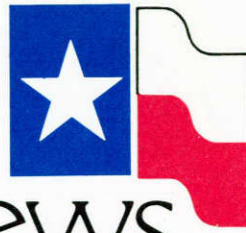


News & Views



★ Texas Rehabilitation Commission ★ A Human Energy Agency ★

Volume 11 Number 5

May 1989



The New Central Office

It's official. TRC's Central Office will be in a new home on June 12, 1989. The move will start at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 7 and it is expected that Central Office will be open for business on Monday, June 12, at 8 a.m.

This is a momentous occasion for TRC. Since the Commission was established in September 1969, the Central Office has leased office space at four locations.

State Purchasing and General Services Commission contracted for the construction of the Brown-Heatly building for TRC and the Texas Youth Commission. The building is named after two men who stood for excellence in public service: J. J. Brown, the first director of rehabilitation in Texas, from 1929-1961; and Bill Heatly, the distinguished legislator from Paducah. TRC will occupy all except the second floor and part of the third floor of the building. The building is attractive, efficient and a model of accessibility for people with disabilities.

Continued on page 4

Employees Called SEIC Program Pioneers

Two TRC employee suggestions were among the first six adopted by the State Employee Incentive Commission.

In April 18 ceremonies at the State Capitol, Gov. Clements honored Dru Edrington, disability examiner in Unit 07, and Beth Palmer, counselor in the Irving Field Office, along with four other state workers.

SEIC-adopted suggestions will improve efficiency and cost effectiveness in state agency operations. Over 200 state agencies participate in the employee suggestion program.

Edrington suggested a change in disability claim file maintenance which TRC estimates will net a cost savings of \$1,460 per year. The idea consisted simply of switching a Social Security Administration form from the right to the left side of case folders. "It was the kind of thing that was always done a certain way and nobody thought to change it," she said.

Palmer's idea will speed up the way DEs retrieve medical records to evaluate disability claims. It was to refer DEs to inactive records archives in the Central Office warehouse for background information on claimants rather than contacting counselors who no longer had the information. The idea was borne of the same kind of frustration many of us experience. "It was a gripe I had to get out of my system," says Palmer.

For suggestions approved by SEIC, employees may be eligible for 10 percent (up to \$5,000) of cost savings the suggestion produces (see January 1989 "News & Views").

Although no dollar savings can be determined for Palmer's suggestion, she will receive a special merit increase granted by Commissioner Arrell.

SEIC Chairman Gary R. Rodgers says, "We consider these first six employees our program pioneers."

David J. MacCabe, director of special services and agency coordinator for the program, has

logged well over 65 suggestions from TRC employees since the program began in January. He points out that the first two TRC suggestions adopted were made by employees who represent over one-third of the total TRC staff population--DEs and VR counselors.

One more TRC employee suggestion was since adopted by SEIC. Deborah Webb, stenographer in the Fort Worth Field Office North, thought that TRC would realize a savings if books purchased for students in college and vocational schools would remain the property of TRC

Continued on next page



Dru Edrington, disability examiner in Unit 07 (left), and Beth Palmer, counselor in the Irving Field Office, went to the Capitol April 18 to receive congratulations from Gov. Clements on their suggestions to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness in state government.

MILESTONES

TRC Service

APRIL 1989

Region I

10 years: Yolanda G. Gonzales

Region II

15 years: B. Ann Buck

Region V

10 years: Emma Ochoa

15 years: Robert G. Gonzales

Region VI

10 years: Nan J. Rose

DDD

10 years: Robert G. Burgess

15 years: Paula K. Connell
Reta P. Scott
Deborah L. Wilks
Alvin Youngblood, Sr.
David M. Ward

Central Office

10 years: Barbara C. Duve

15 years: Olivia A. Maldonado
Tracey Schlatter

20 years: Lucy S. Woodall

25 years: Virginia Taylor

Pioneers

Continued from page 2

rather than the clients. The resale value of these books (and annual savings to TRC) is estimated at up to \$250,000!

"We appreciate Dave MacCabe's efforts in developing such an exciting program of employee participation at this agency," says Executive Deputy Commissioner James L. Jackson.

TRC's success with the program confirms Commissioner Arrell's belief in his employees. "It just proves what we've known all along; we've got quality employees who have good ideas," he said.

