

# trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission

## It's Official

TRC Board cuts ribbon at new DDS building



*A big new building requires a big pair of scissors as TRC Board Chair Jerry Kane helps Dr. Diane Novy and Dr. Dora Gonzalez do the honors.*

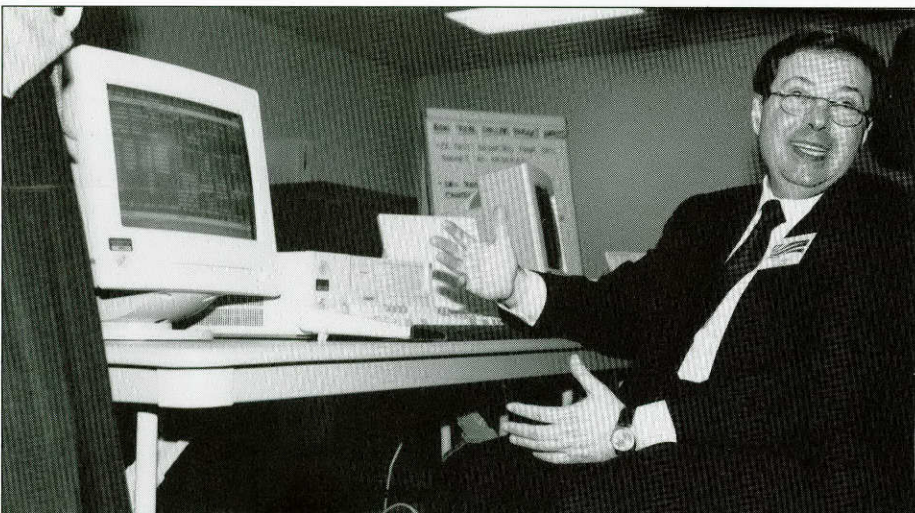
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Texas Rehabilitation  
Commission  
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, Texas 78751-2399  
Vol. 19 No. 4 April 1996

## And what a home it is ...

In a ceremony at the south entrance to the new DDS building, Commissioner Arrell and TRC Board members made it official. DDS has a new home. And it is impressive. Not only breathing room, but working room, walking around room. The DDS building is big, open and roomy. It is also filled with unique features that reflect the DDS mission.



- There is an exercise facility where staff can work out their stress or work off their girth, with up to date, digital monitoring steppers and Nautilus equipment. *In the top left photo, TRC Board Vice-Chair Ray Wilkerson checks out the equipment.*
- Consider "Elvis" the eight-foot automated mail cart that can be "sighted" delivering mail throughout the building. *In the middle photo, Commissioner Arrell, Dave Ward and Board members stop to chat about Elvis.*
- There is computer automation that rivals any found in state or federal government. *In the bottom photo, TRC Board Chair Jerry Kane gets an on-screen tour of VERSA.*

As always at occasions like this, there are surprises. While the Board was touring the new building, they passed through Unit 8 where Dora L. Gonzalez is an examiner. She has often seen her namesake (referred to as "tocayas" in Spanish), a Dr. Dora L. Gonzalez's name on DDS correspondence and medical records. During the tour, the two Doras met. As it turns out, Dr. Gonzalez is a TRC Board member and enjoyed meeting her namesake at DDS and visited with the whole unit. "It was so nice to meet her," DDS Dora explains. "People in my unit often joked that a Dr. with my name had to be a quack," she joked with Dr. Dora. "Now we know better." *In the top right photo is Dora Gonzalez, DDS examiner and Dr. Dora Gonzalez, TRC Board member.*

With formal remarks to wrap up this momentous occasion, Commissioner Arrell put it all in perspective for those in attendance. "It took 21 years to build the Brown-Heatly Building and seven for the new DDS building, so we are getting better at it. But, what I am most proud of is that we now have a first-class facility for the first-class people that are working in DDS."

## Job Trends For The Future

In the 1990s, both businesses and people new to the work force have created a growing demand for the use of temporary employment agencies. This trend has now reached the disability community, creating new opportunities for people with disabilities through temporary agencies dedicated to their needs.

Located in Austin, two of these organizations are Goodwill Temporary Services and Peak Performers. Texas is only the second state in the nation to have such agencies.

