



Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 4

July 2019

Dear Friends,

As the days move forward from parboiled (July) to fully roasted (August), we need to be mindful about the health of our volunteers with respect to weather conditions. The same ramp that you build in July would take on a vastly different perspective in November because of the heat differentials. How can you avoid spending a long grueling day in the heat because your volunteers showed up in much lower numbers than you expected? I had such an experience last weekend, and it can potentially drive away the volunteers we so badly need.

An average ramp will take about one volunteer hour per foot to build. Let's say you have planned to build a 40-foot ramp. Our stated objective is to build a ramp within four to five hours. If you can get eight volunteers, you should be able to get offsite in about five hours. If you only get four volunteers, you could easily be out in the heat until 3:30 or 4 p.m. You will have some unhappy campers when you finish, because every volunteer needed to contribute about 10 hours. Please let your volunteer groups know that volunteer shortfalls are borne by those who show up and that significant shortfalls could affect the health of their friends.

Other variables also need to be taken into consideration, such as the amount of shade available. So look for sites with significant shade. Have plenty of water available. Then try to ensure good volunteer participation by checking midweek to see if the numbers are holding up. And consider starting one hour earlier from June through August to try to beat the heat of the day.

One final point: If you have not obstructed the client's existing access point, you may also stop and come back another day to finish up. Let's keep our volunteers safe during the Texas summer.

Thanks and have a great month,

John

TRP and the AAAs

The state of Texas is divided administratively into 27 multi-county entities called Councils of Governments (COGs). The Texas Ramp Project's geographic regions are designed to reflect these COGs.

It is through the COGs that federal funds work their way down into the local communities. Some of these funds come through each Council of Governments' Area Agency on Aging (AAA). The AAAs are TRP's best way to access federal funds.

TRP currently has contracts with 14 AAAs around the state, with a few more in the works. Last year TRP received over \$58,000 from these entities, both for ramps they have referred and for ramps that are submitted to them when the area coordinator believes the client would qualify for AAA funding.

Each AAA is independently run, and their level of support varies with the amount of federal funding they have available. In most cases, AAAs are delighted that Texas Ramp Project volunteers can build a ramp for their clients at about a third the cost of a local contractor. This means that for the same amount of money in their budget, the AAAs can service three times as many clients using TRP rather than other contractors. They understand the economics clearly in this era of federal cutbacks.

A list of current AAA contracts is below. If TRP has a contract with your COG and you do not know the people at your local AAA office, go down and meet with them and begin to build a relationship. They can tell you what they require in terms of client qualifications and paperwork requirements. At the very least, we should be billing them for every ramp we build with an AAA referral.

In the event that TRP does not have a contract with your region's AAA, make contact with them and tell our story. You can find your region's COG and AAA contact at www.txregionalcouncil.org. Click on Regional Councils, then select your region from the map. The regional page will have a link to the COG's web site, where you can find AAA information.

If you have any questions about linking up with the AAA in your region, contact Garner McNett at garnermcn38@gmail.com. He can help you get a contract developed and put into place.

TRP has current AAA contracts in the following regions:

- Brazos Valley AAA, Bryan
- Capital AAA, Austin
- Dallas County AAA, Dallas
- Deep East Texas AAA, Jasper
- East Texas AAA, Kilgore
- Golden Crescent AAA, Victoria
- North Central Texas AAA, Arlington
- North Texas AAA, Wichita Falls
- Panhandle AAA, Amarillo
- Permian Basin AAA, Midland
- Rio Grande AAA, El Paso
- South Plains Association AAA, Lubbock
- Tarrant County AAA, Fort Worth
- Texoma AAA, Sherman

Attention State Farm Policyholders!

If you have insurance with State Farm, you might want to do what Morris Horton did. Morris, of Brownwood in the Abilene region, was chatting with his agent about the Texas Ramp Project. His interest piqued, the agent said he'd see what funding might be available. He located the right person in the Richardson State Farm office, and she provided the backing to write a \$900 grant.

We now know who the contact person is, so maybe we can leverage this first success. If you can get your agent interested, call Kay Champagne and we will follow up. You do not need to write the grant. You just need to get the agent to vouch for it, and we'll do the rest. If you need more information, contact Kay at kfchamp@iit.net.

If you have a different insurer and know your agent, you might approach that person also. A \$500 or \$1,000 grant can build another ramp or two in your region. Every dollar counts. Good luck!

