get in FY 94 and 95, and (for comparison) the amount TRC initially requested for FY 94 and 95. All amounts are stated in millions. Remember, this chart DOES NOT reflect the federal money the agency gets to administer the vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs. These are STATE funds, only.

STATE FUNDS	CURRENT	FY 94 REQ.	FY 94 APPROP.	FY 95 REQ.	FY 95 APPROP.
Voc. Rehab.	\$ 26.9	\$44.8	\$28.9	\$58.7	\$31.7
Extended Rehab.	4.1	5.7	4.1	6.4	4.1
Personal Attendant Services	.5	2.2	.5	3.2	.5
Indep. Living Centers	1.6	2.5	1.6	3.5	1.6
Services	1.9	3.9	1.9	5.5	1.9
Deaf/Blind Multihandicapped	.7	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.5
Trans. Planning	.4	.6	.4	.6	.4

Tres

Continued from page 1

him. "Even though there was a large expenditure in this case," says Hughes, "his productivity will pay for it many times over."

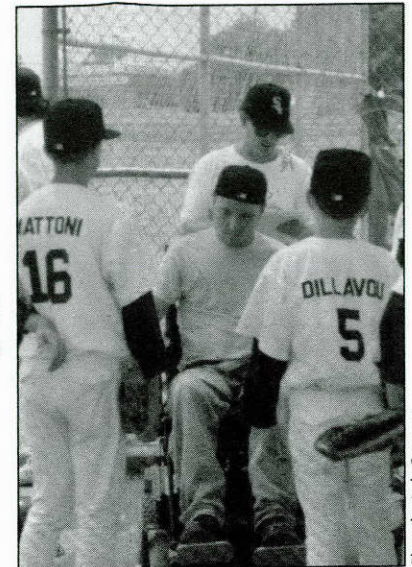
But with a catastrophic disability such as Tres', independence comes in small doses through extremely hard work. Tres goes to rehabilitation three times a week to maintain muscle tone and to work on increasing his upper mobility.

In addition, he started attending college. Although TRC assisted him in his studies with the voice-activated computer, programming and using the computer is a slow process. But this doesn't stop his dream of becoming a teacher and a coach.

"I have always loved sports," said Tres. "Just because of what happened doesn't mean that has changed. Sure, I had a dream. It wasn't to be a millionaire or anything like that. It was the same old thing — a wife, a small house, three kids and a dog. That dream hasn't changed. I still hope to have that."

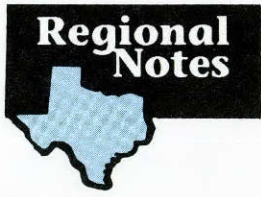
Even though the dream hasn't changed, Tres is the first to admit he now has to rely greatly on other people's help. "I have a friend who's a quad. All he does is play around with a remote-control car all day," says Tres. "He has a lot more control and mobility in his upper body than I do and if he had gotten the support I had, he would be in a different situation."

But the reliance that has caused the most frustration for Tres has also given him a new understanding of life. "The one silver lining I've found is that this disability has taught me love," he says. "Before my priorities were sports, my girlfriend and then, my family. Now I know how important my family is to me and how much I need them."



Tres coaching his "little leaguers."

Photo by Judy Sansom



**June 1993
Service Awards**

Continued from page 3

DDS
20 years
Emmalouise Bloebaum
Jack Bradshaw
James Briggs
Shirley Hamm
Dale Harper
Mary Johnson
Charlia Lewis
Jean Martin
Donna Nicholson
Mary Wilkes
Susie Young
25 years
Berta Palacios
Minnie Salinas

Central Office
10 years
Jose Montoya, Jr.
15 years
Claire Vogler Green
Elias Mojica, Jr.
20 years
Becky Nieto
25 years
Lee Henderson

Region I

The Employee of the Year winners for the Lubbock Region for 1993 are Debbie P. Canchola, RST, Lubbock West Field Office and Debbie Peterson, counselor, El Paso Central Field Office. Congratulations!

Region II

Counselor Sally Harris in Fort Worth Field Office North, participated in a "Sweat Lodge Ceremony" with a local Indian tribe.

Region II's Employee of the Year winners for 1993 are Barbara Pharo, RST, Arlington Field Office and Anne Williams, counselor, Wichita Falls Field Office. Congratulations!

Region III

Pamela McKenzie was selected as RST for the University of Texas Field Office. She is transferring from the Dallas Northeast Field Office.

Region III's Employee of the Year winners for 1993 are Shirley Koehler, HR technician, Austin Regional Office, and Dwight Lindsley, area manager, South Austin Field Office. Congratulations!

Dr. Ufot Umana, counselor, South Austin Field Office, has been named as the "Outstanding Counselor of the Year" by the Marbridge Foundation.

Region IV

Karen Anderson, counselor in Houston West unit, was named Goodwill Industries "Counselor of the Year."

It just came to our attention that **Elayne Halkias**, Fort Worth Field Office North, **Versie Marie Blackmon**, Houston East End Field Office, and **Joanne Edge**, Central Office Human Resources Management, were also nominated for the 1993 Outstanding Women in Texas Government Awards. Thanks for your good work!

Jo McElreath, retired RST at the Houston Central Field Office, died in early June. She was an employee for the Commission for approximately 10 years.

VR Counselor Richard Yahola was contacted by VR in Florida requesting he serve as a resource at the American Indian Rehab workshop, June 15-17.

