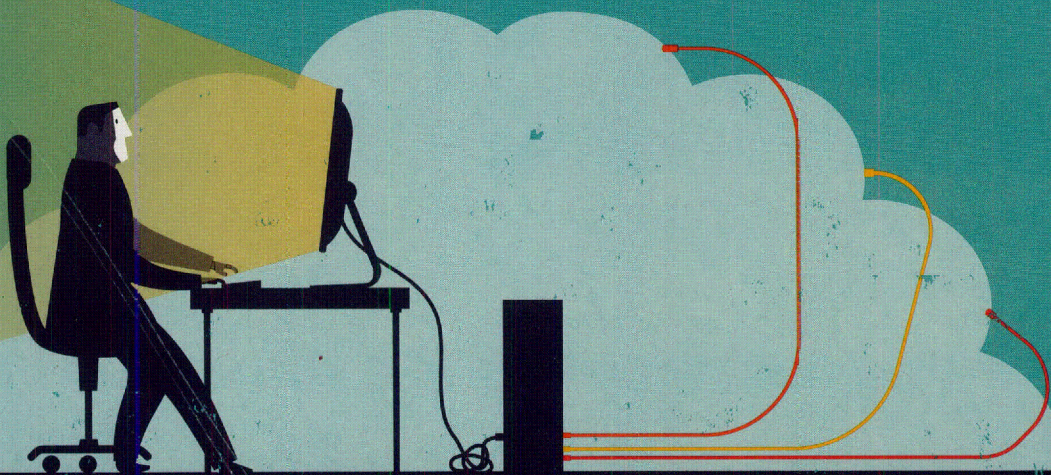




CHANGING HOW WE THINK ABOUT DATA SECURITY



Keeping the entire agency safe from information leaks and cyber attacks means changing how we all think about data security.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Unfortunately, with increasing frequency these days, companies are having to deal with the fallout as a result of someone or some group hacking into their computer system.

Just this past July, hackers broke into the network of the University of California at Los Angeles Health System. At the time, UCLA officials did not believe that the cyber attackers accessed any personal or medical information, but the breach was unsettling for the thousands of people whose data was stored there.

Some might say that this is just the price we pay for living in a world where information — any information — can be accessed at the stroke of a computer key. I disagree. Protection and privacy are not tradeoffs for living in the 21st century. There are ways that we can lessen our chances of becoming cyber victims.

Our Information Technology Division has been working diligently to guard our online systems from outside parties. We have fail-safes that keep intruders out and allow our employees in to access the information they need for their jobs. But those security measures are only as good as we allow them to be.


As employees, we are the gatekeepers. Each of us must reduce threats to our IT systems, threats that can be disguised as emails, attachments and links.

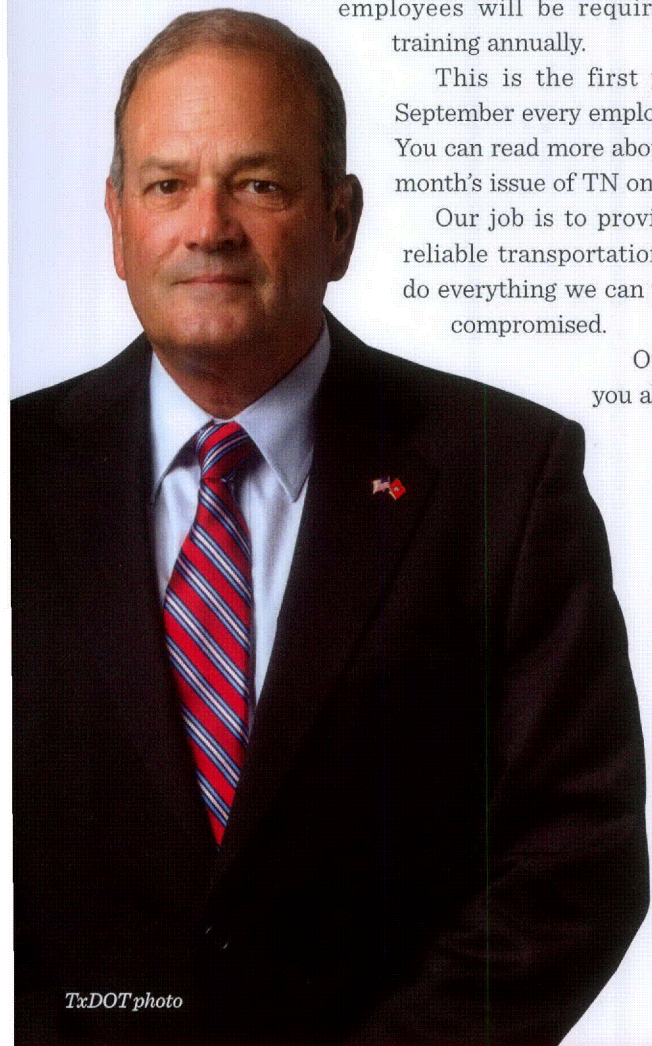
That's why our IT Division has launched the new security awareness campaign "You are a Target" to help employees recognize and reduce security dangers.

Cyber security is so important to the work that we do — and to the trust that Texans have placed in us to secure their transportation network — that all TxDOT employees will be required to complete computer security training annually.

This is the first year of this training, and by mid-September every employee should have taken the new course. You can read more about our new IT security program in this month's issue of TN on page 8.

Our job is to provide Texans with the safest and most reliable transportation system in the nation, and we must do everything we can to make sure that our networks aren't compromised.

On behalf of a grateful Texas, I thank you all for your continued hard work. 



J. F. Weber
Executive Director

Watch General Weber's videos on <http://crossroads/>



TN MAGAZINE SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2015

**CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS AND
MARKETING OFFICER**

Bob Kaufman

**COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION
DIRECTOR**

Jess Blackburn

**EXECUTIVE AND EMPLOYEE
COMMUNICATIONS
DIRECTOR/EDITOR**

Brent Dollar

MANAGING EDITOR

Shannon McIntire

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITORS

Phyllis Chandler-Gordon

Kelly Matthis

FEATURE WRITERS

Rosemary Barnes

Tracey Lamphere

CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Amador

Dianah Ascencio

Paul Braun

Catherine Cromer

Blanca Del Valle

Tony Hartzel

Ann Hatchitt

Chelsea Humphrey

De J. Lozada

Bill Macke

Randy Ormsby

Becky Ozuna

Danny Perez

Michelle Raglon

Michelle Releford

Octavio Saenz

Kevin Stillman

Karen Threlkeld

Jodi Wheatley

Bode Zietz

PHOTOGRAPHY

TxDOT and

GDC Marketing & Ideation

Unless otherwise noted

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

GDC Marketing & Ideation

PRINTED BY

TxDOT Print Services

Austin, TX

TN IS PUBLISHED BY THE

TEXAS DEPARTMENT

OF TRANSPORTATION

125 E. 11th St.

Austin, TX 78701-2483

CONTACT TN EDITOR

Have questions or

comments about TN?

Email TNideas@txdot.gov

and include "TN Editor"

in the subject line.

© Copyright 2015

TxDOT photo



8 ON THE COVER

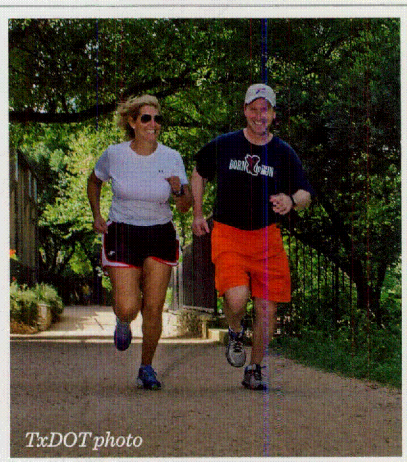
Spam filters and firewalls are not enough to avoid security threats as hackers target individuals to gain access to sensitive information.

FEATURED STORIES

21 Emergency Response Planning

23 A TxDOT Ferry Tale

16 COURAGE AGAINST CANCER



TxDOT photo

NEWS AND NOTES

4 Bridge Maintenance Far From Boring

5 John Barton Retires

10 Texas Tech Bestows Honors

11 Planning and Projects Celebrate Safety

12 Lancaster Hill Road Restored

13 Regency Bridge Reopens

13 Retirement Funding Increases

14 Murals Of West Capture Heritage

14 Drive Smart Campaign

15 Lubbock Recognizes Employee Actions

20 Catching Rain and an Award

22 Don't mess with Texas Contest Winners

TN TRADITIONS

4 5 Things You Should Know Right Now

6 Talk Around the State

26 Employee Q&A

24 I AM A... SAFETY OFFICER



27 Where Am I?

31 TxDOT Chimes In

27 TxDOT Calendar

31 Bright Lights

28 Milestones and Memoriam

32 Journey to Wellness

5 THINGS


FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

1 Employees can now watch internal TxDOT videos on their home computers and smart devices thanks to the launch of a new, private YouTube channel at <http://bit.ly/TxDOTFamily>. This channel is only accessible via this direct link, as these videos will not appear in YouTube or Google searches. The ability to watch TxDOT videos — such as TN Minute — away from work is a frequent request from employees.

2 Texas ranked second on CNBC's annual list of America's Top States for Business, which looks at 10 key factors to assess the regional economic landscape. According to CNBC, "the Lone Star State is in a class by itself for consistent business strength." In addition, Texas ranked No. 1 among all states in the key category of infrastructure for the second year in a row. That category includes the state's transportation network.

3 The Employees Retirement System of Texas now offers state employees an alternative to paying the tobacco-user premium with the Choose To Quit program. Employees and dependents enrolled in the GBP health plans must complete each step of the program to have the premium waived for the rest of the plan year. Visit the Tobacco Policy on the ERS website for more information.

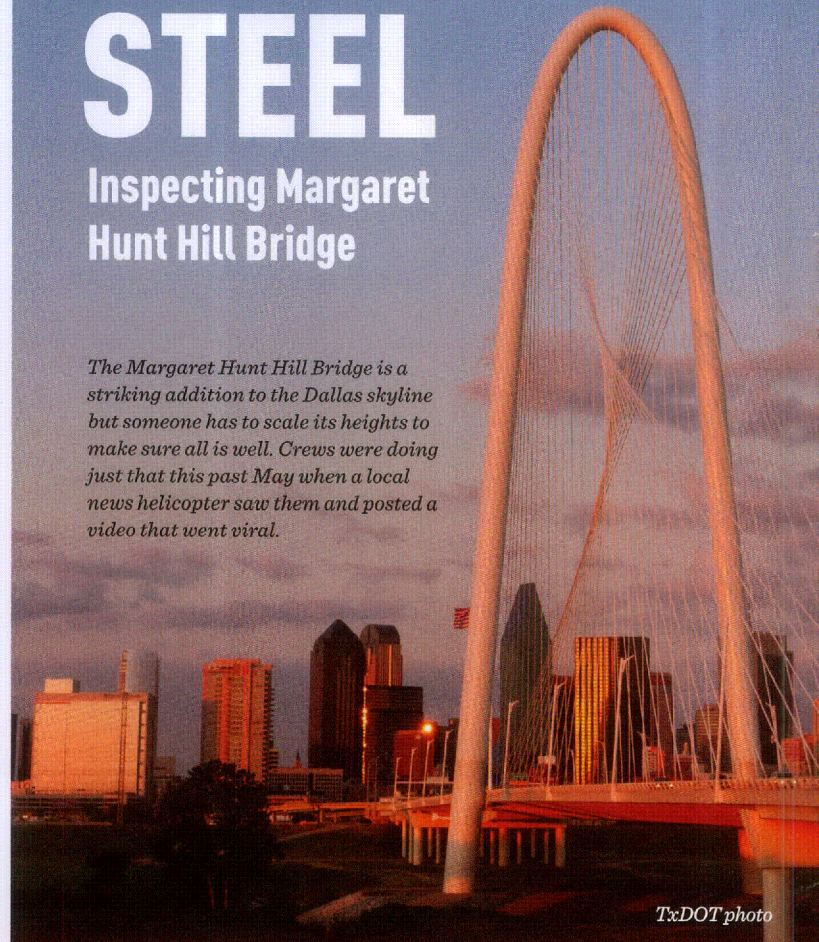
4 TxDOT's own TN Magazine received the Award of Excellence in the National Association of Government Communicator's annual Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards. TN earned the accolade in the magazine category, in which it competed against magazines from all over the world. The NAGC's annual awards program "recognizes superior government communication products and those who produce them."

5 Employees can recommend ways to control costs at TxDOT with the Cost Efficiency Suggestions Program via the link on Crossroads. TxDOT is interested in hearing ideas that extend to all the different operations in the department. The most promising submissions will be included in a quarterly survey posted on TxDOT's website for the public to review and vote on. 

NERVES OF STEEL

Inspecting Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge

The Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge is a striking addition to the Dallas skyline but someone has to scale its heights to make sure all is well. Crews were doing just that this past May when a local news helicopter saw them and posted a video that went viral.



TxDOT photo


Since its completion in 2012, the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge in Dallas has been catching people's attention. In May, a helicopter for a local television station spotted a team of bridge inspectors on top of the arch, 440 feet above the Trinity River. Reporters posted a video to the news website, which attracted more curiosity and interest.

