

TRC TODAY

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

Vol. 14 No. 5
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" I will do
WHATEVER
it takes
to get back,
to work "

ALL for a **ROLEX**

An electrical subcontractor in Houston, James (J.D.) Holcomb took a Rolex in lieu of payment one day last August. Unfortunately, Holcomb hadn't even worn the watch for an entire day before he was the victim of a violent crime.

Because robbers had seen the Rolex on his wrist, they followed him home and, after retrieving the watch, they shot Holcomb three times point blank and then left him for dead. Holcomb barely survived the incident. In addition, he was left with only one lung and was paralyzed from the waist down.

And his bad luck didn't stop there. Due to a late insurance payment his secretary made, Holcomb was left without any medical benefits.

Many people would have given up. Not Holcomb. "The first time I saw J.D. was in the hospital," says Debbie Smith, his counselor. "He had all these tubes coming out of him and looked so pale. I introduced myself and TRC; you know what the first thing he said to me was — 'I will do whatever it takes to get back to work.' Instantly I knew this was a man TRC could help."

Holcomb lived up to his words. Once he was in T.I.R.R., Holcomb followed his rehabilitation program to the letter. "James was a joy to watch," said his T.I. R.R. physician, Rebecca Spearman. "When he first arrived he was very ill. But he worked so hard and kept very busy. Some people just lay down after an

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*Photo—Counselor Debbie Smith
with James Holcomb.*

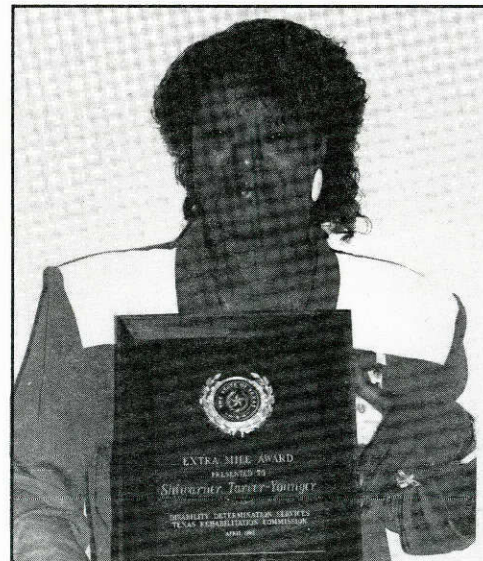
DDS Wall of Honor grows

Shiwarner Tarver-Younger, word processing operator, is the newest addition to the DDS Wall of Honor. And with good reason. She consistently processes twice the number of examination notices her job description calls for and she does this with a 99.6 percent average accuracy rate. In addition, Tarver-Younger meets and exceeds other performance standards of her assigned position and helps others in DDS when called upon to do so.

Tarver-Younger is not only being recognized internally at DDS for her

"She is consistently positive and works with a sense of urgency," says Tina Chambers, co-worker in Word Processing. "Shiwarner came in as a temporary five years ago and, even then, she exceeded standards. She has a great combination of ability plus an attitude of excellence that reflects not only in her work, but on the whole department."

"I was shocked and thrilled to receive this award," says Tarver-Younger. "I like my work and really don't think about the quotas. Those letters are going out to help people and so I feel what I'm doing is important."



"I feel what I'm doing is important"

outstanding performance, she is also to receive a prestigious award from the Social Security Administration (SSA) which she will accept in Baltimore at the end of this month. "Outstanding DDS Employee of The Year for FY 1992," this award is given only to a few selected nationally each year.

"Her track record tells it all," says James L. Jackson, DDS administrator, and it's nice to see SSA recognize her outstanding performance."

Help is on the way!

Due to heavy caseloads, additional field staff is being added to TRC's vocational rehabilitation program. Thanks to additional funds being received, the positions of 30 new counselors, 30 RSTs, two area managers with support staff and six regional office support personnel will be filled by the end of fiscal year 1992.

The breakdown of staff per region is as follows: four counselors and RSTs in Regions I and V; five counselors and RSTs in Regions II, III and IV; six counselors and RSTs in Region VI and area managers with support staff in Regions V and VI. In addition, Regions IV and VI will both receive one part-time counselor.

"This is a dream come true," say Joellen Flores Simmons, associate commissioner for Field Operations. "We have needed this for a long time but have not had the funds until now. This will have a big impact on the quality of service we can give to our clients."

