



Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

As the weather warms, I find myself getting more and more anxious to start working with our volunteers across Texas and providing our clients with safe access at their homes. The coronavirus alert has ground our efforts to a halt as we all wait for the time when we can safely move about without fear of contagion. Referrals continue to flow in, albeit at a slightly diminished rate, to our backlog, and certainly the needs still exist.

In this time of reduced volunteers, I would like us to keep our number of ramps built growing steadily. To do this, I would ask that instead of building lengthy ramps you choose a second alternative, building a bunch of threshold ramps. They generally linger in our backlog because they are not suitable for a normally sized team. However, a team of two or three can easily knock off two of these (or maybe three) in a morning.

I look forward to getting out of the house as the weather warms and seeing many of you throughout the coming months as we continue to help your neighbors in need and enjoy the company of each other as we build our bridges of hope.

John

Coronavirus Update

A few weeks ago, TRP issued guidelines allowing area coordinators to determine whether or not to continue building ramps, depending on local circumstances. That guidance still holds, but with the following caveats:

- First and foremost, follow all directions from federal, state and local authorities.
- If you or any volunteers feel sick, stay home.
- If someone in your household has tested positive for the virus, stay home.
- If you are an older person or have a serious underlying health condition, stay home and away from other people.
- At the site, maintain social distancing and have hand sanitizer readily available.
- At the site, avoid any contact with the client.

We know that the need for ramps will continue and increase during this ongoing crisis. But your safety, and the safety of all volunteers, should be paramount. When this is over, we will return to our core purpose of building freedom for the homebound. In the meantime, be safe. And as always, thanks so much for all you do.

Amplify Austin is a Winner

Amplify Austin, the 2020 online giving day event in Austin, was a great success. Overseen by Donna Taylor, volunteer coordinator for the Austin region, the March 5–6 event netted over \$19,000 for seven counties in the Austin region. The total included matching funds from St. David's Foundation.

Donna and her fellow volunteers promoted the event through Facebook and other social media platforms, as well as email and personal contact. Prior years' participation was in the range of \$1,000, so this outcome shows how local promotion can yield an extraordinary result.

The Texas Ramp Project is always willing to pay registration fees for online giving days in localities, but we cannot run successful events from Richardson. As seen in Austin, when local volunteers step up, the events are much more likely to succeed

Thank You, Lewis Robinson

It is with great sadness that we report the loss of one of TRP's longtime friends, Lewis Robinson, on February 9. In prior years, Lewis participated in ramp building in the Dallas region. For the past several years he and his wife, Beckie, have been handling all of the thank you notes and tax notifications for donations to the Texas Ramp Project. That task involves sending scores of letters every month. Volunteers from the Dallas Ramp Project built a ramp in Lewis's memory, pictured below.

Thank you, Lewis and Beckie Robinson, for your faithful service. We appreciate all you have done as volunteers for the Texas Ramp Project.



State Farm: A Corporate Partnership



TRP is pleased to announce receipt of two grants totaling nearly \$40,000 from State Farm, Inc. One of the grants provides \$9,750 for ramps in the Dallas region. Gary Stopani, Dallas region coordinator, will coordinate with volunteers from State Farm's Citilink office, based in Richardson. State Farm employees started building ramps with TRP last year and voted in September to award TRP a \$25,000 prize from among nearly 20 local charities. That gift was in addition to the current grant.

The second grant, for \$29,750, will be used in regions outside of North Texas. The funds will be designated for areas where State Farm agents will volunteer with ramp construction. Last year the agents built ramps in Brownwood, in the Abilene region, and in Waco. The experiences were so successful that they led to this award. Jeff Davis and Felicia Hutchins of State Farm will help coordinate the funds' use.

WellMed Provides New Funding



TRP wishes to thank the WellMed Charitable Foundation, which has approved a \$20,000 grant for several regions across Texas. The WellMed Charitable Foundation is a nonprofit public foundation that supports nonprofit agencies that offer services to seniors and their caregivers, with a special emphasis on wellness, prevention, and living with chronic illness.

TRP receives a large number of referrals from WellMed Medical Management, Inc., a large Texas health care company. WellMed employees assist with ramp construction in a number of regions. In 2018 WellMed provided \$30,000 in grants for the McAllen and El Paso regions.

Grants Received in March

In addition to the State Farm and WellMed grants, TRP is proud to announce these additional grants during the past month:

- The Burdine Johnson Foundation, \$15,000 for Austin South (Hays County)
- James and Dorothy Doss Foundation, \$10,000 for Tarrant County
- Shelton Family Foundation, \$10,000 for Abilene
- The Gordon Hartman Family Foundation, \$7,500 for San Antonio
- H-E-B, \$2,500 for San Antonio
- South Texas Electric Cooperative, \$1,000 each for Victoria and McAllen
- Walmart, \$500 for Store #293 in Navasota, Bryan-College Station (Thanks to Jerry Gritter for taking time to call on this store.)

If you are aware of a local foundation that might have an interest in TRP's work, please send contact information to Kay Champagne at kfchamp@iit.net and we will follow up.

Ramps of the Month: Brazos and Tarrant Counties

Mr. R., a 63-year-old Bryan man, was referred by CHI St. Joseph Health as the client had difficulty walking and climbing stairs. In the near future, he will need to have some type of durable medical equipment to help him walk. What's more, he lives alone and requires dialysis. His mobile home, with five steps, would be extremely difficult and unsafe to navigate with a walker. Mr. R.'s new 44-foot ramp was built by seven volunteers from the Young Men's Service League (YMSL), who contributed 21 hours of labor. The funds were provided by a grant from the Waldon H. and Adele Orr Charitable Trust.



What great signage! It honors both the funding source *and* volunteers who built the ramp.

Mr. D., 49, lives in Keller, in Tarrant County. He recently had a surgical amputation but couldn't return home because his house lacked a ramp. He was being forced to reside in a rehab facility. When his family learned they would soon get that much-needed ramp, there were tears all around. The Random Acts of Kindness volunteer team stepped up in early March to change things for the better for this family. Mr. D.'s wife was present when the 40-foot ramp was built, and expressed her gratitude for the good work done by this team. This is why we do what we do: selfless people coming together to change someone's life for the better.



Big difference: before and after.

DO: Pass the Newsletter On

We hope you enjoy having the newsletter sent to you directly, as it is filled with useful information, building hints and tips, data collection updates and processes, client stories, special announcements and recognitions.

The newsletter only does its job when it is dispersed and shared with all who might be interested. We encourage you to liberally pass it on to others in your region. Also, do send email addresses of people in your region who should be receiving it, along with their name and TRP region, to Sandy Knutson at sjkbits@aol.com.

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