TxDOT contractor HDR Engineering was performing a fracture-critical inspection on May 18, with five crews: one rope-access team for the exterior, two teams for the interior and two teams on trucks. All teams completed their work by May 20.

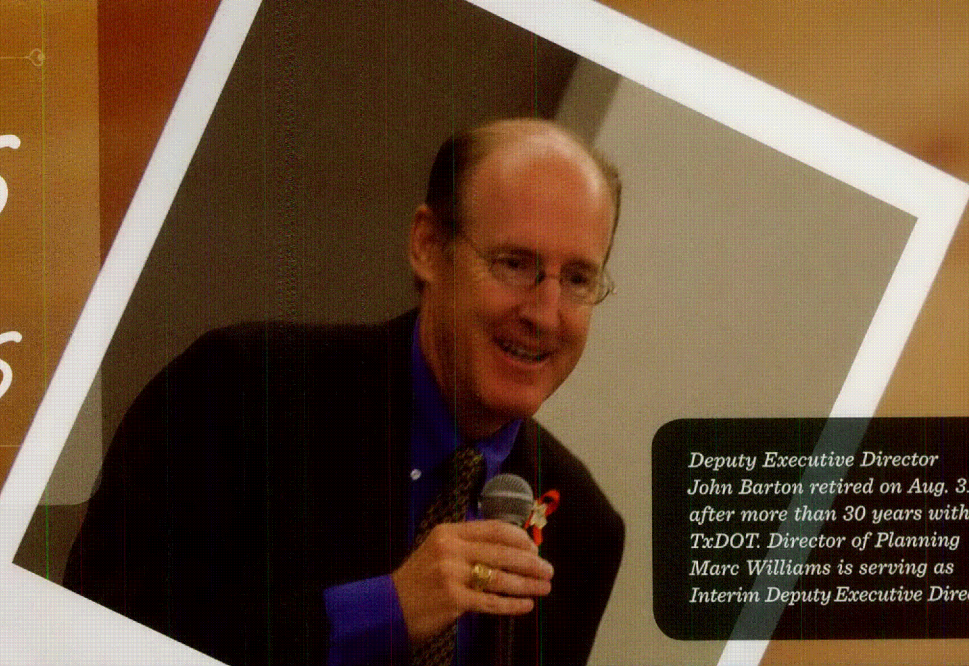
To get to the top of the bridge, the inspectors climbed up a series of ladders and platforms inside the bridge arch, hauling heavy equipment, and exited through a hatch at the top.

The fracture-critical inspection is performed on a 24-month cycle, and a routine bridge inspection is also performed on a 24-month cycle. The fracture-critical inspection is a hands-on check-up, meaning that the inspectors must be within arm's reach of the steel elements, which is why the rope access was required for the pylon.

The documentation of the inspection is not yet complete, but the bridge is expected to be in good condition.

The Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, designed by internationally renowned architect and engineer Santiago Calatrava, connects Woodall Rodgers Freeway to Singleton Boulevard in West Dallas. 

Thanks for the Memories



Deputy Executive Director John Barton retired on Aug. 31, after more than 30 years with TxDOT. Director of Planning Marc Williams is serving as Interim Deputy Executive Director.

TxDOT photo

It was the summer of 1980, and the employees of the Wichita Falls District were doing what they normally do when temperatures are high and clouds are sparse: working outside in the Texas sun. So it was when a wiry kid from Archer City landed his first job at the district. The crew's assignment was to clean out a bar ditch — or “borrow ditch” as it's called in engineering circles — along a stretch of SH 16 near Archer City. While most of the experienced men were doing the highway work, the newbie was left alone on flagger duty a mile or so from the action, with only his orange flag and a five-gallon cooler of ice water.

“Back then, I didn't even get a hard hat or a safety vest. For seven hours, I stood around baking in the sun, wondering what I had signed up for,” said John Barton, who retired as TxDOT's deputy executive director this past August.

That was 35 years and a lifetime of memories ago. Little did that sun-soaked teen know that he'd spend a lot more time with other road crews, and that those days would prepare him to be an engineering assistant, area engineer and director of transportation planning and development in Wichita Falls and district engineer in the Beaumont District. And what may have been more implausible in 1980, that he would rise to the rank of second-in-command at one of the state's largest agencies.

In those three decades, Barton has seen this department change and grow.

“Years ago we were less concerned about what the public wanted and made

decisions based mostly on engineering. Now we are committed to working with these partners to find win-win solutions,” he said.

Projects have become more innovative and complicated. Enormous toll roads and five-level interchanges the height of which rival skyscrapers dot the state's landscape, but more than anything, Barton said, we've made massive improvements in protecting the most important thing, our employees.

“My TxDOT family has given a simple and ordinary man the chances to be involved with extraordinary people and things.” —John Barton

Known as the department's safety champion, Barton has advocated for programs like Safety: Mission Zero that helped TxDOT achieve its best safety records in the department's history.

For Barton, keeping employees safe isn't just mission critical, it's a crusade, born out of a tragic incident on July 14, 2005 when Jeff McNeil, an employee in the Beaumont District, was struck and killed by a vehicle while working on a project.

“I will never forget when I learned that Jeff had died. It's a memory that I carry to remind me that we must never let our guard down when it comes to protecting our employees, our family,” he said.

And it is the sense of family that Barton says he will remember most about his time


with TxDOT.

“My TxDOT family has given a simple and ordinary man the chances to be involved with extraordinary people and things.

“They've allowed me the opportunity to go all over this country on their behalf and experience tremendous people and projects. I've been with them in the heat on roadways as we improve Texas. I've celebrated with them at ribbon cuttings and groundbreaking. I've mourned with them when we've suffered a loss. I will forever be indebted to the people I've served with.

“When my mentor and friend, Leiland Jett, who was the area engineer in Bowie, retired from the department, we were reminiscing about all the things he'd accomplished and the lives he'd touched, and he told me that the lights in the building wouldn't even flicker when he was gone. The agency would still go on.

“And now that it's my time to walk out that door, I know what he means. Projects will continue to be built; roads will be maintained; and communities will be served. And that's just the way it should be because for the people at this agency, their best and brightest days are ahead of them. I've just been blessed to share some of my best days with them,” Barton said.

For the TxDOT family who Barton will leave behind, the lights across the department will certainly flicker, the hallways in the Greer Building will be decidedly lonelier but we will all be better for the memories he's left with us. 

AROUND THE STATE

From the Panhandle to the Valley and all points in between, TN brings you transportation highlights happening throughout our great state.

The Troy Taylor Terminal was named for a local Eastland pilot and should attract more aviation activity to the area.

TxDOT photo




Eastland Airport Terminal Opens

The Eastland Municipal Airport Troy Taylor Terminal opened to the public in May through the combined efforts of private donors, the city of Eastland, Eastland Economic Development, Inc. and TxDOT's Aviation Division.

The new building has 4,700 square feet of indoor space, including a conference room, office space, a private lounge area and flight planning facilities for pilots. The terminal also offers 4,300 square feet of outdoor space with covered parking and two patios.

"The old terminal was a temporary building from the early 1980s. The new building supports our needs and represents our town so much better. A wide variety of aircraft already use our airport and the new facilities will attract more aviation activity to the area," said Bode Zietz, manager for the airport.

The opening celebration featured Eastland Mayor Larry Vernon, community leaders and the Eastland High School Jazz Band.

"We received a warm reception by what appeared to be everybody in Eastland. With that kind of support, this airport will play a major role in air transportation and economic development for the area," said David Fulton, aviation division director. 

TxDOT photo




The Eastland Municipal Airport Troy Taylor Terminal had its grand opening in May. From left to right: Michelle Hannah, aviation planner; Stephanie Klieber, aviation project manager; Dianne Williams, regional director for U.S. Rep. Michael Conway; David Fulton, aviation division director; Sara LeMoine Knox, district coordinator for State Rep. Jim Keffer and Kari Campbell, aviation grants section director.



Traffic and History Intersect at Spur 166 in El Paso

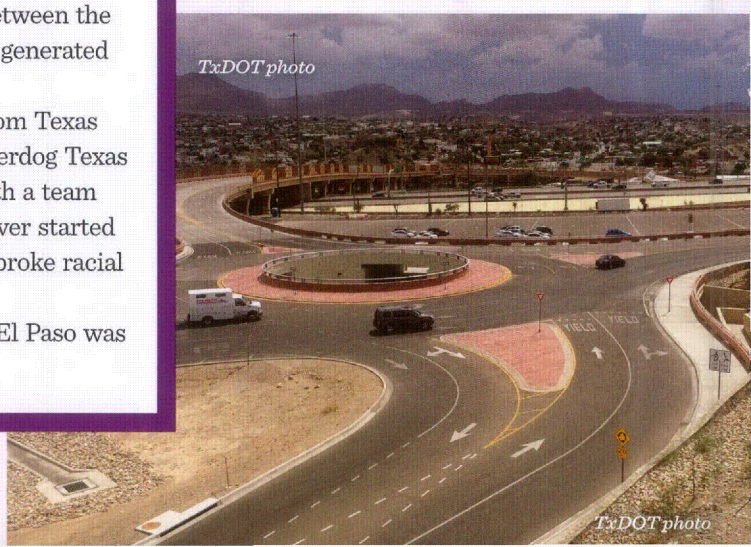
Spur 166, a \$31 million project begun in 2013, opened to the public in El Paso in June. It connects Schuster Avenue on the University of Texas at El Paso campus with Paisano Drive over I-10. The new bridge improves traffic flow between the campus and surrounding area. It also eliminates the need for campus-generated traffic to cut through adjacent neighborhoods, making the area safer.

Spur 166 gets its name from the championship basketball team from Texas Western College, now the University of Texas at El Paso. In 1966, underdog Texas Western won the NCAA Men's National Basketball Championship with a team of five African-American starting players. At that time, no team had ever started only black players at the national championship. Coach Don Haskins broke racial barriers with this decision and made history.

The story of the unlikely championship by an unknown team from El Paso was the basis of the 2006 movie "Glory Road." 

The Spur 166 project improves traffic flow and creates an additional route to downtown El Paso.

TxDOT photo




Transportation Engineer Supervisor Dan Perge (center) accepts the Federal Highway Administration's 2015 Environmental Excellence Award at the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' Conference in July. The award recognized Klyde Warren Park in Dallas for excellence in context-sensitive solutions. Also pictured are (left) Gerry Solomon and Gary Jensen with the Federal Highway Administration.

Klyde Warren Park wins national environmental award

The Federal Highway Administration selected the Klyde Warren Park at the Woodall Rogers Freeway in Dallas for its 2015 Environmental Excellence Award. The 5-acre park — a TxDOT project done in partnership with the city of Dallas and the Woodall Rogers Park Foundation — is built over a freeway and connects north Dallas to the Arts District and downtown.

Selected by an independent panel, the Environmental Excellence Awards recognize innovative efforts to preserve the environment while enhancing America's highways. Klyde Warren Park was recognized for excellence in context-sensitive solutions.


The park includes a performance pavilion, walking trails, a dog park, a children's discovery garden and playground. It also features efficient drip and spray irrigation, lighting and mechanical equipment.

"The Klyde Warren Park project stands as a shining example of how to develop an innovative highway project that enhances its surroundings. We are constantly looking for opportunities to improve mobility and bring together the surrounding community. We're proud to have been a part of this project," said Dallas District Engineer Kelly Selman. 

Toll Road to Port of Brownsville Opens

In June, a new section of SH 550 opened for traffic in the Pharr District. SH 550 is a limited-access toll road around the northern and eastern edges of Brownsville.

Its development provides a faster route for truck traffic to the Port of Brownsville. The toll road connects I-69E and U.S. 77/U.S. 83. Residents can take advantage of an easier, faster and safer route to points of interest such as Port Isabel and South Padre Island.

All tolls installed on SH 550 are electronically collected. Revenue collected by the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority will be used for future transportation projects in the county. 



SH 550 opened for traffic near Brownsville in June. The toll road provides a faster route for truck traffic to the Port of Brownsville. Photo courtesy of the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority.

KEEPING HACKERS OUT

Employees are the best line of defense



Spam filters and firewalls are not enough to avoid security threats as hackers target individuals to gain access to information.

One day, a TxDOT employee downloaded a fast-food menu from a website at home to a thumb drive. Sometime later, the employee plugged the thumb drive into his TxDOT computer and opened the menu, not knowing it was embedded with malware known as Silly Worm. With that single click, the malware was unleashed and immediately began attempting to infiltrate the TxDOT network...

At TxDOT, employees are our greatest defense against hackers — and potentially our greatest weakness. We all care about safeguarding our personal data — social security numbers, passwords, bank accounts, credit card numbers and the like — and we care just as deeply about protecting TxDOT's IT environment. In recent years, hackers have discovered it's often easier to get this sensitive information directly from an individual rather than breaking through a firewall. This tactic is known as "social engineering," and employees need to be aware of this troubling trend.

One of the most popular tactics of social engineering is "phishing," which occurs when someone, via telephone or email, poses as a trustworthy source to collect business or personal information. For large organizations like TxDOT, that means hackers are increasingly trying to glean information from employees to gain access to the TxDOT network. Hackers often call multiple TxDOT phone numbers or send multiple email messages in hopes of reaching an unsuspecting employee.