April 1992 Service Awards

Region I
20 years
Darla Smiley

Region II
20 years
James Lee
25 years
Glen Cagle

Region III
15 years
William Brown III

Region V
20 years
Lucy Matwally
A. A. Cortez

Region VI
15 years
Dennis Kutach

DDS
15 years
Delia Ramirez
20 years
Paula Stone

Central Office
10 years
Thomas Warkoczewski
20 years
Terry Cooper
Louise Stubblefield

New Insurance plan to take effect

As many of you have already seen from memos, the Employees Retirement System is implementing a new health insurance plan for all state employees. Effective September 1, a managed care plan called HealthSelect will replace the indemnity plan currently in effect. The HMO system will remain in place; however, there is an updated list of providers.

HealthSelect will use what is known as the Primary Care Physician approach in health care delivery. A list of preferred physician providers will be given to employees. From that list, an employee may choose a physician and be given "in-network" consideration. If the doctor an employee chooses is not on the preferred providers list, they will be given "out-of-network" benefits.

Not all employees live in an area that will be covered by a preferred physicians list. Employees who do not will continue to receive benefits very similar to the current indemnity plan.

An extensive bidding and evaluation process was made to select the vendor for this new plan. As it turns out, Blue Cross/Blue Shield was chosen as the HealthSelect vendor for the next three years.

Human Resources Management realizes that the information given so far leaves many questions unanswered, however, they have provided all of the information they have received on the new plan to date. Some decisions regarding the new plan have not yet been made by the Board of Trustees of ERS. As these decisions are made, they will be made available to all TRC employees.

In June, there will be employee meetings scheduled to provide information about this new plan in detail. Specific benefits of the plan will be explained and answers to all questions will be given. So stay tuned....



It's that time of the year again — no, not taxes.

Nominations are now being taken for the 1992 TRC Employee of the Year. You have the opportunity to recognize a fellow employee whom you feel has made consistent or significant contributions to the agency, co-workers, clients or the community.

We typically take co-workers for granted, especially if they are doing a good job. Now you can change that. Nominations can be made for Category I (salary groups 2-11) or Category II (salary groups 12-20). Outstanding employees will be chosen in both categories from each of the six regions, the Central Office and Disability Determination Services.

Nomination forms should be forwarded to the appropriate coordinators for the regions, listed in the right hand column.

—1992— REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Region I
David Bosh
Lubbock
Regional Office
(806) 762-0375

Region II
Louise Wagner
Fort Worth
Regional Office
(817) 731-7343

Region III
Edith Sirles
Austin
Regional Office
(512) 447-0616

Region IV
Frankie Watson
Houston
Regional Office
(713) 977-2613

Region V
Carmen Torres
Return to Work
Office #104
(512) 614-5247

Region VI
Delores Packer
Dallas
Regional Office
(214) 343-0991

DDS
Connie Miller
DDS-DO3
(512) 445-8511

Central Office
Deeanne Barnett
HRM
(512) 483-4322

Where the rubber meets the road

ADA in action

ADA is now a reality

After the speeches die, the training seminars end, the regulations are written, legal advice given, public response heard, and media reviews offered — the real work begins.

Laws don't change people or attitudes. But, information which is timely, relevant and helpful does.

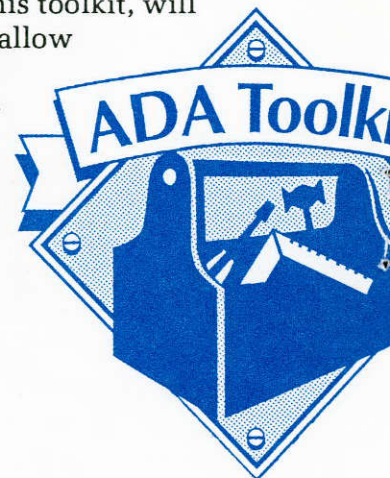
That is where ADA and rehabilitation professionals will have the greatest impact on helping to improve the quality of lives and opportunities for thousands of TRC clients.

ADA joins the repertoire of the rehabilitation counselor as a new, and important resource for clients. With the same goal in mind, independence through work, ADA and the rehabilitation counselor are a dynamic duo.

Tools of the Trade

The TRC Public Information Office has compiled an ADA Toolkit for use by TRC staff in providing timely information to employers, clients, etc. The toolkit contains an overview, answers to frequently asked questions about ADA, self-evaluation guides and a list of publications and telephone numbers for other organizations that can provide comprehensive information on ADA.

"We wanted to provide easy to use information for field staff," says PIO Information Specialist Shayla Fleshman. "Hopefully, this toolkit, will conveniently allow counselors to provide information that will best serve their clients."



Still Waiting...

The search for the new health and human services czar has so far drawn blanks. As of mid-April, the two finalists for the position did not work out for one reason or the other.