Temporary agencies for people with disabilities have been active in the Austin area for a little over a year, but this concept has been used in Oregon for over five years. They have been so successful that most state agencies in Oregon contract exclusively with the temporary agencies for people with disabilities when time-limited work is needed.

Peak Performers, which started temporary services for people with disabilities in Oregon, is now in Austin bringing their performance record with them. A non-profit organization that not only provides experience and job opportunities for people with disabilities, they also offer skills training and job development. And unlike other temporary agencies, they want their employees to find permanent jobs if they so desire.

In little over a year, Peak Performers has managed to provide temporary employment for more than 300 people at an average pay of \$7.06 per hour. Hopefully, this idea will catch on in other Texas locations.



*Thanks to Paul Goldborer, client Jennifer Sandmann (above) is an employee of Peak Performers. Through them, she is working temporarily in TRC's BSSU unit.*

# Focus On Quality

**T**his month, as part of the *Focus On Quality* series, we're looking at two units who scored among the highest this year for client involvement in the Customer Satisfaction Survey: Abilene and Amarillo.

**"If they feel we're vested, they are more inclined to be vested."**

In the Abilene unit, mostly veteran counselors have consistently been top performers. That they scored high in client involvement shows us that it's not really a new idea. In contrast, Amarillo has as many new counselors as experienced ones. Even though the experience levels vary between the two units, both share very similar ideas on what helps

clients become active players in their own plan.

"I think experience does come into play. You seem to get better as you go down the road," says Abilene Area Manager John Stowe. "But client involvement really comes down to this: If you care about people, you involve them. It's a really personal thing."

"Many of us make or break a case by the initial contact," says Jerry Whitaker, counselor in the Amarillo Field Office. "By the time they get to us they may have gone through every resource possible and we are their last resort. If we treat them like a number, then they think it's just going to be the same old thing, so why try. But, if they see care and concern and if they feel we're vested, they are more inclined to be vested."

Creating a caring atmosphere up front is critical but so is the idea of clients *taking the ball and running with it*. "It's working together. I have a

commitment to the client but the client must have a commitment to the program," says Tom Cook, counselor in the Abilene Field Office. "When we go through the IWRP, they see the investment on their part. The achievement means more if they see it's their contributions that will make it happen."

**"It's not me telling them but them seeing for themselves what a particular job is all about."**

"I send them out to do their own investigating with schools and employers," says Brenda Wilkes, counselor in the Amarillo Field Office. "Then it's not me telling them but them seeing

for themselves what a particular job is all about and what they can expect in getting there."

Also, find out *why* a client wants a job. "They may say they want to work in a hospital but what they really want to do is wear a uniform," says David Solis, counselor in the Amarillo Field Office. "You've got to really listen to get past the superficial to what really is going on."

The philosophy behind involving clients in choosing vocational goals is basically the same as helping a client choose services — care and communication. "We basically use the same approach with clients that we do with service providers: know the goals of the clients and communicate this well," says Jim Haile, Amarillo area manager.

All agree that RSTs are an important contact for the clients when choosing services. "My RST is very involved in talking about vendor choices if I'm busy," says Wilkes. "She might not make final choices but she acts as an important go-between in relaying information."

## Commissioner Arrell hits another milestone



**W**hat a fast 15 years. It seems like just yesterday that Max Arrell was taking over the reins of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission in one of our darkest hours with a pledge to not only survive, but flourish. And we have.

In some ways it has been a roller coaster ride. A series of challenges from state and federal sources throughout the 80s and into the 90s gave the agency a reputation for firm resolve and responsiveness. Now known as the agency that Max built, the Commissioner's influence has put a personal stamp on this agency that will always be an important part of our history.

Nationally known and regarded as the state VR program, "that does rehab right", is mostly a tribute to one man — Max Arrell.

Still a fighter, a planner and a visionary, Commissioner Arrell was touched by the many messages from TRC staff wishing him well on his anniversary. "You'd think after 15 years, I would take all this for granted," Commissioner Arrell said. "But I don't. I wish I could respond personally to all of the messages I've received, but that is physically impossible. So, I want you all to know that I consider it a privilege to be your commissioner. And I'm looking forward to the next 15 years."