Legislation at a Glance

State

- The fate of the FY 1990-91 Appropriations Bill is now in the hands of a conference committee. That committee's charge is to iron out differences between the House and Senate recommended versions of the bill. House and Senate version figures for TRC programs have not changed since reported in the last issue of "News & Views." At this writing, conferees are shooting for a mid-May deadline to arrive at a final Appropriations Bill.
- Soon after an April 12 hearing on Rep. Beauchamp's accessible mass transportation bill, the House Transportation Committee referred the measure to subcommittee for further study. No subcommittee members have been named, and no date was set to make appointments to the panel. Disability advocates fear such action so late in the session could mean "death" for the legislation, at least until the 72nd Legislature convenes in two years.
- A bill making helmets mandatory for motorcycle riders became law April 18. Disability advocacy groups believe the law will help reduce the number of closed head injuries caused by highway motorcycle accidents. The helmet law goes into effect September 1.

Federal

- Rep. Steve Bartlett of Dallas reintroduced the Social Security Work Incentives Act of 1989 (HR 8). Action on the bill was not completed last session. The bill follows up on Section 1619 of the Social Security Act passed in 1986

which provides similar employment/health insurance opportunities for Social Security Disability Insurance recipients. HR 8 would ensure continued access to health insurance (Medicare) for people with disabilities on SSDI who are attempting to work.

- Legislation is expected to be introduced in May in both houses of Congress which would provide full civil rights under the law for people with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act, which stalled in committee last session, is being reviewed by White House officials for possible endorsement by President Bush. The Senate Subcommittee on the Handicapped, chaired by Tom Harkin of Iowa, has tentatively scheduled hearings on the measure in May.
- On April 18, the full House of Representatives considered but did not approve the FY 1989 "Dire Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill" which included an Appropriations Committee-recommended \$8.423 million for Section 110 (Basic State Grants). The measure would restore funds "impounded" last year by the Office of Management and Budget for Rehabilitation Act programs. Funds were impounded due to an across-the-board cut in FY 1989 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations bill. Texas can expect to receive \$572,659 when the impounded funds are released. Because of problems with its size (\$4.7 million in new spending), the supplemental budget measure was returned to the House Appropriations Committee for modification.

New Building Continued from page 1

Some of the accessibility features are:

- The parking garage has 16 dedicated parking spaces for people with mobility impairments, with no curbs . . . people in wheelchairs can roll straight from their vehicle to the walkway.
- All visitor parking spaces are designed wider to make it easier for people in wheelchairs to get in and out of their cars.
- The parking garage entrance has a covered walkway.
- There are no curbs around this building--anywhere. Concrete cylinders in the front parking lot alert drivers to boundaries.
- Three entrances to the building are opened by sensing devices. The doors are activated by the movement of the person entering.
- The entrances to the restrooms are by privacy curves rather than doors.
- Showers in the fitness facility have built-in seats and extension shower heads. The entrance to the shower is level and accessible.
- Electrical power outlets are 18 inches off the floor and light switches are 37 inches high (average shoulder height of a person in a wheelchair).
- The fire alarm system uses both sound and flashing strobe lights. More than 60 extra strobe lights have been added over code requirements. You can see the flashing lights from anywhere in the building.
- All staircases are pressurized to keep out smoke during a fire.
- An emergency elevator to evacuate people who cannot walk down stairs has both a pressurized entrance and shaft and also has its own power source.
- The special design of the carpet colors indicates exits to assist in the evacuation of the building.