Initially, the governor set March 1 as her deadline for appointing the cabinet-level position to preside over the 11 agencies that now handle health, welfare and other social service programs.

Because of expectations for this new executive to formulate and present a plan for agency consolidation to the state Legislature by January 1, there is a sense of urgency to fill the position. Finding the most highly-qualified person, however, is stated as the highest priority at this moment.

Still on hold...

At this time, the bill from Congress on the Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act has not yet surfaced. In the meantime, a hearing on reauthorization held by Rep. Major Owens, chairman of the Subcommittee on Select Education, has surfaced the need to keep congressmen informed of client successes.

What you can do now...

Check your files and mail letters from clients or former clients to:

Senator Major Owens, Chairman,
House Subcommittee on
Select Education
518 House Annex #1
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Tom Harkin, Chairman,
Senate Subcommittee on
Disability Policy
113 Hart Senate
Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Counselor comments

"ADA doesn't tell people with disabilities they can go to the head of the line. It just gives them a fighting chance for the same opportunities we all enjoy. Those chances are long overdue."

Knobby Sanchez, Midland

"The bottom line is that people with disabilities—our clients—cannot be screened out of the employment process just for their disability. Knowing this makes our job easier."

Norman Hooge, San Antonio

"How can it keep from helping the rehab process be more effective? I wish it had passed ten years ago."

Valerie Wherle, Irving

"Independence, for all of us, comes from a paycheck. Work is the key."

Polly Walton, Beaumont

"I just hope that employers don't rush out and recruit workers with disabilities as token employees. That will set us all back. People with disabilities should and can earn their jobs through qualification and keep it through performance — that is how they will be truly independent."

Melvin Haisler, Temple



Region II

Karen Cravens was selected as counselor in the Fort Worth West Field Office. Cravens was recently vocational evaluator for Goodwill of Dallas before coming to TRC.

Region III

Carol Hoppens was selected as medical services coordinator for the Region. She brings many years of valuable experience within the Commission.

Shawn Saladin was selected for the deaf/hearing impaired caseload position in the Victoria Field Office. Saladin was previously in the Bryan Field Office.

DDS

Wendell Elkins retired after 22 years of service with the Commission.

Central Office

Tammy Jeter was selected to fill the compensation/benefits position in Human Resources. She most recently worked for DDS.

Hable Espanol?

Need to talk with a client or vendor in a language other than English? AT&T Language Line Services provide over-the-phone access to trained interpreters who can get your message to non-English (or barely English speaking) persons in more than 140 languages. AT&T Language Line Services also provides written documentation or voice recording. For more information, contact Sherri Parks at TEX-AN 255-3580 or (512) 463-3580.



what would you do?

ask people

to judge me by my

ability

not my

disability

cindy bolus, colorado

ESPRIT

Kudos to Esprit ...

This particular ad is causing quite a stir within and outside of the disabled community. The Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, whose phone number is listed on the ad, has received numerous calls ranging from questions concerning the rights of persons with disabilities to where they can order a t-shirt or poster.

It is a positive sign to see persons with disabilities portrayed in mainstream advertising. Thanks to Esprit for including Cindy Bolus in their recent advertising campaign.

Getting the experience

Sheila Robbins, TRC client, has a lot to smile about these days. With a new job and a new car, life seems to be getting easier. It wasn't always this way.

For the last two years, she has looked for a job but could not find work. "I found that people just don't want to risk taking you on without experience," says Robbins. "I felt like there wasn't any chance to get my head above water."

All that changed in October 1991, when, to help her get the experience she needed, Robbins was able to participate in the TRC client training program offered by Administrative Services. A six-month program, it allows non-job ready clients to receive specific job training.