In July, IT launched the You are a Target Security Awareness Campaign — an ongoing effort to increase awareness of these types of security threats and reduce the risk that an employee will open a malicious attachment, click on a link, download an application, or take some other action that can harm our IT environment.

As part of this campaign, all employees are required to complete the IT Security training by Friday, Sept. 18. The training will be required on a yearly basis. To access the training, go to the Employee Learning Management portal on Crossroads and enter the keyword "EL8474."

IT has worked diligently to implement a multi-layered security strategy to help protect both you and our IT environment. This includes the latest advanced protection software such as ad blockers, website blockers, and anti-spam and malware software. The most important strategy, however, is you. Here are some key tips about "phishing" you need to remember.

How do I recognize telephone phishing attempts?

Telephone phishing attempts are on the rise everywhere. How can you tell if a caller is a hacker? **Common phrases used in telephone scams include:**

- "Hi, (says your name), I'm Bob from the Microsoft/Apple/Dell/TxDOT Help Desk."

- "We're providing additional file/email storage for all employees, and I want to help you set yours up. Can I please have your computer number and log in?"
- "We're providing additional file/email storage for you. Please enter (website address) into your browser and we'll get started."
- "To pay for this, please go to (website address) and provide your credit card information."

What should I do if I get this type of call?

- Hang up immediately and contact the IT Service Desk at 512-302-HELP (4357) to report the incident.
- Be sure to include the following information:
 - o The caller's number from your caller ID log (NOTE: ask for the caller's number if it is not visible).
 - o Caller's gender, name of caller's organization, and time of call.


Email phishing

In June alone, IT's security protection software stopped more than **2.4 million emails** identified as malware or spam from entering the TxDOT system. Even so, some malicious emails occasionally make it past these filters because hackers are constantly changing their email characteristics to evade our protection software.

What should I do if I get this type of email?

- Always check the sender and subject of every email before you open it.
- If you suspect the email could be from a hacker, **do not open it.** Instead, delete it immediately.

TxDOT has numerous IT security defense mechanisms in place, but your diligence is especially critical to protect the department's data and prevent operational interruptions. If you have specific questions or want more information on avoiding phishing scams, please contact the IT Service Desk.

The Silly Worm malware began jumping from device to device, attempting to create a phantom network of TxDOT computers that could be controlled remotely by a hacker. Fortunately, our advanced malware prevention software systems helped keep other employees' computers secure. Within a short time, the IT security team received notification of the incident. Once the root source was identified, IT began working with the employee to remove the malware. Ultimately, the infected device had to be wiped and rebuilt in order to remove all traces of Silly Worm. 



TxDOT photo



TxDOT photo

Amarillo District Engineer Ronald Johnston and Dallas District Director of Project Delivery Lacey Rodgers were inducted into the Texas Tech Civil and Environmental Engineering Academy in April.

TEXAS TECH HONORS JOHNSTON AND RODGERS

Amarillo District Engineer Ronald Johnston and Dallas District Director of Project Delivery Lacey Rodgers were inducted into the Texas Tech Civil and Environmental Engineering Academy on April 25.

The academy celebrates the achievements of graduates from the Department of Civil, Environmental and Construction Engineering to encourage alumni and students to strive for excellence, to recognize their outstanding achievements and to support and strengthen engineering educational programs at Texas Tech.

Johnston graduated from Texas Tech University in 1990 with a degree in civil engineering and became a licensed professional engineer in 1997. He joined TxDOT in 1990 in the Borger Area Engineer's Office. In 1994, he transferred to the Amarillo District Design Office, where he was named district pavement engineer in 1997 and district design engineer in 1998. He was appointed the Canyon Area Engineer in 2001. In 2007 he became the Collin County Area Engineer for the Dallas District. As the Dallas District Director of Operations, he

served as the co-chair of the Snow and Ice Committee for Super Bowl XLV. Johnston was named district engineer for Amarillo in 2012.

"I grew up on the South Plains and was the first one in my family to go to college and graduate. Texas Tech was really the only school I ever heard of people attending," said Johnston. "When I got to Texas Tech, one class had more people

Delivery Office, managing three separate teams in the district. She is a licensed professional engineer and volunteers at local schools to promote her profession.


"To be a member of the academy is an honor. I now have an opportunity to connect with my university and provide professional advice to the current student body and to the department to further

"To be a member of the academy is an honor."

Lacey Rodgers

than some of the schools I went to. It was overwhelming, and now to be recognized is something that I will cherish for the rest of my life."

Rodgers graduated from Texas Tech University in 2004 with a degree in civil engineering. She started with TxDOT as a summer intern and went to work for the agency in the Collin County Area after graduation. In 2011, Rodgers took charge of the newly created Hydrology and Hydraulics Design Section in the Dallas District. She is currently Director of the Project

its ability to provide superior academic and professional training to the civil engineers of our future," said Rodgers. 



TEXAS TECH
UNIVERSITY

PLANNING AND PROJECTS

Recognizes Contributions
to Safety



In April, several hundred Planning and Project Office employees gathered at the Reunion Ranch Events Center in Georgetown to celebrate their safety accomplishments during fiscal year 2014. Employees from the Planning and Project Office — including the Environmental Affairs, Maritime, Rail, Public Transportation, Strategic Projects and Transportation Planning and Programming divisions, along with the Project Management Office — had an opportunity to focus on the importance of safety.

Recognizing safety helps the Occupational Safety Division identify areas where employees are doing well and where improvement might be needed. On the job, safety is about working smart, watching out for co-workers, securing the work environment, bringing unsafe conditions or hazards to management's attention and making sure resources are available to get the job done right and safely.

Acknowledging employees for their contributions to safety shares a powerful message: someone cares enough to take that extra step to expand protection and security beyond themselves.

The following employees were recognized for their contributions to the goals of Safety: Mission Zero.

Safety Awards

- **Alan Grohman (TPP)** - 5 years no injury, 6 years safe operator
- **Mike Hofferek (TPP)** - 22 years no injury, 7 years safe operator

Certificates of Safety Excellence


Alvin Meyer (SPD) — Outside of his normal job, Meyer holds a commercial driver license and assisted the Fort Worth District with de-icing roadways.

Bill Reichert (PMO) — Reichert worked with contractors to create a safer work environment at a non-TxDOT facility to ensure that safety standards and best practices were consistent with department goals and policy.

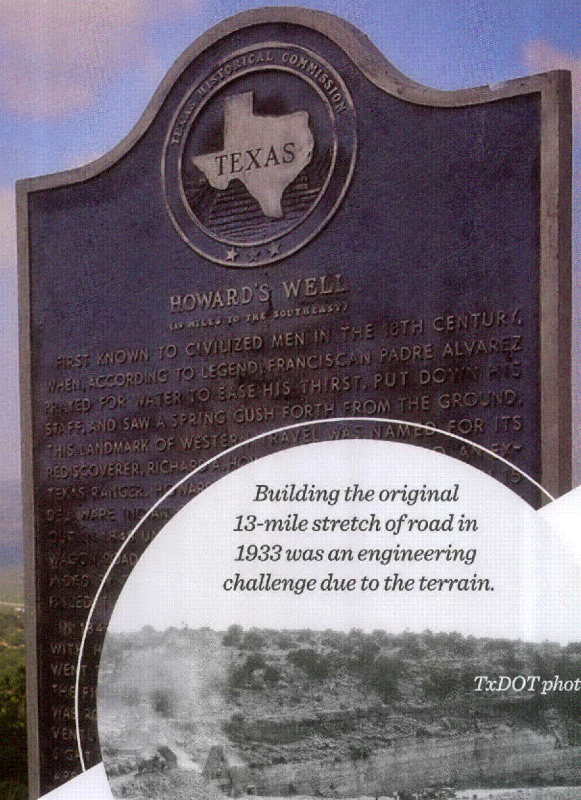
Carolyn Reyna (MRD) — Reyna was the safety point of contact for the Maritime and Rail divisions, in addition to her normal job duties.

Jody Wall (RRD) — Wall ensures daily safety briefings are held with railroad contractors and that all contractors comply with safety requirements on rail construction projects.

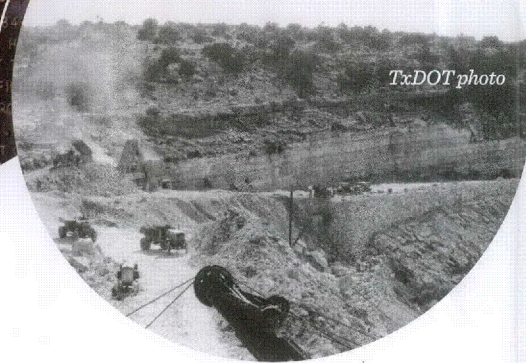
John Young (ENV) — Young assisted with the removal of a bat found in one of the buildings at TxDOT's Riverside Campus in Austin. Up to date on his rabies vaccinations, he safely caught the bat and conducted an impromptu training session for staff prior to removal.

Rebecca Black (PTN) — Black worked with other divisions and offices at Camp Hubbard, including contractor personnel, to schedule reoccurring safety meetings. These meetings addressed safety concerns and issues, provided for training and knowledge-sharing opportunities and improved communications between employees and contractors. 

A MARVEL OF THE 1930S RESTORED



Building the original 13-mile stretch of road in 1933 was an engineering challenge due to the terrain.



TxDOT photo

Badly damaged in 2014, Lancaster Hill road in the San Angelo District has been repaired and restored to its original 1930s appearance.

Sixty miles west of Ozona, in a remote area of Crockett County, the SH 290 scenic loop meanders off I-10, down a long slope — locally known as Lancaster Hill — into the valley below. It passes the long-abandoned ruins of the Fort Lancaster state historic site before curving back into the interstate. This lonesome 13-mile stretch of highway, first built in 1933, was part of a larger project to build the Old Spanish Trail. Building the original road down the hill was especially difficult due to the terrain and the stipulation that the contractor use local hand labor. It took almost two years to complete.

Through the years, several sections of the masonry railing on Lancaster Hill were repaired or replaced due to landslides and impact damage. But a torrential downpour in the spring of 2014 caused the most damage in its 80-year history.

Heavy rains washed away about 390 feet of the original retaining wall and caused the road surface to crack, pulling it away from the retaining wall in various places. Now, more than a year later, a unique \$1.1 million project has stabilized the hillside slope and returned the retaining wall to its historic appearance.


Damaged by a storm in 2014, Lancaster Hill road is now returned to its original appearance.

San Angelo District engineers worked with the Bridge Division and the Texas Historical Commission to design a method of stabilizing the retaining wall while keeping the original look of the 1930s. A project began in March to stabilize the wall with soil nails. Soil nailing is a construction technique used as a remedial measure to treat unstable natural soil slopes. Patterned in a

five-foot repeating grid, the nails are designed to hold the rock embankment in place.

Next, a shotcrete sculptor pre-stained and finished the rock face to match the original detail work. Shotcrete is concrete (or sometimes mortar) conveyed through a hose and pneumatically projected at high velocity onto a surface. Only a handful of individuals can do this type of work. TxDOT hired Bob Hill, a shotcrete sculptor from California.

Using hand tools while perched in the bucket of a crane, Hill traversed the 28-foot rock face. In three days he finished the shotcrete sculpting. Knowing the pride of Texans, he even sculpted one of the rocks in the shape of the state of Texas.

Thanks to hard work and the use of innovative construction techniques, the Lancaster Hill road is now restored to its original beauty. 

REGENCY BRIDGE

Reopens After Repairs

TxDOT photo

Regency Bridge on the Colorado River between San Saba and Goldthwaite is open again after closing for repairs last fall. It is the only suspension bridge still open to traffic in Texas.

A quick trip off the beaten path is all it takes to get to one of the most interesting bridges in Texas. Regency Bridge straddles the Colorado River between San Saba and Goldthwaite in the Brownwood District. It is the last suspension bridge still open to traffic in the Lone Star State.


Regency Bridge closed last year for maintenance work that included a new deck and stringers and a fresh coat of paint. It opened again this spring and draws tourists from all over the world.

Crossing this one-lane, wood-deck bridge can be a little harrowing to the unsuspecting driver. Cables suspend the bridge about 75 feet above the river and you can actually feel the bridge deck sway and rock beneath you.

The bridge as it is now has stood since 1939. It was the last one of its kind to be built in Texas.

"Preservation of Regency Bridge is not only important to TxDOT but also to the families and communities in the area whose history is tied to the bridge. It helps connect us to our past," said Carl Johnson, director of operations for the Brownwood District.

Throughout the years, crews have worked hard to preserve this Texas treasure. In 1997 the bridge was completely redesigned and reconstructed. The renovation included an upgrade to the suspension system and repairs to the structure.

The rededication ceremony in 1999 was attended by thousands, including then-Gov. George W. Bush. 

FINANCIAL FUTURES FOR STATE EMPLOYEES

Though the big headlines focused on other issues, the 84th Legislative Session that concluded in June took important steps to ensure retirement funds for state employees and retirees are secure for years to come.