The Employee of the Year winners for Region IV for 1993 are Judy Zwahr, RST, Rosenberg Field Office, and Ruan Moreno, MSS, Lamarque Field Office. Congratulations!

Region V

Joseph Orsak has been selected as medical services technician for the San Antonio North Field Office.

Robinette Lott has been selected as the new RST for New Braunfels Field Office.

The Employee of the Year winners for the San Antonio Region for 1993 are Brenda Geschiedle, RST, Gonzales Field Office, and Kenneth Bowen, area manager, Victoria Field Office. Congratulations!

Region VI

Shjuania Harris, Paulette Ford, Pam Hodges, and Sheila Rosario, Tyler Field Office have been

promoted to RST II.

The Dallas Region Employee of the Year winners for 1993 are Bertha Hinojosa, operating director for Programs and Barbara Graves, RST, Sherman Field Office. Congratulations!

Central Office

Carol Farris was selected as administrative secretary for the Special Services Office in Austin.

Jan Mallett, Ph.D., has been selected as planning and evaluation director of the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities in Austin.

Hats off to Dell

On June 15, TRC gave Dell Computers an award of appreciation for their consistent hiring of persons with disabilities. Three Dell senior vice-presidents were on hand for the event.

Since August 1992, Dell Computers has hired 20 persons with hearing impairments and has worked diligently with TRC in assessing how they can bring other disability groups into employment at the company. The effort was initiated by two TRC employees in the East Austin Field Office, Dale Kennedy, counselor, and

Carmen Asebedo, vocational communications specialist.

“As a major employer of deaf and hearing impaired persons, Dell gives a real sense of pride and accomplishment to these employees and to others who, in seeing this success, learn that they too achieve,” says Kennedy.

“They have also set up sign language classes for employees,” adds Tony Lawrence, area manager. “The first time over 100 people enrolled and about 25 stuck with it. One of the line managers has become fluent and several others continue working toward development of manual communication skills.”

Left to right: Carmen Asebedo, Tony Lawrence, Donna Cox, human resources specialist for Dell Computers, Sam Gassett, staff director of Dell Computers and Dale Kennedy



J. B. Baker Day

Fiddlers, food, dancing and door prizes marked the festivities of a fun(d) raiser held for J.B. Baker — a former TRC employee. The Irving Unit coordinated the event which took place on May 26 in the Dallas Rehabilitation Institute (DRI).

Baker has a rare type of brain cancer and is undergoing experimental treatment in Maryland. Although the treatment and air travel are paid for, Baker currently has no income and savings will soon be depleted. That's when Irving Field Office Interactive Planning Board thought of a way that they could help.

“We had a lot of fun and were pleased to see a lot of participation from other units,” says Martha Carrington, counselor, who coordinated the event. “People donated time and money who didn't even know J.B.”

The end result was over \$1,100 raised. “‘Thank You’ may seem like small words,” says Baker, “but the feelings behind the ‘Thank You’ mean more than you'll ever know.”

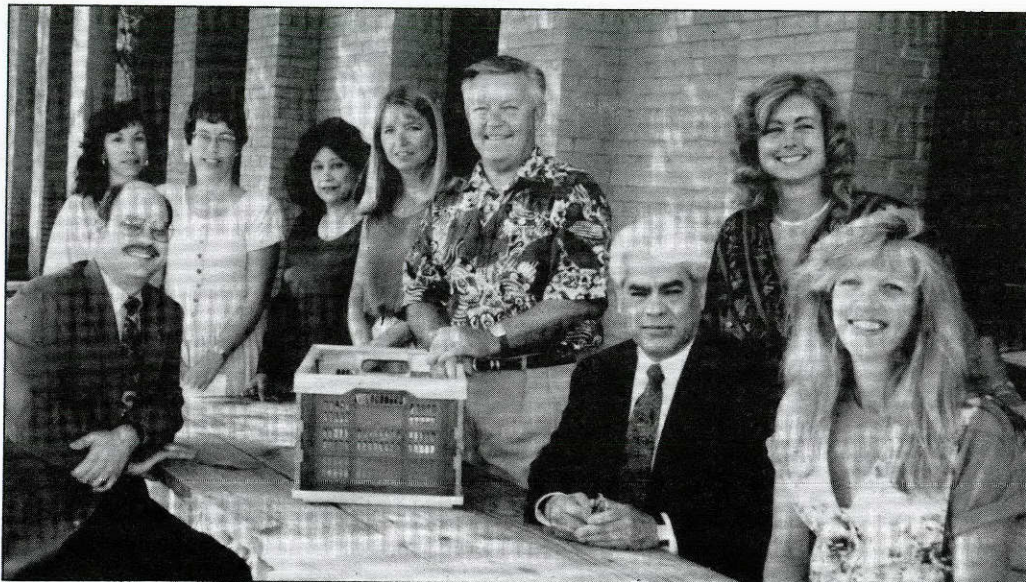


Martha Carrington with J. B. Baker.

Photo by John O'Brien

How 'bout a picnic?

Members of the Texas Association of Disability Examiners (TADE) enjoy hanging out on the picnic benches they purchased for employees at the 118 Riverside building. Many months ago, TADE approved the purchase of the tables. In late May, Building Services poured the concrete and TADE members assembled the tables.



Left to right: Ken Vogel, Irene Pena Miller, Lavonne Mercure, Mary Lou Sanchez, Holly Houser, Hank Daniel, Carlos Valdez, Susan Lewis and Leslie Hendren



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