Partnering with Home Depot

Home Depot employees are busy building ramps in the San Antonio Central region thanks to two grants obtained through the initiative of Roland Guzman, San Antonio South coordinator. Home Depot's focus is on ramps for veterans or their families.

The first grant was for \$19,900 to build ramps for nine veterans and help with some tools. The second, for \$4,600, will build a ramp along with extensive home modifications to accommodate a veteran whose 19-year-old son is paralyzed due to a stroke. The Home Depot employees will provide labor for all the ramps and handle the home modifications. TRP need only provide a team leader for each ramp.

The process is fairly easy. Contact the Team Depot store captain at your local Home Depot and tell them about a veteran for whom you have a referral. The store captain will fill out a request form and provide a quote. That paperwork is sent to Kay Champagne, who fills out TRP's part of the form and submits the application. It's important to allow four to six weeks for the grant to be approved.

For more information, contact Kay at kfchamp@iit.net or talk to Roland Guzman at rg_gov@yahoo.com or 210-436-9390.

Recent Grant Awards:

In addition to the Home Depot and State Farm awards, AAA payments, and other donations from local churches, businesses and civic clubs, TRP is pleased to announce the following foundation grants received in June:

- Harry E. & Edna L. Montandon Charitable Trust, \$25,000 for statewide use
- The Greehey Family Foundation, \$12,000 for San Antonio
- Louis and Peaches Owen Family Foundation, \$7,500 for East Texas
- Greathouse Foundation, \$5,000 for Abilene
- Paris Legacy Foundation, \$5,000 for Texarkana North

Texas Ramp Project Long-Range Plan

The TRP board has begun a long-range planning effort for the organization. The Texas Ramp Project has an incredible vision that no Texan shall be denied safe access to his or her home because of financial limitations. This vision has attracted a dedicated and gifted group of individuals and volunteers working year-round by building ramps for these vulnerable people. Volunteers are currently building nearly 2,000 ramps annually.

Here's the But:

We are receiving 5,000 requests for ramps every year. That's more than double the number of ramps we are building on an annual basis. The graying population and other demographic factors lead us to believe there is no shortage of client referrals for ramps in our future. With this in mind, the board has agreed that a long-range plan will help us grow our organization with the goal of building 5,000 ramps annually by 2025.

Structural, geographic and technical issues are challenging our current operations. We are at a tipping point and need to move beyond building 2,000 ramps annually. There is tremendous support that we can harness on a local level, including churches, civic clubs, businesses, and individuals. With our committed volunteers and extensive community support, we believe many more opportunities exist to provide safe and reliable access for people who would otherwise be homebound.

Next Steps:

The Board held a strategic planning meeting on June 22, at which the following key areas of focus were identified:

- Funding – All potential sources and methods
- Organization – Structure of business model, succession, future planning
- Technology – Communication, database, social media, accounting operations
- Public Relations – Social media, TV, reporting, referral sources
- Risk Management – Safety, insurance, legal
- Scalable Training – Standardized operating procedures, construction manual, leadership training

Six task forces were established, and members for each were identified and nominated. Each task force will be composed of TRP team leaders and/or coordinators, funding and referral sources, and TRP board members.

The board believes we have an attainable goal that will provide so many more Texans with safe and reliable access to their homes and communities, AND, many more individuals who will be experiencing the joy of a volunteer opportunity that results in such satisfying and immediate outcomes. The board welcome ideas and expertise from any of TRP's volunteers in the field—and want you to know that we appreciate every one of you.

Ramp of the Month: San Antonio Northeast – Comal County

On March 23, Kaley Collins, a senior at Canyon High School, led a team of 12 volunteers from her school's National Honor Society in building a 45-foot ramp for a 56-year-old New Braunfels woman. Kaley has been a team leader, and it seems that building with the Texas Ramp Project runs in her family. Her father, Dan, is the New Braunfels United Methodist Church's team leader. But it goes even further, as the family's oldest daughter is working to develop another team in San Antonio.



Pass It On

You are encouraged to liberally pass this newsletter on to others within your region. Hopefully, you will find that it is filled with useful information, building hints and tips, data collection updates and processes, client stories, special announcements and recognitions.

AND: Keep sending us email addresses of the people in your region who should be receiving our newsletter, along with their name and TRP region. Send new subscribers to Sandy Knutson at sjkibits@aol.com. Our TRP newsletter is a great tool, but it only works if we can send it directly every month to all the folks who might be interested.

If you prefer to **not** receive the newsletter, you can unsubscribe by emailing sjkibits@aol.com and ask for your name to be removed.