This session legislators passed House Bill 9, which increases employee and state contributions to the Employees Retirement System. They also passed House Bill 1, which includes a salary increase for state employees to offset the contribution increase.

The changes went into effect on Sept. 1, and will be reflected on October paychecks.

The increased contributions are intended to preserve the state pension fund for many decades. HB 9 has been


years in the making for the state.

As every state employee knows, a defined benefit pension is a great attraction to state employment and an excellent retention tool. However, for many years, the state retirement fund has not been actuarially sound. In other words, the account did not have enough money to cover the liabilities already accrued (for retirees) or the liabilities currently accruing (for employees). With increased contributions from the state and employees — and continued contributions from state agencies — the pension fund is now actuarially sound.

For retirees, this change opens the door for a future cost-of-living adjustment, which hasn't occurred since 2001.

Highlights of HB 9

- Increased employee contributions from 6.9 percent to 9.5 percent (HB 1 included a 2.5-percent salary increase to offset the contribution increase).
- Increased the state contribution from 7.5 percent to 9.5 percent
- State agencies continue to contribute 0.5 percent of base payroll

While state employees will not see a cost-of-living increase this biennium, we can take comfort in knowing the increased contribution to our future financial security is a worthwhile investment. 

MURALS OF WEST: RICH IN HERITAGE

TxDOT photo



One of the murals depicting polka-band musicians in West. Music and dancing are strong forms of artistic expression in the local culture.

I-35 motorists who take the exit at West are now greeted with two murals depicting the area's Czech heritage. The images of dancers and polka-band musicians adorning the retaining walls of the highway overpass at FM 2114 are eye-catching and memorable. But they have a deeper meaning for some residents who endured a deadly fertilizer plant explosion in 2013 that rocked their small community. For them, the murals symbolize deeply personal and heartwarming stories of dedication, heartache and perseverance.

"The city has been through a lot in the last few years," said West Mayor Tommy Muska, who took part in a ribbon-cutting ceremony in June celebrating the opening of the I-35 main lanes at the FM 2114 intersection.


The completed murals on the west side retaining wall were a backdrop for the event. The other mural on the east side will be completed soon. "This location is West's front door. And with the murals, it's a proud representation of our heritage," Muska says.

During the planning stage, the late West City Secretary Joey Pustejovsky played a vital role in coordinating the project. Pustejovsky, 29, was also a volunteer firefighter and was one of the 15 people killed in the plant explosion.

"Joey did a lot for this community, so it's heartwarming to pass by the murals every day and know my son played a role in that," said Joe Pustejovsky, Joey's father. The Pustejovsky family settled near West in the early 1900s.

"I grew up going to the dances and listening to the music, so the murals mean a lot to me for those reasons, too," said the elder Pustejovsky.

In all, more than 30 West residents participated in designing the murals. They have already become a favorite location for photographs.

"The people of West have been extremely patient. Now, things are coming together," said Muska. "A lot of progress has been made in repairing and rebuilding the city. This is an appropriate time for the mural project to be completed." 

Be Safe. Drive Smart. Big Message.



TxDOT photo

Giant-sized traffic signs highlighted several safe-driving tips from the Be Safe. Drive Smart campaign at a press event in Corpus Christi this summer.

During the summer, at press events in Corpus Christi, Odessa and Laredo, TxDOT used larger-than-life traffic signs to draw greater attention to safe driving practices. The safety message was especially important because oil and gas production has created higher traffic volumes and rising crash rates in those areas.


"The oil and gas industries have provided a tremendous boost to the state's economy, but the resulting increase in traffic and heavy vehicles makes it especially important for drivers to be alert," said Texas Transportation Commissioner J. Bruce Bugg Jr.

The Be Safe. Drive Smart campaign urges drivers to reduce the risk of crashing by following these safety tips:

- Always buckle up.
- Pay attention by putting cellphones away and avoiding talking or texting while driving.
- Give trucks space.
- Obey speed limits.
- Stop for all stop signs and red lights.
- Pass carefully.

In 2014, when the campaign began, 3,660 traffic crashes in the 26-county Eagle Ford Shale region resulted in 270 fatalities, a 13-percent increase over 2013. As of this past June, there had been 1,311 crashes and 95 fatalities.

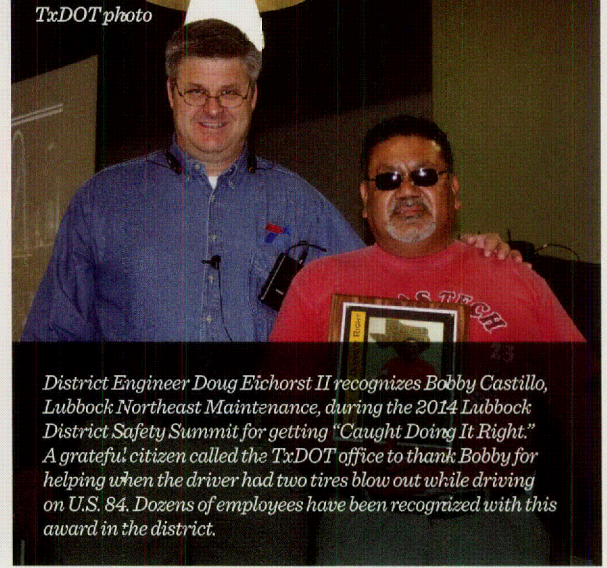
In the Permian Basin region in 2014, 5,038 traffic crashes in the 59-county area resulted in 429 fatalities, a 17-percent increase over 2013. As of June 2015, the Permian Basin saw 1,953 traffic crashes and 175 fatalities.

The leading cause of crashes in both regions is failure to control speed. 



TxDOT photo

SE Lubbock Maintenance employees and Caught 'Em Doing It Right award recipients (from left) Billy McClellan, Orfila Banda, Manuel DeLaCruz and Rusty Smith.



TxDOT photo
District Engineer Doug Eichorst II recognizes Bobby Castillo, Lubbock Northeast Maintenance, during the 2014 Lubbock District Safety Summit for getting "Caught Doing It Right." A grateful citizen called the TxDOT office to thank Bobby for helping when the driver had two tires blow out while driving on U.S. 84. Dozens of employees have been recognized with this award in the district.

“CAUGHT ‘EM DOING IT RIGHT”

LUBBOCK RECOGNIZES EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS

TxDOT employees often go beyond their typical job duties to maintain Texas’ road system and ensure the safety of the traveling public. They do it without hesitation and no expectation of recognition; most employees consider it part of the job, but their efforts leave a lasting impression.

“Since the inception of Safety: Mission Zero, the Lubbock District has recognized dozens of employees for deeds done outside their job duties that have promoted safety within the department, ensuring both the safety

of their co-workers and that of the traveling public,” said Lubbock District Engineer Doug Eichorst II. “We call the award Caught ‘Em Doing It Right.”

“Our reactions and responses to situations that happen in the blink of an eye are what define us as individuals, as a district, as a department.”

Doug Eichorst II

The range of the award recipients’ actions is varied, from helping a co-worker who is suffering from heat exhaustion, to changing a tire for an elderly citizen on the district’s busiest roadway, to driving through winter

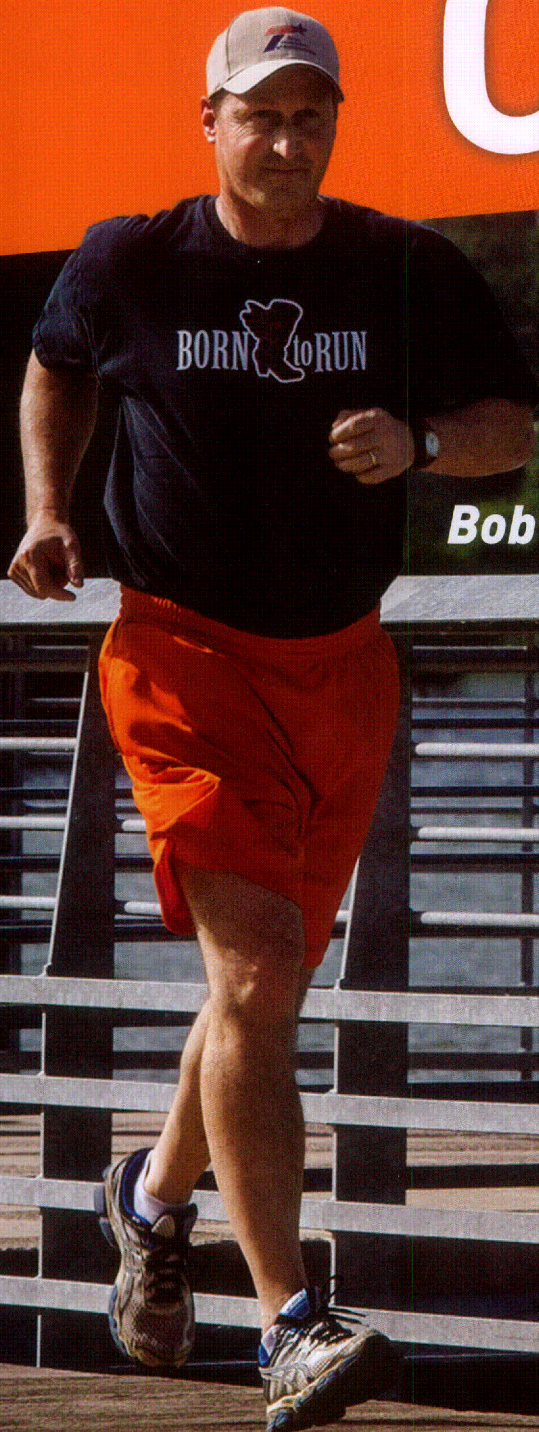
storm conditions to ensure maintenance sections have enough de-icing materials to battle icy road conditions. In the end, though, they promote and affirm the district’s

safety mission. “Our reactions and responses to situations that happen in the blink of an eye are what define us as individuals, as a district, as a department,” Eichorst said. “TxDOT employees respond to the

unexpected on a daily basis without ever giving it a second thought — simply because it’s their job. It’s important that we take the time to acknowledge and thank our co-workers for their commitment.”

Recognized with their own unique poster that is displayed at the district headquarters and details their efforts, the recipients of the “Caught ‘Em Doing It Right” award receive a plaque and a letter from the district engineer, along with his heartfelt thanks for their hard work and service to the citizens of Texas. **TN**

COURAGE AGAINST CANCER



Bob Kaufman

TxDOT photo

BOB KAUFMAN, TxDOT CHIEF**COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING****OFFICER. MARTY SMITH, CHILDRESS****DISTRICT ENGINEER.****TWO MEN, ONE ENEMY: CANCER.**

At first glance, the two men don't seem to have a lot in common. Kaufman comes from a background of hard-hitting news gathering in Washington, D.C., and high-profile communications for one of the world's largest computer companies. He works at TxDOT's headquarters in Austin. Smith comes from a background of practical engineering and grew up in the small town of Childress. He has worked for TxDOT for 28 years in the rural Childress District.

But they found they did have some things in common – non-Hodgkin lymphoma and courage in the face of very personal and private battles against the disease.

Non-Hodgkin lymphoma – or NHL, as it's often called – is cancer that begins in the lymph system in white blood cells. When these cells become abnormal, the body is left essentially defenseless against infection or disease.

It can start almost anywhere in the body: a single lymph node, a group of lymph nodes or an organ such as the spleen, as in Kaufman's case, or the stomach as it was with Smith. It can spread to almost any part of the body, including the liver and bone marrow.

Kaufman was diagnosed with Stage IV NHL in January 2009. At just 48 years old, he was facing the battle of his life.

He began six months of intensive chemotherapy in Austin and was proclaimed clear of the disease in June 2009. Kaufman's worst fears were realized, however, later that same year when he was again diagnosed with NHL. This time, he chose the most "impactful" option available.

In July 2010 he took a leave of absence from his job at Dell to commit himself fully to the battle. Surrounded by and with encouragement from his family and in-laws, Kaufman checked himself into M.D. Anderson in Houston. For 100 days, he attacked the disease with everything he had, and on July 14, 2010 – which Kaufman affectionately calls his "second birthday" – he received a stem cell transplant from a 22-year-old male donor.

Kaufman later met that man in California in 2012. He described the meeting as very moving and emotional, and it provided him with the opportunity to express his gratitude to the stranger who saved his life.

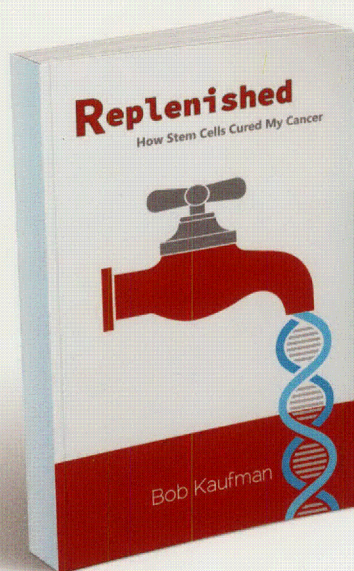
July of this year marked Kaufman's fifth anniversary of living cancer-free. To celebrate the milestone, but more importantly to give back to those who gave so much to him, he authored and published the book "Replenished – How Stem Cells Cured My Cancer." Upon its release in July, the book was

No. 1 on Amazon's Hot New Releases list in Motivational Growth & Spirituality.