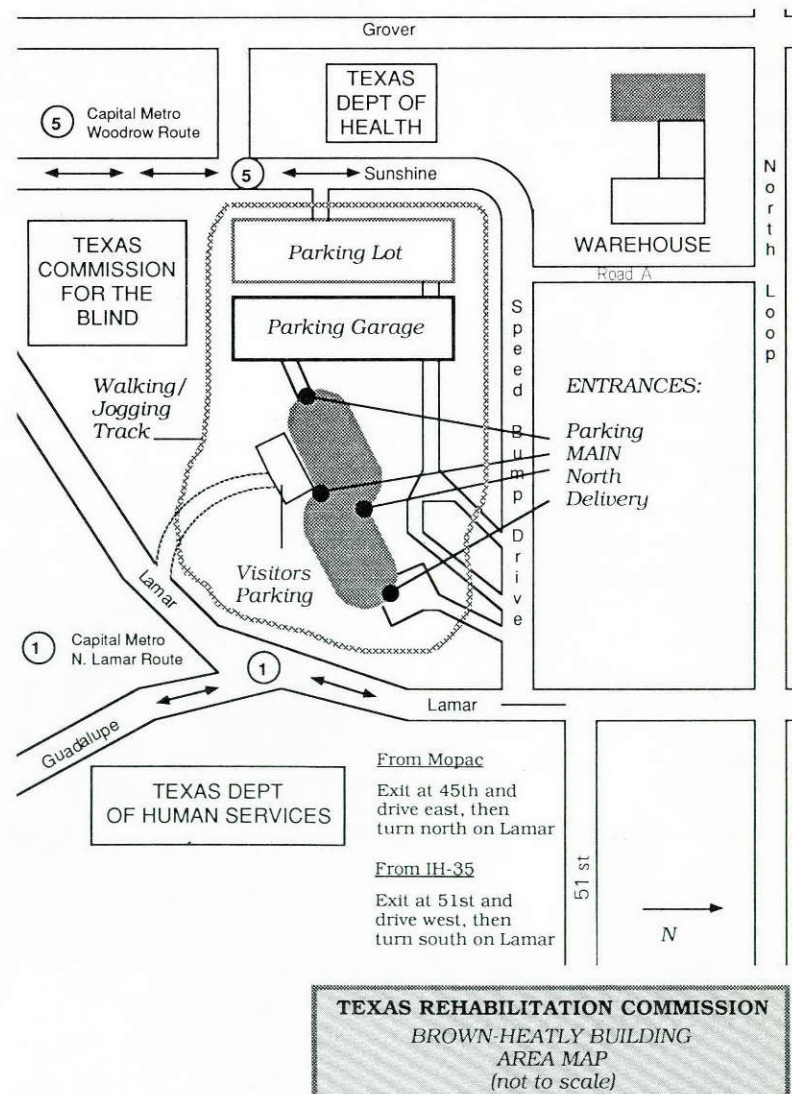
- Door handles with rough texture indicate that the door does not lead to a way out of the building.
- Walkways are free of obstructions to enable a visually impaired person to move around easily.
- All signs in the building, other than name plates, will be tactile.

Now you can see why we are not only proud of the accessibility of the new building but also invite our consumers to explore and try out these features. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

Some of the architectural features of the building are com-

puterized energy efficiency and a working environment called open office landscape system (OOLS). OOLS is a unique and versatile modular arrangement of office furniture which takes advantage of natural light and is the most efficient use of space in the building--an important cost consideration now and in future expansion.

The building has ample meeting space and a cafeteria facility. Customers, clients, vendors, field staff and Central Office employees will be impressed with opportunities that this new building offers for fostering effective working relationships.



A Whole New Ball Game

On June 12 only the people and office names will be the same, everything else in the Central Office will be different. There will be new office locations, phone numbers, parking arrangements and addresses. Get ready to learn new numbers.

Alphabetical directories, by first or last name, will be available for field staff use.

The plan for the move to the new Central Office home calls for no disruption of service. The warehouse has already moved and supplies and client equipment will be ongoing during the move. Vendor payments, usually very fast, might be slowed, but it should not be noticeable. If you have any problems, please call the Claims section at (512) 483-4630 (or FAX number 483-4664).

NEW
Central Office address

**4900 N. Lamar Austin, Texas
78751-2316**

(512) 483-4000 or Texan: 825-4000

Building Bridges

The "oneness" that has existed in our agency for the past several years will not be forgotten during this period of transition . . . or after. When more than 400 people move into the new Central Office home, they will leave about 700 people in the Disability Determination Services to occupy the 118 E. Riverside address. The Central Office will establish satellite offices in the DDS building to provide these services:

Human Resource Management (Personnel) - will have the newly appointed Director for HRD/DDS, Annette Dominquez,

with three other people to provide services to DDS employees.

Office for Civil Rights - will be staffed by two people.

Automated Services - will have one telecommunications specialist to act as liaison for DDS.

Voice Services - will have two telephone operators to handle the DDS switchboard.

Supply Services - will have two people to serve DDS.

Library - will provide reference resources through the HRD/DDS office. DDS employees will continue to receive *Bookmark*, the Library newsletter, and other services.

The renovation of the 118 E. Riverside building to accommodate all of the DDS employees, will be extensive. For the first time in more than a decade, DDS staff will share the same building.

The third floor, previously housing the Commissioner's suite, will be used for management, inquiries, training and meetings. The first floor will be converted to the same OOLS environment as the new Central Office.

"I couldn't be more pleased with our new TRC Central Office, the upgrade of the DDS facility and our preparation for the move," said Commissioner Arrell. "I am as excited as everyone else about moving."