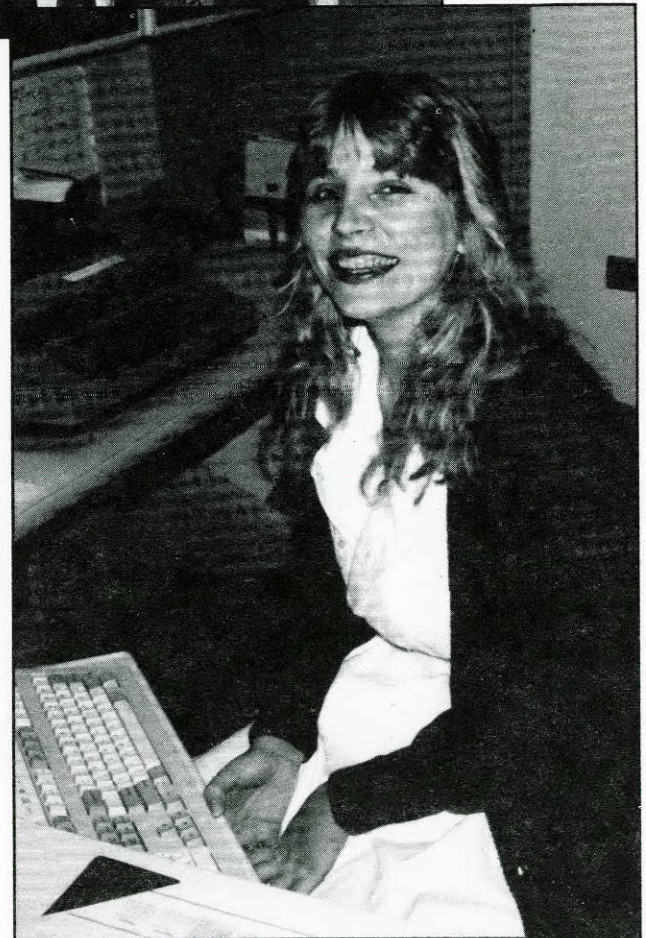
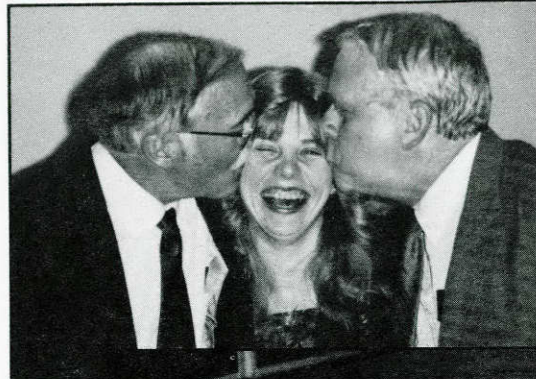
Its benefits are two-fold. For clients, it gives them the experience they need. For TRC, it lets us experience what we are asking employers to do, providing TRC with direct feedback on the quality of its delivery system. The program is currently growing and soon there could be up to 18 client traineeships in different areas of Administrative Services.

Designed to enhance clerical skills, Robbins' particular position was in the Media Department. "It helped me to organize and let me know that I am capable of doing a job as well as anyone else can," says Robbins. "It was a great experience."

"There was pressure, however, in knowing that I had only six months to find another job for further employment," Robbins adds. "I mailed out eight applications in one week. Nothing happened. One day, I saw a job opening on the computer for the Department of Human Services and I went for it."

It worked out. She interviewed the day she saw it and the prospect looked good. "I did run into some snags, though. They lost my application, so I went through their mailroom to find it and then I lacked one month experience needed for the job. They actually waited for me to complete my month at TRC in order to have the necessary experience."

Robbins highly recommends the TRC client training program, "If people are willing to learn and throw them-



selves into it, this program is great. Persons with disabilities need to work harder to get where they want to go and getting a chance to prove yourself makes all the difference."

(top) Commissioner Arrell and Deputy Commissioner for Administrative Services John Fenoglio give Sheila Robbins a big send off.

Special Issues Planned

Next month, you are going to see something different. In order for employees to learn more about the overall workings of the Commission and to meet some of the people behind the scenes that you would not ordinarily get to know, TRC Today is featuring special issues throughout the year devoted to specific areas of the agency.

The June edition features Disability Determination Services. DDS is on the move. Find out how the employees are starting to take charge. You may ask yourself, what is DDS about? In June, you have your chance to find out.

In addition, look for upcoming issues devoted to Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Administrative Services.

TRC is a very diverse agency staffed with people of a myriad of backgrounds and interests. By learning some in-depth information about specific pieces, we hope you will get a clearer picture of the whole pie. We also hope these issues will be not only informative, but fun to read as well.

Rolex *continued from page 1*

injury like that. James said — 'I want a new life, it may not be the same, but I want a new life.' And that's what he did."

"J.D. rolled out of T.I.R.R. on Friday afternoon and was back to work on Monday morning," says Smith. "He took charge of his own accessibility needs whether it was asking someone to build a ramp or rearrange the furniture."

Holcomb says he just takes life one day at a time. "I made a choice to do the best I could do with the situation I had. Everyday is a learning experience ... getting in and out of doors or the carpet is too thick. It's the little things you don't take for granted anymore."

"I was told that you're a cripple when other people do everything for you and that you are a person with a disability when you start doing it for yourself," says Holcomb. "I really believe that."



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