In putting pen to paper, Kaufman described his experiences to help others endure the battle against cancer. His hope, he says, is that the book will help alleviate the fear of the unknown and ease the apprehension and anxiety that can overwhelm someone in such a vulnerable condition. He wanted to empower other patients with the knowledge of what to expect in their fight against cancer. He also wanted to encourage other patients to explore all options, and let them know that there is always hope.

"During my fight, I learned that there is no replacement for hard work and a good attitude means everything. If I can help one patient, it will be worth the time and effort," said Kaufman.

His intentions are for the book to be placed in resource centers at M.D. Anderson, including the hospital's library, select waiting rooms and anywhere else the book can serve as a source of comfort, hope and encouragement.



Kaufman has written a book, "Replenished – How Stem Cells Cured My Cancer," to give back to those who supported him during his cancer treatment. The book is available on Amazon.com.

As a result of his experience, Kaufman gained perspective and a greater appreciation of what is most important in life – family, friends and colleagues. "Life is short; make the most of it and live a grateful life."

By 2013, Kaufman had been working for TxDOT for a year at the Austin Headquarters, not knowing that some 370 miles away a colleague would soon be facing a similar battle. In October of that year, Marty Smith was attending the TxDOT Maintenance Conference when he started having stomach pains. After visiting the doctor, he was prescribed Nexium, but it wasn't helping the pain. Even at a double dose, he was still having trouble. The doctor suspected it was his gall bladder.

Continued on page 18

Marty Smith

After treatment for cancer, Smith was able to enjoy golfing again. Smith says the Childress community surrounded him with love and support and former Deputy Executive Director John Barton texted him every day.

Continued from page 17

IN JANUARY 2014, SMITH HAD HIS FIRST COMPUTERIZED TOMOGRAPHY SCAN OR CT SCAN.

The bad news was that the doctors found a dark spot on his stomach. After having a biopsy, Smith was diagnosed with Stage IV, aggressive, NHL. He received the lymphoma diagnosis on February 10, 2014. He was 53 years old and like Kaufman, was battling for his life.



Like Kaufman, Childress District Engineer Marty Smith was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma. He underwent chemotherapy in 2014.

Smith first saw an oncologist at the Don and Sybil Harrington Cancer Center in Amarillo. He took a class on chemotherapy and began reading about what to expect from the treatments. On Feb. 27, 2014, Smith received his first chemotherapy treatment. The treatments continued every three weeks for a total of six sessions.

Smith had his last chemotherapy treatment on June 13, 2014. That July 20, he had his first positron emission tomography scan, or PET scan. It indicated he was cancer-free. At his three-month checkup, another PET scan again showed no

signs of the cancer. At that time, he was told he could pick up his favorite hobby again, golf.


The Childress community surrounded him with love and support during his illness. He received get-well cards daily and was included on many prayer lists. Smith said that these acts of kindness and caring “build up your strength.” Smith did not require any additional medications or radiation.

When asked if someone stood out as being particularly supportive, Smith said, “Mr. (John) Barton. He sent me a prayer text every day. He didn’t miss a single day from February 10 through the middle

of July.” Barton recently retired as TxDOT’s deputy executive director.

When asked what he learned from this experience, Smith said, “Keep your head up. Keep a positive attitude and realize you’re not through living yet!”

Two men who seemingly had little in common now have a special bond and a common trait – courage in the face of cancer and ultimate victory over it.

Kaufman again enjoys an active life, exercising with his wife, Lisa. As recommended by his doctors, Smith is playing golf again and feeling great. 



Transportation Engineer Supervisor Andy Keith (holding award) accepts the 2014 Texas Rain Catcher Award from Texas Water Development Board members (from left) Carlos Rubenstein, Kathleen Jackson and Bech Bruun.

MAINTENANCE DIVISION

receives Texas Rain Catcher Award

In May, the Texas Water Development Board honored the Maintenance Division with its annual Texas Rain Catcher Award, a rainwater-harvesting competition and recognition program. Winning entries are featured on the Texas Water Development Board's website.

The division was honored for rainwater-harvesting systems at the pair of Hill County safety rest areas on I-35, south of Hillsboro. The systems promote rainwater harvesting and provide conservation education to motorists every day.

"At TxDOT, we're building interesting safety rest areas that reflect their communities and attract drivers," said Andy Keith, transportation engineer supervisor. "Texas has more fatigue-related crashes than any other state because of our long distances. Making our rest areas unique encourages drivers to take a break and relax for a while."


The Hill County safety rest areas feature an agricultural theme suited to the farming

community there. Irrigation, water and conservation are prominent concerns.

"A rainwater-collection system was a natural fit for these rest areas. We have them at other facilities but here we made it more eye-catching," said Keith.

At the safety rest areas, a visible system of gutters, downspouts, a funnel and an aqueduct collects rainwater that irrigates landscaped areas around the buildings. Collecting rainwater will reduce water usage, save money and conserve natural resources at the facility.

More than 50,000 vehicles pass the rest areas each day and they are two of the busiest facilities in the state. The system includes a display explaining its features to promote water conservation education.

"It was an honor to accept this award for TxDOT. We enjoy what we do and it's gratifying to be acknowledged for our work, especially by another state agency," said Keith. 

At TxDOT, we're building interesting safety rest areas that reflect their communities and attract drivers.

EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING



When emergencies happen in Texas — from hurricanes to ice storms to major incidents — Texas Department of Transportation crews are on the scene.

“We respond to just about anything and everything. We are often the lead agency when it comes to emergency response,” said Emergency Management Coordinator Gilbert Jordan with the Maintenance Division.

TxDOT staffers plan for all types of emergencies and coordinate their efforts with other state agencies and local governments.

“It’s a challenging job and we coordinate with all the districts when an event is coming. It’s all very orchestrated but the public doesn’t really see all that,” said Director of Transportation Planning and Programming James Koch, who worked for the Houston District for 22 years and experienced several hurricanes and storms.

Preparing for success

Some events can be anticipated and the agency always works to improve its response. For instance, preparations for hurricane season take place year-round.

“We have an annual hurricane workshop with all coastal districts and supporting districts. We go over our response plans and make sure our contracts for services like meals and showers are in place,” said Jordan.

The workshop also includes representatives from local governments so they understand the agency’s process during a hurricane.

“In most emergencies, TxDOT is typically there, whether as the lead or as a support agency. It’s a challenge to

keep everyone we work with in cities and counties up to speed because of frequent turnover. We’re talking about the same thing every year but it’s new to many people,” said Jordan.

The agency is always looking for new ideas as well. For example, a new program from the U.S. Department of Transportation provides assistance to storm-ravaged areas. Under the program, a ship loaded with personnel and equipment is moored in the area to ride out the storm. Personnel on board can respond as soon as the storm passes and provide accurate information about the extent of the damage right away.

Another recent development is the Transcube system of portable emergency fuel tanks. During an evacuation, traffic snarls often cause drivers to run out of gas on the road. TxDOT now has 30 portable fuel tanks that field teams can use to provide fuel to evacuees in need. These tanks fit on dump trucks and can be powered by a generator or hand crank, if necessary.

“Our workers are very selfless and work long hours during these events.”

—James Koch

“We’re also working to ensure that gas stations along evacuation routes have generators and well-stocked fuel tanks before a storm hits. We need those pumps working even if the power goes out,” said Jordan.

Providing relief

Early warning is probably the most important aspect of responding to weather emergencies. With advanced notice, personnel and equipment can be put in place before the storm hits.

“We cross-train personnel in all districts so they can provide support where it is needed. We’ll bring them in on a bus so they can immediately go to work and give the local staff some relief. We want to make sure our workers have the equipment and resources they need and that they can take care of their personal concerns. We’ve got plenty of people throughout the state more than ready to help,” said Jordan.


“Our workers are very selfless and work long hours during these events,” said Koch. “I have so much respect for them. They get out there to keep other people safe.”

Taking stock

The agency’s job doesn’t stop once the emergency passes. The aftermath of an event is also very important.

“The key for good emergency management is to have an after-action meeting when there is an event. We discuss what worked, what didn’t and what could be done better,” said Jordan.

Gathering materials, anticipating problems and looking for innovations all factor into responding to emergencies. But the key to successful response is the people working out in the field.

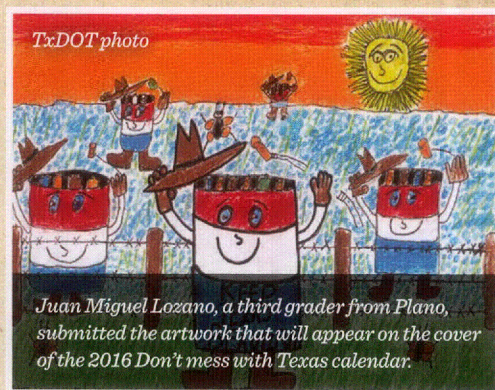
“All the women and men who are out there doing what they do best are the reason for our success,” said Jordan. “They make us look good and we can’t thank them enough.” 

Don't mess with Texas[®] ANNOUNCES WINNERS

Students across Texas participated in the Don't mess with Texas™ art and slogan contests in 2015. Don't mess with Texas and Keep Texas Beautiful, along with sponsor Forestar, also announced the winners of the 2015 Don't mess with Texas scholarships.

Don't mess with Texas Elementary School Art Contest

More than 8,000 elementary school students lent their artistic talent to the effort to keep Texas highways litter-free by entering the 2015 Don't mess with Texas Elementary School Art Contest. Kindergarten through fifth-grade students submitted their work, and TxDOT's grassroots partner, Keep Texas Beautiful, selected 13 entries to appear in the 2016 Don't mess with Texas calendar. Third grader Juan Miguel Lozano, homeschooled in Plano, did the artwork chosen for the calendar cover.



Other top entries:

Kindergarten

Pearce Choi, Las Colinas Elementary, Irving
Caroline Zhang, Lakeside Elementary, Coppell

First Grade

Santiago Lozano, homeschooled, Plano
Camille Symmank, Elkhart Elementary School, Elkhart

Second Grade

Yunsol Baek, La Villita Elementary, Irving
Aditi Vikram, Dallas Art Studio, Dallas

Third Grade

Bryan Garcia, Sneed Elementary, Houston
Anne Christiono, Cornerstone Elementary, Sugar Land

Fourth Grade

Audrey He, Mathews Elementary, Plano
Jessica Chai, Roosevelt Alexander Elementary, Katy

Fifth Grade

Vivian Wang, Cornerstone Elementary, Sugar Land
Annabelle Du, James E. Williams Elementary, Katy

Don't mess with Texas Middle School Can Slogan Contest

In the Don't mess with Texas Middle School Can Slogan Contest, students wrote their own slogan to be featured on a Don't mess with Texas trash can.

The winning entries are:

Wrangle In Your Trash, Cowboy!

Ella Weathers, Trinity Middle School, Trinity

I'm All About That Waste

Nathalie Quintanilla, Devers Middle School, Devers

Wildcats, I'm Open

Maddie Strickling, Whitney Middle School, Whitney

Give Your Trash A Home

Zackary Huntley, Nottingham Middle School, Whitney

Hey Good Looking, Got Any Trash?

Ivelissa Gonzalez, Buffalo Jr. High, Buffalo

#TrashMe

Lexi Rogers, Neches Elementary, Neches

Seriously? I'm Right Here

Kathleen Espinoza, Flores Middle School, Uvalde

Trashketball, Bet You'll Miss

Lone Oak Middle School 8th Grade Art II Class, Lone Oak

Keep Calm And Trash On

Brandon Ramirez, Flatonia ISD, Flatonia

Don't mess with Texas Scholarship Winners

Scholarship contest winners were selected based on student essays detailing their creative and sustainable solutions for litter prevention, anti-littering behavior and building awareness of the Don't mess with Texas message.


A record 1,456 applications were submitted.

Marisol Martinez of Collegiate High School in Corpus Christi is the winner of a \$6,000 scholarship. Marisol launched a drive to encourage her neighbors to keep their neighborhood clean, which led to the creation of a community garden.

Jaclyn Muniz of William J. Brennan High School in San Antonio won a \$2,000 scholarship. Jaclyn started a chapter of "Tidy up the Tides" at her school to clean up South Padre Island after learning that sea turtles often die by ingesting litter.

Charlotte Lichtenheld of McCallum High School in Austin also received a \$2,000 scholarship. Charlotte tackled a litter problem at Austin's Lamar Middle School by creating a sustainable recycling program and educating students and teachers about its benefits.

See the winning artwork and videos on the Don't mess with Texas website.

Don't mess with Texas is a registered trade and service mark owned by the Texas Department of Transportation. Any and all uses of the mark must be approved by TxDOT. 



Marisol Martinez of Collegiate High School in Corpus Christi is the winner of a \$6,000 scholarship.



Bill Mallini (center in blue stripes) and the staff at the Galveston-Bolivar Ferry Operations.

FERRY TALE: Bill Mallini Works His Way Up

TxDOT employee Bill Mallini started with the department as a ferry deck hand in 1987 when he was just 19 years old. Back then, all the trucks were yellow and the department was known as the Texas Highway Department.