Frequently Used Central Office Numbers: 483-xxxx

Administrative Services	4350	Information	
Automated Services	4480	Distribution System	4270
Budget and Planning	4700	LAN Administration	4580
Civil Rights	4410	Legal Services	4050
Claims	4630	Legislative/Program	
Commissioner	4000	Development	4130
Communication/Security		Library	4240
Services	4340	Management Audit	4020
Computer Operations	4490	Media Services	4360
Consumer Affairs	4400	Medical Services	4190
Controller	4600	Planning/ Technical	
Customer Computing	4530	Development	4470
Customer Services	4720	Printing Services	4820
Data Administration	4550	Program Administration	4110
Datacommunication		Program Monitoring	4150
Services (HELP)	4357	Programs	4100
Environmental Software	4590	Public Information	4420
Facilities Management	4450	Purchasing and Supply	4430
Field Technical Assistance	4170	Records Management	4300
Governor's Committee for		Security Services	4280
Disabled Persons	4380	Special Services	4060
General Accounting	4710	Systems/Program	4500
Human Resource		TABOT	4070
Development	4200	Texas Planning Council	4080
Human Resource		Voice Services	4250
Management	4320	Warehouse	4800

“
Why are health insurance rates going up?”

Skyrocketing state health insurance premiums, higher than 50 percent in some categories, could offset state worker pay increases being considered in the Legislature.

Insurance Rates May Cut into Proposed Pay Hikes

The Employees Retirement System recently announced that group insurance benefits under Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas, Inc. will cost state employees an average of 22.6 percent more in September.

ERS also approved 20 health maintenance organizations to provide insurance benefits to state employees. HMO rates will also increase by an average of 34 percent.

Along with a modest across-the-board pay raise for state employees, the Legislature is considering increases in state contributions to health insurance plans above the current \$115 to \$130 in FY 1990 and to \$155 in FY 1991. For some state employees, both increases together won't be enough to cover rising insurance costs.

Employees insuring themselves and their families are most affected by rate increases, according to Joanne Edge, manager of compensation/benefits in Human Resources Management (see April 3 memo from Edge to

all employees for specific category increases).

"People are upset. That's clear and it's understandable," says Edge.

"We've had an average of 20 calls a day from TRC employees since the announcement was made," she reports. "They're asking questions like: 'What are we supposed to do? Why are the rates going up? Is anybody doing anything about this?'"

"Why are health insurance rates going up?" Health care industry costs are escalating at a frightening rate nationwide--faster than any other industry and faster than inflation. It's not just a Texas problem; it's not just an insurance industry problem.

But the answer may not be quite so complex.

"Our state group health plan rates are going up as a direct result of health plan usage," she says.

"Several years ago, most people would let a sore throat, for example, run its course. Now, they may see a doctor at the first sign of a problem," says Edge.

Measures to slow down insurance plan usage and curb rising rates have, for the most part, failed.

Methods such as requiring two opinions before a surgery, pre-certifying out-patient office visits and requiring a \$50 deductible on hospital visits were all designed to help people stop and think before using insurance coverage. It hasn't worked.

One Central Office employee said, "People who don't get sick shouldn't have to pay for people who do."

Another TRC employee points out, "We've got employees in the mid to lower salary ranges who've got their whole families to cover. What are they going to do?"

In one such case, a TRC employee, her husband and four children depend on her state health insurance plan. This year, the family's insurance cost is \$259.95 per month. In September, under the newly adopted rates, it will jump to \$428.75--an increase of 64.9 percent. Even with an increase in the state contribution to the plan and a modest pay increase, this employee stands to bring home less pay in 1990 than she will in 1989.

"I'm upset about the insurance rates," says Commissioner Arrell. "I've personally written letters and/or spoken with Gov. Clements, Lt. Gov. Hobby, and Rep. Jim Rudd (chairman of the House Appropriations Committee) and others expressing my concern over the situation. We're working with state leadership to get larger percentage salary increases for state workers," he says.

Right now, increased state contributions to health care plans and state worker pay raises are still up in the air. What remains certain is the big jump in state worker health care insurance premiums come September.

Ways To Save Your Back During the "Move"

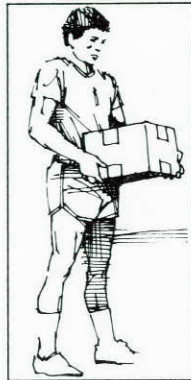
The upcoming Central Office move into its new facility June 8-9 presents many challenges to TRC employees. One important challenge is maintaining safety and security with no injuries.