# TOOLTIME

Our tools aren't power saws and wrenches, but mouses, monitors, LANs, WANs, and a plethora of new software. This column will run throughout the next few months to help folks learn more about nifty new features on our computers we either don't know about or don't feel comfortable using.

If you have any technology questions, call or cc:Mail Shayla Fleshman. We promise to demystify the computer jargon and write in terms that you can understand and use. This first column offers just a little food for thought ...

*What if people bought cars like they buy computers?*

**HELPLINE:** "General Motors Helpline, can I help you?"

**CUSTOMER:** "I got in my car and closed the door, and nothing happened!"

**HELPLINE:** "Did you put the key in the ignition slot and turn it?"

**CUSTOMER:** "What's the ignition?"

**HELPLINE:** "It's the starter motor that draws current from your battery and turns over the engine."

**CUSTOMER:** "Ignition? Motor? Battery? Engine? How come I have to know all of these technical terms just to use my car?"

**HELPLINE:** "General Motors Helpline, can I help you?"

**CUSTOMER:** "Hi! I just bought my first car, and I chose your car because it has automatic transmission, cruise control, power steering, power brakes, and power door locks."

**HELPLINE:** "Thanks for buying our car. How can I help you?"

**CUSTOMER:** "How do I work it?"

**HELPLINE:** "Do you know how to drive?"

**CUSTOMER:** "Do I know how to what?"

**HELPLINE:** "Do you know how to DRIVE?"

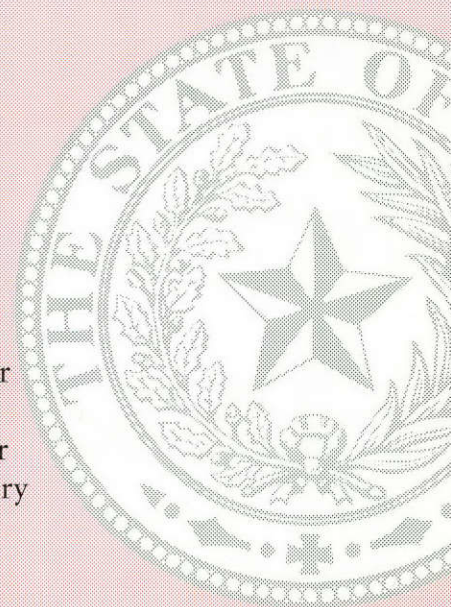
**CUSTOMER:** "I'm not a technical person! I just want to go places in my car!"

Remember how scary and frustrating it was learning to drive. Still, we put the car in gear, hopefully without too many fender-benders. It's the same with computers. It takes learning the basics. And hands-on experience.

## Across the State February 1996

Welcome Aboard!

Alice Maldonado, HRM  
 Sylvia Honeycutt, admin tech  
 Ernest Ytuarte, HRM  
 Josephine Griego, RST  
 Joe McGaha, RST  
 Pamela Schmitz, RST  
 Ora Harris, RST  
 Jacqueline Pacha, counselor  
 Daniel Washam, counselor  
 Donald Aekins, RST  
 Michelle Pryor, RST  
 Grace Akpaffiong, counselor  
 Samuel Payne, counselor  
 Victoria Saunders, counselor  
 Frank Arrington, Jr., secretary  
 Refugia Juarez, RST  
 Norma Saenz, counselor



Deaths

Maria Estela Ruiz passed away February 22, 1996 in El Paso. Ruiz was employed with the commission for 25 years.

Marshall Denson, examiner in Unit 15 since 1988, passed away February 15, 1996.

Awards April 1996

10 Years	20 Years
Stan Terry, Sr.	Magdalena Hancock
Laura Craig	Ronona Sellars
Sherri Eddy	Yolanda How
15 Years	25 Years
Irene Antonik	Randall Scott
Stephen Schoen	Collett Foyt
Dawn Bosley	Hector Flores
David McKay	
Karin Balch	30 Years
Hilda Lerma	Tommy Williams
Pamela Eaker	Nathalie Hallmark
Pat Simpson	

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Shayla Fleshman, Editor  
Randy Phinney & Susan Antoniewicz, Design

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