Mallini did maintenance, cut grass, cleaned boats, worked as a ferry crew member and whatever else was asked of him. When Mallini had been with the ferry two years, another deckhand said he would be a “lifer.” It wasn’t meant as a compliment. But Mallini had other plans for his career with the department. He worked his way up to able-seaman and then to first class pilot. Within seven years, Mallini had worked all the way up to captain.

He earned a bachelors degree in accounting and an MBA under the TxDOT Tuition Assistance Program during the 1990s and into the 2000s.

“Bill was the perfect candidate for our program. He possessed the desire and commitment to better himself and TxDOT through his studies,” said Director of Human Resources David McMillan.

Mallini’s hard work and dedication to advancing his career through the education assistance program lead to his promotion to Galveston ferry manager in 2000. He has a unique perspective on managing the ferry, having seen the service from entry level to being in charge of the entire operation.

“TxDOT has been good to me,” said Mallini. “Many of the teamwork concepts I learned in the MBA program helped support and develop the ferry unit’s safety culture.”


That other deckhand who called Bill a “lifer” was right. But the joke’s on him, because Mallini says he’s had a good life at the ferry.

Now Mallini successfully handles the demand of operating one of the busiest ferry systems in the country. Between keeping passengers happy and safe and making sure ferry boats are running efficiently, Mallini’s job can be very demanding.

“He does an outstanding job as ferry manager and the education assistance program contributed significantly to the development of Bill’s skills and abilities,” said Houston District Engineer Quincy Allen.


Even under demanding conditions, Mallini ensures safety is never compromised. Staff and passenger safety is a top priority. The Safety: Mission Zero program recognized Mallini and the ferry crew members in 2014 for their commitment to safety. The crew went an entire year without injuries or accidents on the job.

Currently, Mallini supervises about 125 full-time employees and six ferry boats. He oversees a large group of marine engineering, administrative, deck, maintenance and supervisory personnel. His duties also include frequent contact with the public and various local, state and federal advisory and regulatory groups.

Ferry operations are rarely routine but Mallini and his staff have learned to handle it all. An overboard passenger, less-than-ideal weather conditions and severe mechanical issues can overburden the ferry operations. Add in the high-traffic times of spring break, holiday weekends and summer vacations, and the ferry system can be pushed to the limits. Still, through Mallini’s leadership and the hard work of his employees, the ferry operations always run efficiently. 

I am a... *Safety Officer*

Eddy Rentas



Eddy Rentas was born to Lourdes and Edwin Rentas in Ponce, Puerto Rico, in March 1983. His father worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, so he moved a lot growing up. He spent his youth in California and Puerto Rico, then moved north to Minnesota, before settling in Big Spring, Texas. He then went to work in Midland in oil field safety. Being bilingual was a definite asset in his job. Then, Joe Robledo, a retired TxDOT employee and friend of his father, recruited Rentas to be the Odessa District's safety officer in 2007. He's loved it ever since!



Tell us what the safety officer does and what kind of projects you work on?

As a safety officer in the Odessa District, I conduct monthly safety meetings at all of our locations. The bulk of my time is spent on the road visiting our staff at work zones. The Odessa District is large. We maintain 8,144 miles of road. Sanderson, which is one of our farthest maintenance sections, is two and a half hours south of Odessa, and Balmorhea in Reeves County is also two hours west of us. I have a lot of early mornings to get to these locations for their tailgate meetings. The beautiful sunrises are worth it.

Share an instance where your work made a significant impact on the traveling public?

This past winter was the worst one I have experienced in my seven years with the department. I can't say my work made a significant impact, but I can say our staff's did. I got to tag along for long hours and over several nights while our amazing maintenance crews cleared roads. I don't have enough space in this article to tell you about all the awesome work I saw firsthand. With so many people traveling during the holiday season, it's great to be a part of a group of so many who sacrifice time with their loved ones so Texas roads are as safe as possible. It was pretty cool to get plenty of thumbs-up from the traveling public as well.


What do you enjoy most about working for TxDOT?

Hands down, it's the people. I can truly say I've seen the TxDOT family come together, not only during my time of need, but for so many others as well. I've been fortunate to work alongside so many amazing people. As a safety officer, I have had the opportunity to sit in on meetings, conference calls and trainings with the department's top management. I have also had the amazing experience of working alongside our employees in 100-degree heat and riding shotgun in a snowplow going 10 mph at 4 a.m. It's a big operation. There are so many moving parts. But trust me when I say it is working.

Do you have any advice for being stuck in traffic?

The best advice is to avoid it. Stay off interstates at peak times, generally from 7 to 10 a.m. and 3 to 7 p.m. But if you find yourself in a traffic jam, do anything but stress yourself out over it! Stress will wear you down and make you sick, both mentally and physically. Avoid it at all costs.

What are some of the more challenging aspects of your job and how do you handle them?

Keeping our safety culture strong, day in and day out. It can be tough at times to continually keep the message fresh and appealing, but I love the challenge. It's also encouraging to know that I'm not alone in this fight. I am honored to work alongside this district's administration whose passion for safety is evident in words and actions. My hat goes off to each and every teammate who truly takes the message and applies it at work and with their family and friends. 

Q & A

Frankie Ruiz

*Littlefield Maintenance Supervisor
Lubbock District*

Frankie Ruiz has been with TxDOT for 14 years. He started as a maintenance technician in Morton in July 2001 and transferred to Levelland in 2006. He was promoted to assistant supervisor in Morton in 2008 and then promoted to supervisor in Littlefield in 2012. Frankie and his wife, Gracie, have three children: Gabie, 16; Mari, 13; and Javier, 6. They live in Levelland.

Frankie Ruiz

What does a maintenance supervisor in the Lubbock District do? I am responsible for the roadway maintenance in Lamb County. I oversee a maintenance operating budget for the purchase of roadway materials and goods for my facilities. I approve payroll and pay utilities. I also work with my area engineer and the district to manage contractors to perform various roadway maintenance operations yearly. I am responsible for the performance of my crew. I also meet with local officials and discuss any issues that they may have.

What's the most challenging part of being a maintenance supervisor? The most challenging part of being a supervisor is ensuring all my crew is safe. Drivers have many distractions behind the wheel and that is something we can't control.

If you had to be trapped in a TV show for a month, what show would you choose?

I would like to be the co-host on "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives." I enjoy eating at different places and trying different foods.

On your day off, what do you look forward to the most? I enjoy spending time with my beautiful wife, Gracie, and our wonderful children at church or at their sporting events.

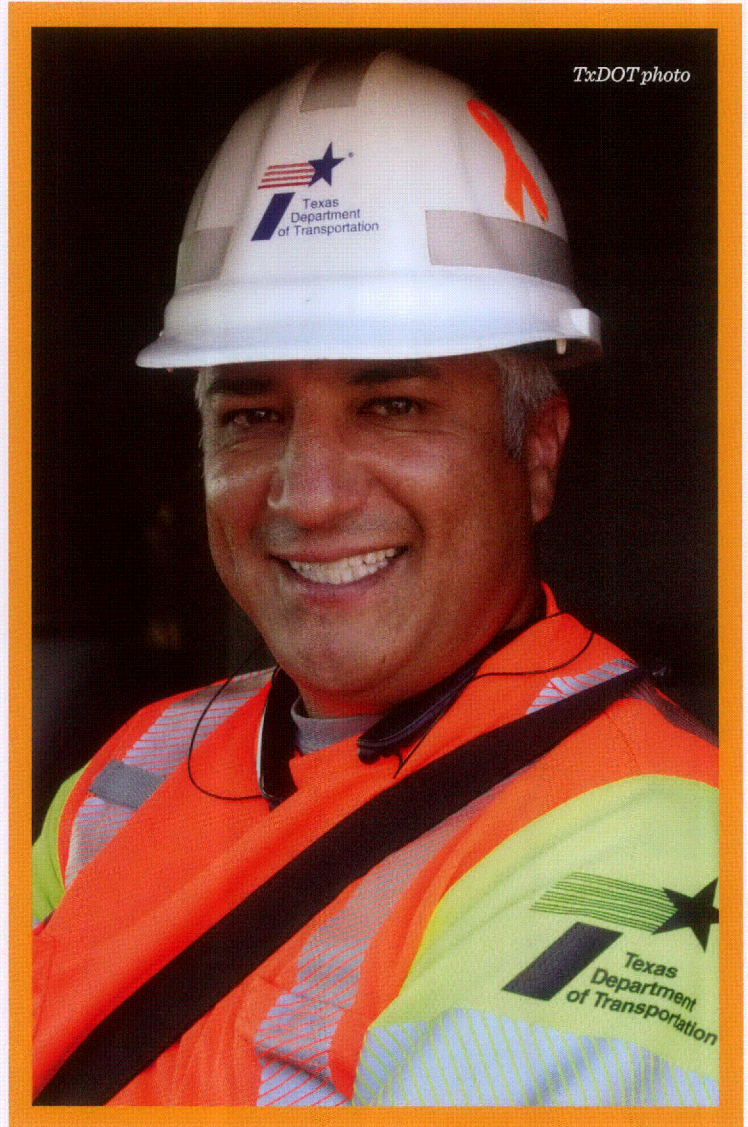
What's the best candy for Halloween?
I love my candy with chocolate and peanut butter. Reese's!!!

Why is your district the best in TxDOT?
All the supervisors communicate well and we help each other when needed. We believe there are no boundary lines between each maintenance area. We also celebrate and acknowledge accomplishments we make as a district with safety awards, banquets and area safety summits.

What is your dream vacation?
To go to Yankee Stadium and watch the New York Yankees play in the World Series!

How do you ensure that safety is your top priority every day? I lead by example. I put safety reminders on the walls, on the equipment and on our desks so we can see them daily. I also rely on my assistant and crew chief to be my eyes and ensure my crew is safe.


TxDOT photo



What's an interesting fact about you that most people don't know?

I am in the diaconate program at my parish. I am in the first year of aspirancy of a five-year program to become a Catholic deacon.

What's a good substitute for Blue Bell Ice Cream?

Paletas, which are frozen fruit pops. I love to eat the nuez con leche, which is walnut with milk, and the coconut. 


Where Am I?

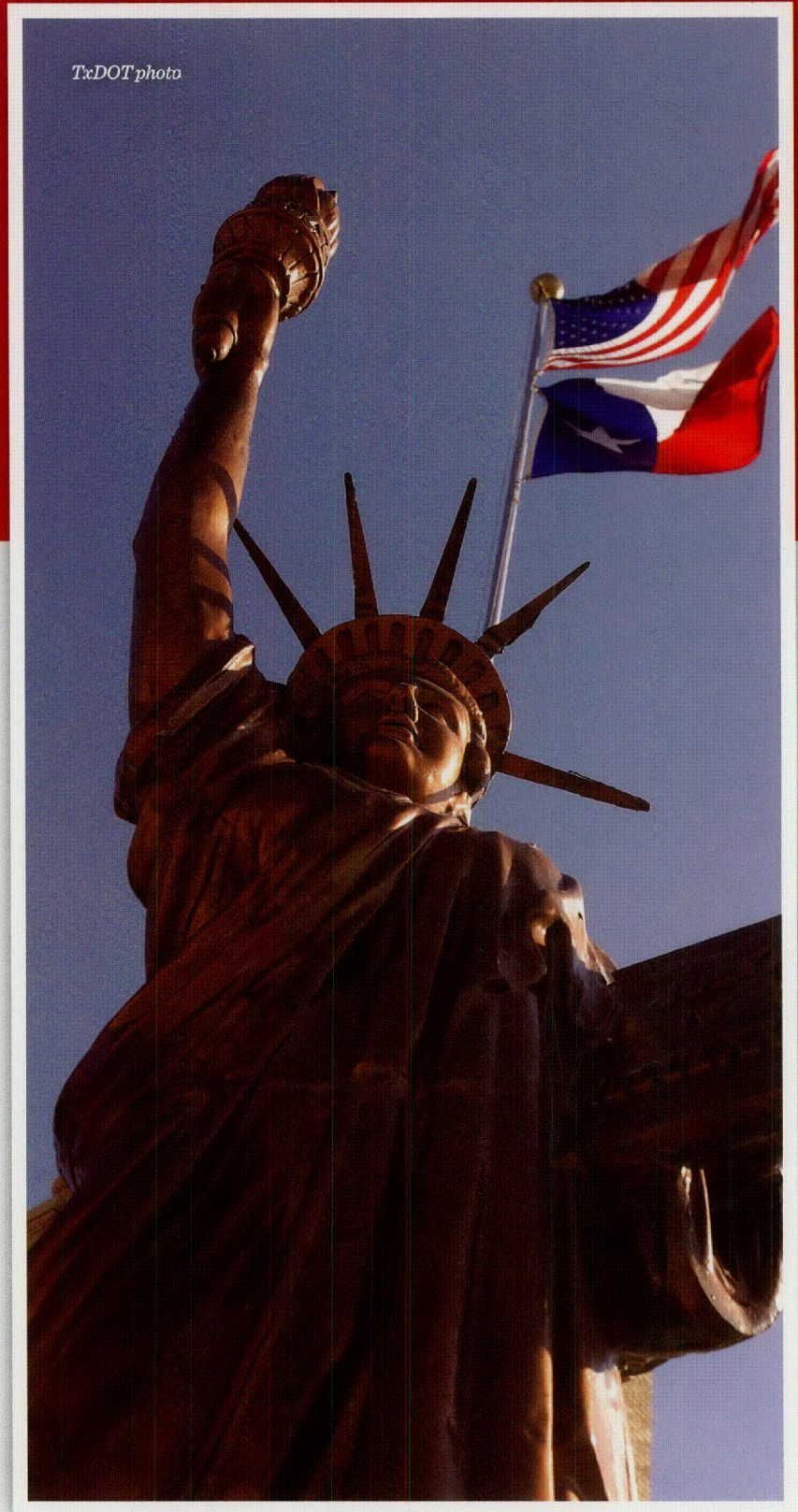
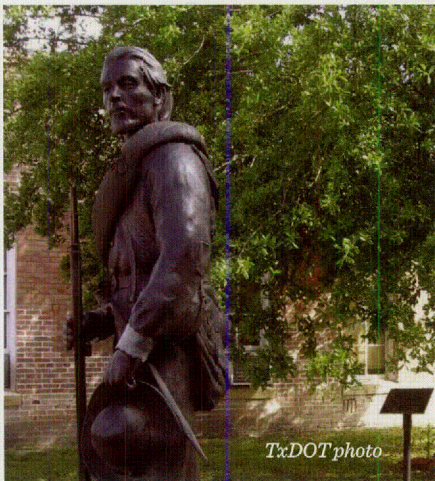
Here is a photo depicting an identifiable landmark you may have seen in your travels around Texas. If you think you know what this is a photo of or know where it was taken, send an email to TNideas@txdot.gov. Deadline for submissions is Sept. 25.

