



Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

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December 2020

Dear Friends,

As we go through the Christmas season this year, with all its ups and sometimes downs that we can't control, we may find ourselves needing a little "booster shot" of goodwill to bring the spirit of the season into a more positive focus.

For me personally, it is a Christmas ramp that provides a marvelously wonderful gift of mobility to one of our clients. I bring bows and ribbons to put on the handrails to provide a note of joy for the client and my fellow volunteers, and then take some pictures for posterity. I hope that each of you can seize the happiness of that moment and allow it to bolster your own joy of the season. It's amazing what a little bit of ribbon can do.

Another way to make your December efforts special is to bring along one of your family members and some donuts or other refreshments to share during and after the build. Maybe you will have far more volunteers than you really need. Take advantage of the setting where you are bringing your own goodwill to help a person and family in need.

I hope that the December ramps you build will do more than provide safe mobility for the client—that they will also lead you to a better place in what might be a difficult time.

Wishing you and your families the best.

John Laine,
Executive Director

Grants Received in November

The Texas Ramp Project has received a \$15,000 grant for several San Antonio region counties from the Ruth Lang Charitable Fund and the Lila G. and Vesey F. Taylor Fund of the San Antonio Area Foundation. We also received \$15,000 from The RAM Foundation for the Texarkana North and West regions.

Other grants received in November include \$5,000 from State Farm, one of our "100 Miles of Freedom" sponsors; \$5,000 from the Josephine Anderson Charitable Trust for the Amarillo region; \$4,500 from the Rotary Club of Georgetown Foundation for Williamson County; and \$2,500 from Betenbough Homes for the Lubbock region.

We are so grateful for the generosity of these foundations and donors.

Countdown to 20,000th Ramp

Sometime in the next two weeks the Texas Ramp Project will record its 20,000th ramp. The magic number is 1,502 ramps built in 2020. As of December 1, we have recorded 1,482 ramps. The 1,502nd ramp will be the 20,000th.

It's amazing that this milestone is being reached at the same time we are celebrating our 100th mile of ramps. We centered our media campaign on "100 Miles of Freedom" because we knew every region could participate, creating lots of opportunities for press coverage. But the 20,000th ramp will be special, and it will also merit a statewide press release.

So for ramps you build between now and year-end, be sure:

- To report every one of them promptly.
- Take before and after photos of every ramp you build.
- Secure a photo consent form signed by the client.
- Good luck!



Update on '100 Miles of Freedom'

Ramp construction has been going strong since November 15, when we launched "100 Miles of Freedom." In the first two weeks of the campaign, you have reported 45 ramps. And you have showered us with photos and stories. Thank you, Thank You, THANK YOU!

TRP has also gotten some great media coverage, again thanks to you. We have had TV news coverage in such places as Dallas/Fort Worth and San Antonio and newspaper coverage in Houston, Jacksonville, La Grange and Whitney. What a great way to gain recognition for the wonderful work you do to help our neighbors with their mobility issues.

To keep the press coverage going, please remember that you have a template for a press release you can send out on a completed ramp. Simply fill out the template with the appropriate information and send it to your local TV stations, newspapers and magazines along with before, during and after photos. If the client is in a photo, you will need to secure a signed photo release. The photo consent form has also been emailed to you. Remember to identify the people in the photos.

Also let the local media know about our "100 Miles of Freedom" sponsors: St. David's Foundation, Toyota, State Farm, Alphagraphics and H-E-B. Their logos are on the back of your shirts. Their support has been critical to the success of this celebration.

Board member Sandy Knutson is chair of the 100th Mile committee. If you have questions, you may contact her at sjkbits@aol.com. If you need assistance with a press release, contact Kay Champagne at kfchamp@iit.net.

Volunteer Spotlight: Lynn Patterson, Texarkana North Coordinator



High school principal and cattle rancher. If that's not an odd enough combination, throw in officiating at basketball games, exploring family genealogy, and building wheelchair ramps. All the corners are rounded.

Lynn Patterson, area coordinator for Lamar, Red River and Delta counties in TRP's Texarkana North region, is indeed unique. He grew up in the Brookston community and spent 35 years as a teacher and coach in Lamar County schools, with the last 16 years as principal at Chisum High School in Paris. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in education from East Texas State University. He retired in 2011 to western Lamar County, where he is owner and operator of Patterson Brangus.

Lynn became aware of TRP by attending a workshop that John Laine presented at the Texas-Oklahoma District Kiwanis Convention held in Rockwall in the summer of 2011. Lynn was president of the local Kiwanis Club at that time and asked John to come to Paris and speak at a meeting. As they say, the rest is history. Paris Kiwanians have built more than 250 ramps in the three counties ever since.

"Building ramps is a service project that gives immediate positive reinforcement to its participants," says Lynn. "Seeing the look and response from someone who has been homebound getting freedom at last is so rewarding. Building ramps allows our club and me personally to help others in a way that we as individuals could not."

Lynn has a wide variety of interests. He is an active member of the Kiwanis Club of Paris and has served as a lieutenant governor of the Texas-Oklahoma Kiwanis District. He is also president of the Lamar County Imagination Library Foundation, which provides free, age-appropriate books for preschool children. He is currently serving as president of the Friends and Alumni Association of Paris Junior College. He also serves as president of the Paris chapter of the Texas High School Basketball Officials Association.