During the move, most of the heavy lifting will be done by professional movers.

However, both before and after the move, you will probably have occasion to lift smaller boxes in your work area. Here are some tips which could help you save your back and make the move a safe and secure experience for you.

★ Applause

The following TRC employees recently received press coverage for the Commission: **David Cohen** and **Alan Craig**, counselors in the Baytown Field Office; **Paul Baganz**, counselor in the Fort Worth Easter Seal Field Office; **Richard Palacios**, operations director for program services in the San Antonio Regional Office; **Elizabeth Rhodes**, counselor in the Wharton Field Office; **Laura Banks**, manager of Communication Services in the Central Office; **Roger Levy**, program specialist; **Ted Thayer**, program specialist; **Roger Webb**, executive director of the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities; **George Clark**, director of the Office for Civil Rights; **Debbie Chandler**, Consumer Advisory Committee member; **Executive Deputy Commissioner James L. Jackson**; and **Commissioner Arrell**.



Lifting:

- Be aware of how much an object weighs before lifting it.
- Make a large base of support with your feet in a diagonal position, one foot slightly in front of the other.
- Squat with one knee down on the floor; do not bend from the waist with knees straight.
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Lift light objects with one leg in the air, knee slightly bent.
- Do not twist at the waist when lifting.
- Use elevators when carrying loads from one place to another.
- Get help with heavy or awkward loads!

Trips/Falls:

- Watch for boxes, cords and open file drawers which may cause you to trip and fall while carrying objects.
- Be aware of possible collisions with others when rounding corners.

Security:

- Start now removing personal items from your work area. They could be damaged or lost during the move.

Finally, now would be a good time to take a look at the "Back School" tape/slide show available in the TRC library. It offers a comprehensive look at proper lifting techniques which will be useful during the move.

↑ Transitions

Doug Dittfurth, former TRC counselor for the hearing impaired in the Pasadena Field Office, was named director of the Southwest Center for the Hearing Impaired.

Debra Williams joined the Commission in April as staff auditor for grants/contracts in Management Audit. She comes to TRC from the Employees Retirement System.

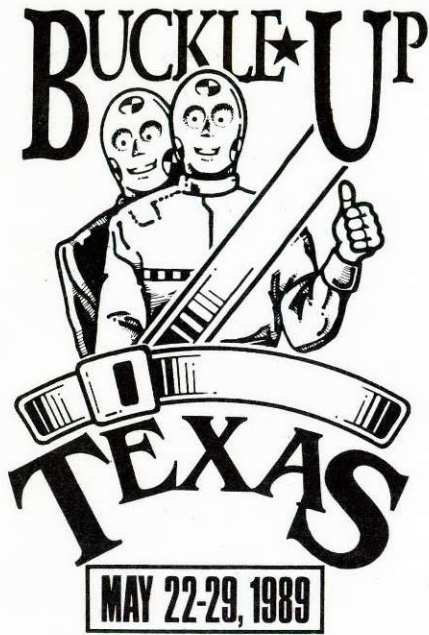
Annette Dominguez joined Disability Determination Services April 17 as DDS personnel director.

Robyn Creel, unit systems support specialist in the Houston Field Office Central, was selected to fill the position of secretary to the regional director in Region IV.

Martha Carrington recently became counselor for the Parkland Hospital caseload in the Dallas Central Field Office.

Bruce Rollman, director of staff development for Disability Determination Services, was selected as director of administration and policy for DDS.

William Clark and **Geri Linder** both recently joined the Odessa Field Office as counselors.



The Texas Buckle Up Coalition wants everyone to get involved in the week-long campaign leading up to Memorial Day weekend.

The focus of this year's awareness week is increasing the level of vehicle safety belt and child safety seat usage. The goal is to reach a 70 percent correct use rate by 1990.

As TRC employees, you are aware of the critical importance of using safety belts. Many TRC clients have spinal injuries and a growing number of clients have traumatic brain injuries resulting from car crashes.

Here are some statistics which should make you think twice before choosing NOT to use safety restraints:

- The National Safety Council projects that 3,500 additional lives could be saved and 59,000 fewer disabling injuries could result annually by raising safety belt use to 70 percent.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death and disabling injury among

Americans between the ages of six months and 35 years.

- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that among children under the age of four, child safety seats saved about 200 lives in 1986.



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