Identified:

Congratulations to our first identifier James Norment (BRY).

Last edition's photo featured Confederate Memorial Park in Anderson, Grimes County. The statue depicts an enlisted infantryman in Co G, 4th Texas Volunteer Infantry, Army of Northern Virginia. This company was known as "The Grimes County Greys."

Also correctly identifying the photo was Chris Cowen (BRY). 



UPCOMING TxDOT EVENTS

Sept. 7
Labor Day
(Agency Closed)

Sept. 14-15
Rosh Hashanah
(Optional Holidays)

Sept. 23
Yom Kippur
(Optional Holiday)

Sept. 24
Texas Transportation
Commission Regular Meeting
(Austin)

Oct. 29
Texas Transportation
Commission Regular Meeting
(Austin)

MILESTONES

July 2015 Service Awards



DISTRICTS

Abilene

- 25 Amy J. Hart
- 15 Kyla K. McGuffin
- 5 Ricardo Camacho
Joshua C. Caudill
Michael W. Shankles

Amarillo

- 30 Durward M. Dorris
- 15 Roger M. Robbins
- 10 Michael S. Stockfisch Jr.
Martin F. Walsh

Atlanta

- 30 Douglas J. Reiter
- 25 Jim W. Teel
- 15 Jerry C. Phillips
- 10 Dayna J. Mason

Austin

- 30 Charles R. Vaughn Sr.
- 20 Robert L. Kempf
- 15 Christopher W. Ake
Ngan K. Bui
Cole G. Farmer
David J. Walenta
Robert B. Wilson
- 10 Stephen G. Easley
- 5 Carmen M. Grasoi Garcia

Beaumont

- 25 Joe A. Felan

Brownwood

- 10 Brian E. Owens
- 5 Michael P. Pugh

Bryan

- 5 Billy D. Avritt
Dennis A. Krc
Charles E. McDermott
David W. McKibben
Robert T. Stahl

Childress

- 30 Mark A. Hightower
- 25 Gene Garcia

Corpus Christi

- 40 John M. Jacobs
- 10 Vicente Romero Jr.
- 5 Peter J. Albert
Joel O. Angeles
Emilio Hernandez

Dallas

- 50 Donald P. Green
- 25 John T. Inman
John H. West
- 20 Nicki C. Kerksieck
Juan A. Perez Jr.
- 15 Russell A. Emerson
Anhnguyet T. Nguyen
Robert J. Williams Jr.
- 10 John L. Aaron Jr.
Ryan J. Badgley
Terry L. Clark
Dawn P. Perkins
Richard F. Williford
Shawn Yousefi
- 5 Raymond R. Parker
Rachael D. Twigg

El Paso

- 15 Jose F. Perez
- 10 Ruben Lara
Anthony C. Marquez
Moises Montes
Jaime Soto
- 5 Rafael Gandara III

Fort Worth

- 30 Richard L. White
- 15 Gary G. Cline
David R. Oster
- 10 Roy G. Rosson
- 5 Marco A. Cardena
Tracy G. Hefner

Houston

- 30 Albert F. Brewster Jr.
Mark D. Patterson
- 25 Bobby B. Cayton Jr.
- 15 Stella P. Beserra
Bruce E. Cash
William M. Hausman
- 10 Wilfred W. Buck
Algenon G. Byars
Shederick D. Harris
Randle L. Kelley
Maria D. Pacheco

Laredo

- 20 Jose M. Benites

Lubbock

- 15 Domingo Q. Saldana
- 10 Juan M. Gonzalez
Paulino F. Gonzalez
Tommy H. Walden Jr.
- 5 Jeremy W. Stanley

Lufkin

- 20 Dexter B. Richards
- 10 John McCaffety
- 5 Bradley D. White

Odessa

- 25 Ruben L. Reyes
- 5 Jesse M. Hernandez

Paris

- 30 Ricky J. Mackey
- 20 Carlos O. Gilstrap
- 15 Jodie D. Doran
Bruce W. Thompson Jr.
- 10 Christopher C. Cannon

Pharr

- 15 Juan Gomez
- 10 Elizabeth M. Mikulencak
Monica P. Perez

San Angelo

- 10 Gilbert L. Gomez
Francisco J. Martinez
Christopher J. Pena

San Antonio

- 30 Victor H. Gil
- 20 John P. Gianotti
Robert J. Gutierrez
- 15 Michael T. Boyd
Tony S. Martinez
Roy T. McCue
- 10 Tony R. Botello

Tyler

- 20 M.K. Soucek
- 10 Charles R. Adams
- 5 William P. Braly
Robert G. Covington
Terry G. Platt

Waco

- 25 Brenda L. Franklin
Billy M. Tweedle
- 15 Bodie L. Pate
- 10 Grady B. Norman
Ryan C. Bonner

Wichita Falls

- 15 Gregory A. Gibbs
Larry W. Gooch

Yoakum

- 30 Maurice Fifer
- 15 Kenneth J. DeBord
- 5 Larry Shilling

DIVISIONS/ OFFICES

Bridge

- 30 Malcolm R. Arnold
- 10 Leon B. Flournoy
- 5 Jorge A. Carrasco

Communications

- 10 Dianah D. Ascencio

Construction

- 25 Stewart H. Dewitt Jr.
- 15 Raymond D. Merritt

Design

- 15 David L. Bedrich

Environmental Affairs

- 15 Carlos H. Swonke

Finance

- 20 Patricia Carrillo
Nnabugwu W. Ezi
- 15 Victoria D. Gross
Alva G. Marines
- 5 David G. Maurer

Fleet Operations

- 30 Ricky L. Nieman
- 25 Toby T. Towery
- 10 William G. Crain
Mary A. Harris
Stephen C. White
- 5 Milton P. Kelley
Heath L. Rothwell

Maintenance

- 15 Timothy L. West

Professional

Procurement

- 10 Christi L. Bonham
Marialyce Luckey

Project

Management Office

- 25 Marilyne D. Rowland

Research and

Technology

Implementation

- 30 Willis W. Odell
- 5 Moses A. Garcia

Support Services

- 5 Raani T. Francis

Traffic Operations

- 30 Georgette M. Pillitere
- 15 Blanca N. Trevino-Castro

Travel

- 10 Christy Kale
- 5 Kathlyne B. Caraway
Marco A. Salgado

August 2015 Service Awards



DISTRICTS

Abilene

- 15 Russell D. Chapman
Debra D. Paylor

Amarillo

- 20 Rodney D. Denson

Atlanta

- 15 James T. Green
- 10 Aaron L. Hackett

Austin

- 30 David A. Boone
Sherman M. Coots III
- 25 Gerald D. Pohlmeier
- 20 Diana E. Vargas
- 15 Scott R. Cunningham
Rebecca A. Garza
Jason W. Whitworth
- 10 Kristina L. Morriss
Adeliza Ramirez
Leroy Roman
- 5 Brian J. Taylor

Beaumont

- 30 Grady O. Simmons II
- 5 Jonathan D. Lawrence

Brownwood

- 25 Efrain Almodova
- 15 Jason H. Scantling
- 10 Chris J. Graf

Bryan

- 20 Allison C. Kurwitz
Mark A. Schoenemann
- 15 Timothy R. Ramirez
- 10 James W. Brewster
Glen W. Fenton
John C. McDaniel

Childress

- 25 Jimmy C. Braker
- 15 Marty D. Navarrette
Arty R. Tucker

Dallas

- 35 Arthur R. Nance
- 25 Byron K. Bishop
- 20 Dianne H. May
Jerry A. Newsom
Vicki E. Rodriguez
- 15 Gustavo J. Garcia
Murray D. Johnson Jr.
David R. Oberle Sr.
Jamshid Shirali
- 10 Jerry Pea
Ismael Sanchez
Ronnie L. Willis
- 5 Nathan J. Petter
Eldon R. Stout

El Paso

- 20 Walter R. Devine Jr.
- 10 Claudia Vazquez
- 5 Joel E. Muniz

Fort Worth

- 25 Billy J. Manning
Phillip S. May
- 15 Mohammad A. Al Hweil
Annette G. Cuevas
Timmy R. Cunningham
Ernest F. Gass
- 10 Ted W. Hensley
Isaac A. Johnson
Jimmy R. Johnson
Jacky D. Kirkland
Manuel Padron Jr.
Ben Trevino
- 5 Jose J. Ruiz
Lane D. Selman

Houston

- 25 Jeffrey M. Schwartz
Frank M. Wadlington
- 15 Dennis A. Johnson
Barbara D. Russell
Carlos M. Zepeda Jr.
- 10 Gerard A. Clisham
Sarah J. Jones
Mitchell E. Porcelli
- 5 Elvis Lewis Jr.
Cameron R. Mansky

Laredo

- 25 Juan R. Campos
Arturo Smith Jr.
- 20 Melisa D. Montemayor
- 15 Sergio Reyna
- 10 Jerry L. Stevens
Luis M. Villarreal

Lubbock

- 15 Orfila E. Banda
Andy Peralez
Daniel T. Richter
- 10 Juan G. Cantu
Leonel L. Reyes
- 5 Esteban Garcia Jr.
Ramiro Martinez

Lufkin

- 30 Daron W. Webb
- 25 Howard S. Looney
- 10 Cory M. Howard
- 5 Darrel S. Cathey

Odessa

- 5 David B. Mendoza

Paris

- 15 Daniel S. Bly
- 10 Karen L. Jackson
Ricky G. Roberts

Pharr

- 30 Gilberto De La Fuente
- 10 Martin Delafuente
Jose T. Garza
Alberto F. Hinojosa
Romeo Pena
Arturo Villarreal

San Angelo

- 15 John O. Baker

San Antonio

- 35 Craig S. Williams
- 15 Charles A. Bendele II
Frank Bermea
Francine B. Elkins
Louis C. Ugarte
- 10 Victor Abrego
Mark S. Andrews
Christopher N. Douglas
George J. Garza
Brian K. Gillaspay
Scott A. Magers
Dustin A. Popham
Georgena A. Sasser
Carlos B. Seda
- 5 Irma B. Benavides

Tyler

- 5 David A. Tober

Waco

- 25 Gregory N. Holecek
Ricky D. Pierce
- 15 Donald W. Hampton
Donald E. Wilganowski
- 5 Mallory E. Donovan

Wichita Falls

- 20 Michael L. Carriger

Yoakum

- 15 Timothy J. Kocian
- 10 Alan J. Migl

DIVISIONS/ OFFICES

Administration

- 25 John T. Jennings
- 15 Carol V. Garcia

Communications

- 10 Joshua M. Hunter
- 5 Shawn P. Lloyd

Construction

- 35 Bunny M. Neible
John M. Reedy
- 30 Jorge R. Besa

Design

- 15 Vincent J. Parker

Environmental Affairs

- 15 Jonathan H. Budd

Finance

- 20 Jimmie B. Broaders
- 10 Rosa L. Martinez
Canh H. Nguyen
Kathryn D. Steese
- 5 Fernando Hernandez

Fleet Operations

- 35 Deborah C. Harris
- 25 Frederick N. Jones
- 15 Joe Koite
- 10 David W. Harris

Human Resources

- 25 Julie L. Durham
- 20 Ruben Alonso
- 15 Monica Hetherington
- 10 Laura L. Johannsen

