



## **Texas Ramp Project Newsletter**

Volume 2, Issue 5

May 2020

### **Dear Friends,**

It appears, at last, that the long siege caused by the rampant coronavirus may be drawing to a close with the reopening of Texas to relatively normal day-to-day activities. This, of course, has much greater impact on restaurants, places of lodging and schools, not to mention the opportunity to gather at churches.

For TRP, it means that we are once again starting to provide access ramps for older adults and people with disabilities. In talking with several region coordinators recently, I have found a real desire by our dedicated volunteers to get back to building ramps.

With that in mind, I encourage you to restart your regional projects, subject to your best judgment, with the goal of completing at least one build in May. To simplify these builds, I would suggest you use only your regular volunteers initially (as opposed to an outside volunteer group) and limit your interaction with the client to avoid any cross-contamination.

I will be building in Wichita Falls on May 9, and I will be happy to be at work again after this long hiatus. Please let us know of any concerns that may not have been addressed.

With best regards,

John Laine, TRP Executive Director

### **Coronavirus Reminders**

First and foremost, follow all directions from federal, state and local health authorities as we don't know how long social distancing and the wearing of masks will be either required or the smartest thing to do.

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, thank you so much for all you do.

## Meet TRP Board Member: Brock Bayles



Brock Bayles joined the TRP board at its April 2020 meeting. A California native, Brock moved to North Texas five years ago when Toyota decided to relocate its U.S. headquarters to Plano. An 18-year Toyota veteran, he is currently vice president of product, marketing, operations and dealer relations for Toyota Financial Services, supporting private label financing solutions.

Brock also serves on the ITOM (Information, Technology and Operations Management) Analytics Advisory Board at Southern Methodist University's Cox School of Business.

In 2017, he collaborated with the university's MBA program to establish a case-study competition sponsored by Toyota. He has partnered with other local universities to expand student learning opportunities.

Brock holds a Bachelor of Science degree in economics from Brigham Young University and an MBA from Carnegie Mellon University. Brock and his wife, Mary, met at BYU and have been married for 21 years. They have four children.

The family has been involved in service for many years. Brock and both his sons are Eagle Scouts. Brock is also president of his church's youth group. He's excited to be part of TRP. He says he has seen first-hand the benefit of this type of service after watching the limited options available to close friends and family members as they had to rely on using a wheelchair and needed safe access.

His take on the Texas Ramp Project: "This program changes lives!"

## Hammill Foundation Continues TRP Support

The Donald D. Hammill Foundation of Austin has provided TRP with another grant of \$15,000 for our work in Travis and Williamson counties. They also gave permission for the funding to be used at TRP's discretion in what they call "very unusual circumstances." The Hammill Foundation has provided funding for TRP since 2012 in grants totaling more than \$45,000. The foundation's president, Judith Voress, was an honored guest and keynote speaker at TRP's conference in Austin in February 2019.

In the notification letter, Dr. Voress writes, "We feel your program provides services to a population in our community that would otherwise face very limited resources or be overlooked, and we are pleased to support your efforts."

Thank you, Hammill Foundation. Your support and encouragement are much appreciated.

## Virtual Interaction via Social Media

Social media is an innovative way for our regions, volunteers, potential volunteers and donors to stay connected. Now more than ever during these times of social distancing, we are learning how virtual interaction can be so useful. Through online communities like Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, TRP has the opportunity to engage with members of the community that may not yet know about the work we do.

If you are new to social media or simply haven't connected with TRP on social media platforms yet, give us a "follow" on Instagram: @tx\_ramp\_project; Facebook: Texas Ramp Project; and/or LinkedIn: Texas Ramp Project.

Help us build our follower base, so we can reach new potential volunteers and donors. Do this by "sharing" our posts on Facebook and on your Instagram "story." Encourage your friends and family to follow the above accounts, and use the hashtag #TexasRampProject anytime you post a photo of a build.

In the next few newsletters, watch for hints and tips on how to maximize using the various platforms of social media by our SMU Board Fellow, Madison Lopez.

## Washington County: Ramp Building and Social Distancing Do Work

Robert Meier, team leader from the Bryan/College Station region, and one of his sons took a few days during the pandemic to build this 36-foot ramp. Another of Robert's sons and two friends came back another day to add the hand rails. Such as they could, they maintained social distancing while completing the ramp.

The client is an 83-year-old woman with severe spinal stenosis. She needs assistance to stand and walk and relies on the use of a wheelchair for ambulation. Baylor Scott & White made the referral as the client was still in rehabilitation and was expected to return home in late April or early May.

Her home has two steps and a threshold, making it impossible for her to safely navigate entering or exiting her home. In addition to being built using social distancing, this ramp had other challenges, namely fencing and pets. This team conquered the obstacles over a couple of days and with a combined 45 hours of labor.





Well done: a great example of social distancing while getting the job done.  
The client is now home with a 36-foot welcome-home present.

## Waco Region Pioneers Federal Block Grant

Last year the City of Waco received a HUD Community Development Block Grant. The city then invited organizations to apply for funding. Jim Hoge of the Waco Irregulars, a group of friends devoted to building ramps with TRP, recognized the opportunity. A proposal was written, and TRP was awarded a \$30,000 grant.

Then the real fun began. Stringent rules apply, and a process had to be developed to satisfy all HUD and City of Waco requirements. In stepped Jim's wife Marcia, a committed member of the Waco Irregulars. Her nickname on the team is "The Boss." A retired controller and risk manager, Marcia loves a paperwork challenge. It was a natural fit.

The entire process involves several team members. Steve Jackson, regional coordinator, has to determine that a referral is in an approved zip code, gather information, and submit it for an environmental review. Then he has to submit paperwork regarding family size, income and demographics, along with supporting documents, to confirm eligibility.

Once the ramp is approved, the Waco Irregulars swing into action. Kenny Barker orders lumber, produces modules, and delivers all to the site. After the ramp is built, invoices are delivered to Marcia, who submits them along with a monthly status report that contains demographics and other details. All forms require the signature of the TRP board president.

After a slow start to implement the process, TRP has been able to get approval for 15 ramps and has received over \$5,500 from the city. While we are unlikely to get close to the \$30,000 available, this project has shown that with dedicated partners like Jim and Marcia Hoge, Steve Jackson and the Waco Irregulars, we can attack and master the complexities of a government program.

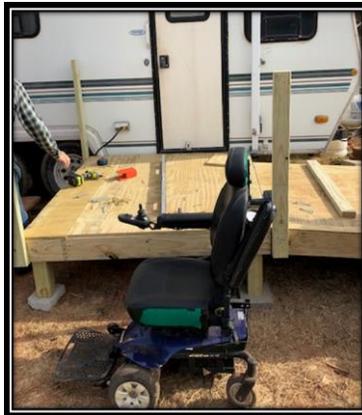
If you would like more details, contact Jim or Marcia at [jhoge@grandecom.net](mailto:jhoge@grandecom.net).

## Database Reminder

For those of you reporting your builds in the TRP database, please remember to include the name of the team leader, the source of the volunteers, and the funding source, if known. It is also possible to attach before and after photos in the database. Having this information is so key for reporting back to a referral or funding source.

## Ramp of the Month: Taylor County

Ms. Edna P., 75, of Buffalo Gap was referred for a ramp by Kindred at Home. Edna lives alone and has multiple disabling conditions. She has had several falls on the stairs accessing her trailer. Her new, 29-foot ramp was built by five volunteers from Abilene Kiwanis, who donated a collective 20 hours of labor to give Edna her new ramp.



Edna is enjoying her new ramp and safe access.

## 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](mailto:sjkbits@aol.com).

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