Lynn and Marvin Ann, his wife of 45 years, are members of Calvary United Methodist Church in Paris. Marvin Ann is retired after serving 22 years as district clerk of Lamar County. They have two married sons, Matt and Kyle, and five grandchildren. Lynn and Matt have done extensive research on the Patterson family history in the Brookston area.

Governor Recognizes TRP Milestone

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has signed a proclamation citing the Texas Ramp Project for building 100 miles of ramps. The document reads, in part, "In 40 regions across Texas and by building nearly 20,000 ramps, you have brought safety, independence, and a better quality of life to Texans with disabilities and their families. Your dedication to those in need highlights the best of the Lone Star State."

You can view the proclamation on the TRP web site at www.texasramps.org/100-miles-of-freedom.

Your Build Pictures Tell our Story

By Madison Lopez, SMU Board Fellow

The "100 Miles of Freedom" celebration is here, and we need to see your smiling faces! As the word spreads about TRP's work during this exciting celebration of 100 miles, more and more people are searching for TRP online. This means we have an unprecedented opportunity to tell our story through photos. As they say, a picture is like a thousand words, and TRP certainly has a beautiful story to tell.

You are part of the story, so we want you to help tell that story. Post often on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, and when possible, use the hashtag #TexasRampProject when you post photos. When someone clicks on the hashtag, they will be able to see a collection of great photos from volunteers and clients alike.

You can help us convey a message of service and strength and a story of resilience and community by posting pictures of crews working together on a build, smiling and laughing faces, and volunteers wearing TRP masks and shirts.

As a storyteller, you can transform our grand tale of strength and community into much more than a hopeful narrative. The stories told through your photos translate into a bigger, realistic impact.

When people see the tangible outcomes of TRP's work, they are encouraged to participate themselves. When they see the stories come to life, they are encouraged to give. Your photos spark curiosity and hopefulness. At the close of a whirlwind and oftentimes turbulent 2020, a ray of hope in the form of a "good news post" may be just what someone needs to help them see that good exists in our world and happy endings are still possible.

You are the storyteller during this celebration, and we are so excited for that hopeful message of helping our community to spread like a best-seller.

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@tx_ramp_project

Facebook:

Facebook.com/texasramps

Twitter:

@TexasRamps

LinkedIn:

Texas Ramp Project

H-E-B Adds Bonus for San Antonio Clients



Team leader Jim Hoffmans presents San Antonio resident Juan Pena with an H-E-B gift card after a group of nine volunteers from the Young Men's Service League built Mr. Pena a ramp on November 21. H-E-B provided gift cards for 11 San Antonio clients who received a ramp as part of the Texas Ramp Project's "100 Miles of Freedom" celebration. H-E-B was one of the major sponsors for the campaign. H-E-B also provided a \$2,500 grant for the San Antonio region earlier this year.

Ramp of the Month: Williamson County Ramp Withstands Test of Time

Larry Baird, the Williamson County regional coordinator, was able to locate the first ramp built by his team back in August 2012. Larry recently met with the current occupant of the house. Larry spoke with Ms. Bobby S, the niece and caregiver for the original occupant until her death in 2014. Larry and Bobby shared memories of how this ramp was the first one that Larry built without John Laine's assistance.



Vines and all, but still a great looking ramp.

As they recalled, Larry asked girls from Southwestern University to paint **only the deck**. Instead, they painted the entire ramp until they ran out of paint, which was only half of the ramp. Not the best way to start building for the Texas Ramp Project! After checking out the ramp, however, Larry and Bobby agreed that it had withstood eight years of weather quite well, even with vines wrapped around some of the rails.

Larry said, "Every time I pass the house, I think of what we did and how far we have come from No. 1 to No. 399." Larry then located two of the original build team members, Bill Connor and Bob Koska. They all met at the site for a picture and agreed the ramp has withstood the last eight years better than any one of them had!



Bill Connor Larry Baird Ms. Bobby S. Bob Kostka

Larry's region is going strong and just announced construction of their 400th ramp. There are seven teams serving Williamson County and Northern Travis County. Each team is well seasoned, having their own lead and dedicated builders who have built over 40 ramps each. The work of the Texas Ramp Project continues, and the test of time has not weathered their spirits and dedication.



Message from Garner McNett, TRP's Board President

I bring you greetings from the members of the board of the Texas Ramp Project and each of our families to each of you and your families. It is the 1st of December, the beginning of the holiday season, and the very last month in a year that we will all remember for its human problems and challenges.

I share the gut-wrenching sadness with each of you when we see the loss of life, the crowded ICUs, and the long lines of families waiting for food. At the same time, I am filled with joy when I see each week the gifts of mobility and freedom of movement and the kindness that each of you brings to our neighbors and the less fortunate in our community. That we are celebrating 100 miles of built ramps is simply astounding, and that we will soon build our 20,000th ramp is hard to believe.

We cannot solve all the problems of the world, but together we have made a real difference in the lives of 20,000 families. The fact that we are all volunteers and give willingly of our time and resources to the less fortunate makes these TRP milestones so much sweeter and more meaningful. The Texas Ramp Project is such an extraordinary organization, and it is made up of such extraordinarily kind and giving people. It is a great honor for me to be part of this.

So, to each of you from each of us, a very Happy, Healthy, and Safe Christmas and New Year. As always, many thanks for all you do.

Garner McNett, President

DO: Please 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.



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