Local Government Projects

- 5 Sonya E. Ayers

Maintenance

- 20 Carroll L. Starkey

Maritime

- 5 Sarah E. Bagwell

General Counsel

- 5 Rebecca B. Bronson

Procurement

- 10 Erasmo G. Salazar

Professional Procurement

- 20 Harry C. Pan

Public Transportation

- 15 Alfredo Gonzales

Right of Way

- 25 Charles U. Lankford
- 20 Paul A. Fierro
Pete R. Garcia
- 15 Timothy G. Cunningham
- 10 Nancy J. Romero

Support Services

- 20 Rhonda L. Branecky
- 15 David W. Coleman
Carl O. Nix
Shane A. Phillips
Charles A. Wallace
- 10 Samuel L. Copeland
Helen C. Rodriguez

Traffic Operations

- 15 James H. Hollis
- 10 Joshua S. Verastique
Dustin L. Wiggins

Travel

- 10 Valerie D. Followell
Oswaldo Lopez
- 5 Ricky D. Upton

May 2015 Retiree Report

DISTRICTS

Amarillo

- 27 Reid W. Steger
25 Tommy D. Davis

Austin

- 31 Manuel G. Vela

Beaumont

- 34 Rose T. Pugh
27 John E. Sudela
17 William D. Sims

Bryan

- 35 Ricky G. Wills
19 Rhonda G. Carpenter

Corpus Christi

- 30 Michael Esparza
24 Connie M. Avalos

Dallas

- 31 Chris A. Johnson
29 Timothy P. Boleyn
23 Alan D. Houston
18 Sandral M. Davis

El Paso

- 21 Charles E. Webster

Fort Worth

- 31 Tony V. Henson
Gregory S. Lane
30 Ricky D. Tompkins
16 Joanna Gentry
15 Robert O. Martin

Houston

- 33 Johnny L. Guice
31 Roxanne P. Willey
30 Manuel Mendoza
Lavada H. Murphy
28 Donald Guidry
27 Jeff A. Volk
18 Ronald E. Groves
15 Servando Rodriguez
11 Robert Z. McFarland
9 Gene L. Palmer

Lubbock

- 38 Louis Aguilar Jr.
25 Carlton R. Jolly
24 Raymond Smith
16 Manuel A. Cardenas

Lufkin

- 27 David R. Collmorgen
15 Billy V. Waller

Odessa

- 17 Deborah A. Hensley
16 Mikel W. Bridge

Paris

- 32 James L. Sisson
30 Jeffery B. Dorner

Pharr

- 17 Charles D. Evans
28 Michael A. Vela

San Antonio

- 28 John D. Bohuslav
15 Loyd L. Thompson

San Angelo

- 29 David Sanchez
17 Reba F. Thompson-Edgar

Tyler

- 28 Terry D. Williams
18 Randy C. York

Waco

- 29 Kenneth K. Krause
19 James R. Erwin

Yoakum

- 30 Sherry L. Hutchinson

DIVISIONS/ OFFICES

Audit

- 30 Sabra P. Vaughan

Bridge

- 33 Bobby W. Heine

Construction

- 27 Griselda S. Martinez
26 Daniel R. Geary

Design

- 21 James J. Mercier

IT

- 27 Lynn Woods

Procurement

- 8 Kathy W. Perry

Right of Way

- 16 Sandra J. Hatcher

Strategic Projects

- 26 Randall C. Redmond
20 Maryann Jarutowicz

Transportation

Planning and

Programing

- 27 Rhonda J. Christensen

Travel

- 20 Douglas L. Martin
Linda S. Vaughan
17 Cheryl M. Granger
11 Hallie V. Newton

June 2015 Retiree Report

DISTRICTS

Abilene

- 22 Alan D. Hufstutler

Amarillo

- 27 Nick N. Martinez
10 James R. White

Atlanta

- 29 Dennis J. Brown
26 Adam A. Lundy

Austin

- 29 Pedro Dehoyos
Thien T. Nguyen
28 Terry G. McCoy
22 Dixie L. Duncan

Beaumont

- 22 Donna L. Phillips
16 James W. Wagner
15 Joel M. Laningham

Bryan

- 30 James H. McCoslin
28 Russle R. Stauffer Jr.

Brownwood

- 34 Tamara K. Cope

Corpus Christi

- 28 Israel Gonzalez

El Paso

- 33 Joseph W. Hudy

Houston

- 27 Darrell R. Elliott
26 Levan Richardson
24 James C. Bryant
10 Luwettica Richardson
James Villagomez

Lufkin

- 29 Samuel V. Skrehot

Pharr

- 30 Enrique Ruiz
15 Rodger N. Jones

San Antonio

- 29 Aida C. Chapa
19 Serena S. Burrough

Tyler

- 9 Danny W. Williams

Waco

- 28 Charles E. Ferry
20 Theresa S. Dudik

DIVISIONS/ OFFICES

Bridge

- 28 Tyra G. Gentry II

Finance

- 15 Irene Venegas

Fleet Operations

- 21 Raymond Roddy Jr.

Human Resources

- 14 Minnie C. Brown
12 Robert Gomez

Maintenance

- 20 Carolyn A. Dill

Professional

Procurement

- 19 Epifanio Ruiz Jr.

Right of Way

- 23 David A. Bryant
17 Linda S. Morgan-Doss

Transportation

Planning and

Programming

- 30 Jeffery A. Wilhelm

In Memoriam

DISTRICTS

Childress

Robert Dewayne Gollihare
General Transportation Tech
Years of Service: 26 yrs
DOD: 7/11/2015

Beaumont

John Snoddy
Maintenance Administrator
Years of Service: 29 yrs
DOD: 6/28/2015

Dallas District

John V. Blain Jr.
Director Of Transportation Plan-
ning and Development Years of
Service: 33 yrs
DOD: 4/19/2015

Odessa

Jack R. Vincent
Engineering Technician
Years of Service: 12 yrs
DOD: 8/06/2015

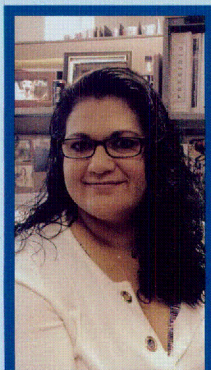
San Angelo

Peggy W. Jackson
Contract Service Specialist
Years of Service: 24 yrs
DOD: 5/14/2015

Eduardo P. Saenz Jr.
Centerstripe Crew Service
Years of Service: 32 yrs
DOD: 7/17/2015

TxDOT Family Members Chime In

== Halloween isn't just for kids! Who will you dress up as? ==

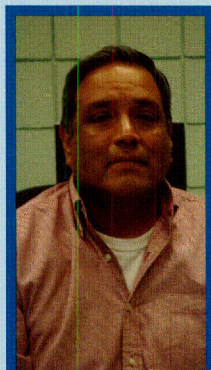


Rebecca Reyes

PLANNER
EL PASO DISTRICT

"This year I am going to be the Black Widow. In fact, my entire family is dressing up as the Avengers, including the dogs!"

TxDOT photo



Michael Sifuentes

TRAFFIC SIGNALS
SUPERVISOR
CORPUS CHRISTI
DISTRICT

"I plan to dress up as Guy Fieri, host of 'Minute to Win It.'"

TxDOT photo



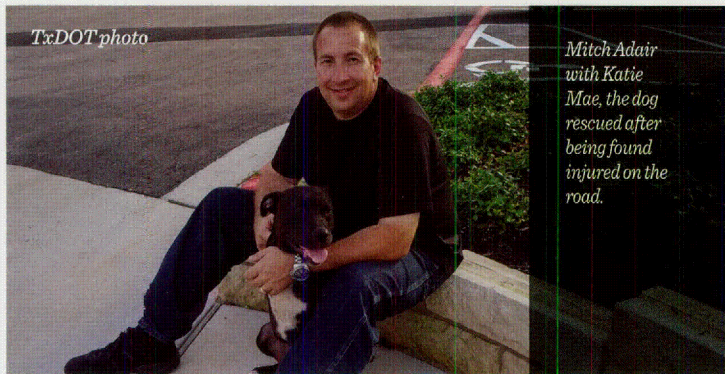
Lisa Walzl

PUBLIC
INFORMATION OFFICER
STRATEGIC PROJECTS,
DALLAS DISTRICT

"For my daughter Lily's first Halloween, when she was 4 months old, my husband Mike and I decided to make it a family affair and we plan to continue the tradition until Lily thinks her parents are too embarrassing."

TxDOT photo

Bright Lights: TxDOT employees contribute to happy endings



TxDOT photo

Mitch Adair with Katie Mae, the dog rescued after being found injured on the road.

TxDOT workers have been going the extra mile and getting noticed for it. Here are just a few examples of how they've helped their communities.

A new family addition

General Transportation Technician Mitch Adair with Travis County Maintenance was working on the median on SH 71 in Bastrop when he noticed something in the gutter. When he got closer he realized it was an injured dog in a puddle of water. The dog had apparently been hit by a vehicle. When Adair called to the dog, she raised her head and wagged her tail. She hobbled over to Adair and crawled under his truck. He called the Bastrop Animal Hospital and staff there turned her over to Hardy-Hayes Refuge.

The veterinarian there had to amputate her leg but believed she would make a full recovery. She was named Katie Mae and Adair and his family asked to adopt her. She is now living happily with them and he says she's as sweet as a dog can be.

Great job to Mitch Adair for going above and beyond to help rescue Katie Mae and give her a home!

Birds are people, too!

While traveling recently, Director of the Travel Information Division De Juana Lozada pulled into a restaurant parking lot and noticed a small bird on the ground. Upon inspection, she realized that it was actually two birds that had fallen out of a tree.

The pavement the birds had fallen on was very hot, so the birds were in grave danger if they didn't get help quickly. Lozada shaded them with an umbrella while waiting to hear from Animal Control. After she waited more than two hours, Animal Control instructed her to take the birds to a nearby veterinarian.

Lozada delivered the birds safely to the veterinarian. She later learned that the two birds did make it and were being nursed back to health under the veterinarian's care.

Lozada believes that we should always lend a helping hand to others — including our animal friends.

"I believe it's our responsibility to help those in need whenever we can. I'm just happy that I was able to be in the right place at the right time," she said.

Thanks, De Juana Lozada, for the reminder to be kind to animals, too!



TxDOT photo

De Juana Lozada with her recovering feathered friends. She rescued the birds after they fell out of a tree.



125 E. 11th St.
Austin, Texas 78701

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Note to our retiree subscribers: Many of the mailing labels for the July/August TN had an incorrect last name for the recipients. We have hopefully corrected the problem for this issue. If your mailing label is still incorrect, email us at TNideas@txdot.gov.

Copies of this publication have been deposited with the Texas State Library in compliance with the State Depository Law.
Printed on recycled paper by TxDOT Support Services Division.



TN Online (TxDOT computers only):
<http://crossroads/>

An "aha moment" sparked a lifelong journey

As a child and teenager, Melba Schaus, project manager for Advanced Planning & Project Management in the Pharr District, was athletic but still carried extra weight. In college she gained more weight. By the time she joined TxDOT, she had reached her heaviest point. At 26 she was on blood pressure medicine. Eleven years later, she had her "aha moment." This is her journey to wellness.

I attributed my weight gain to genetics but I knew my poor diet was not helping. I had my only child at age 35. For the first three years of her life, we were in and out of hospitals for several medical procedures. The stress caused me to seek comfort in food.

Everyone has that moment. My moment came three-and-a-half years ago, when my then 68-year-old mother joined WeightWatchers and lost 40 pounds. I was 37 years old, and if my mother could lose weight, I had no excuse.


In September 2011, I started using WeightWatchers as a guide to get healthy and lose weight. I began a food journal to track everything I ate. I realized that many fast food lunch combos were the equivalent of what I should eat all day. So now everything I ate was studied. During my journey, I often asked, "Is it worth it?"

Most of the time, the answer was no. But I still indulged in my cravings because, for me, denial was not going to work. I learned that I could still enjoy some of my favorite fast food with portion control. A full-size Whataburger and fries became a Whataburger Jr. and a side salad (which the fast-food chain has discontinued, much to my dismay).

I was not starving or feeling deprived; I was simply making better choices. I educated myself on reading labels and learned about portion size. In less than a year, I lost 28 pounds without exercising (except picking up after my daughter). Yes, I know I could have lost more with exercise.

In September it will be four years since I started my weight-loss journey and I have maintained the change. I maintain my success with continued education and by tracking my meals using the My Fitness Pal app. I keep a food scale and measuring cups handy at home and try to weigh and measure what I eat.

I also use my weekends to prep meals for the upcoming week and pack my lunch instead of eating out. It's a daily struggle, but all of it has been made easier with the support of my husband. He has been my inspiration to try new foods, especially vegetables. Four years ago, I would never have even tried eggplant parmesan lasagna or tofu stir-fry. Today, they are two of our favorite meals. We have also incorporated daily exercise for the past couple of years.

Journey to wellness is not a destination but a way of life. Most of us think we could be healthier, but it won't come until you find your own "aha moment." I am so glad I found mine. 



Melba in 2014 after joining Weight Watchers and learning to track her meals and control portion sizes. "I was not starving or feeling deprived," she said. "I was simply making better choices." Photos provided by Melba Schaus.

Melba Schaus in 2006, before her "aha moment."

Contact your local Wellness Program Coordinator to learn about the wellness program and start your journey today!

