



Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

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March 2021

Dear Friends,

I hope that all of you survived that nasty spate of weather we just went through with minimal disruption (and water pipes intact). That was a reminder for us about what winter is like along the Canadian border, and it was certainly difficult, to say the least.

We would ask that you try a slightly different approach this month. The suggestion is to build more of the smaller ramps this month to boost our build numbers and chop a hole in our backlog. In other words, instead of building that 40-foot ramp, use the same crew to build two ramps in the 16- to 24-foot category. This will numerically boost our build numbers, spread our limited funds among more clients, and perhaps help us raise some additional funding from our grant sponsors.

The trick will probably be to find sites close enough to one another that you won't need to spend too much time driving. The weather seems to be moderating nicely, **so let's keep masking up** and make some sawdust fly.

As always, thank you for your efforts on behalf of elderly and disabled individuals in Texas.

John Laine,
Executive Director

Grants Received

TRP is pleased to report a grant of \$35,000 from the Harry E. & Eda L. Montandon Charitable Trust. This is the second large gift to TRP from this trust. It is an unrestricted grant, which means it can be used to support operations or applied anywhere in the state where an infusion of funds is needed.

Other recent grants include:

- The Perry & Ruby Stevens Foundation, \$15,000 for San Antonio Northwest
- Harold Simmons Foundation, \$5,000 for Dallas
- Golden K Kiwanis, \$3,000 for North Central Texas East/Hunt County
- South Texas Electric Cooperative, \$1,000 for Victoria

Local Funding for Austin East



Second Chance Emporium has donated \$5,000 to the Texas Ramp Project to buy ramp materials in Fayette County. Pictured (from left) are Gayle Schielack, store director; Julia Thomas, assistant store director; and Frank Smith, Texas Ramp Project regional coordinator. (Photo courtesy of The Fayette County Record, February 1, 2021)

Second Chance Emporium is a resale store in La Grange. It was organized in 1996 by a coalition of local churches. Like TRP, most work is done by volunteers. Since inception, Second Chance Emporium has provided \$2.9 million in profits to local human services organizations, including TRP.

Also in January, Frank's Austin East region received \$1,000 from the Fayette County General Fund and \$500 each from Fayette Savings Bank and Round Top State Bank. This is a fine example of local fundraising, which is critical to the success of our regions. Job well done, Frank.

Texas Ramp Project: Your Build Pictures Tell Our Story By Madison Lopez, Social Media Editor

During an age where it seems we cannot escape technology, we must be reminded of the power of social media—how it can be utilized as a force for good or bad. With what often feels like never-ending information and discouraging stories floating about in cyberspace, there is a unique opportunity to be a light. If you have a social media presence, your online voice holds the potential for encouragement and positive change, and I am certain we can agree that our world needs more of that.

By engaging with TRP's social media presence and sharing your own builds and experiences, you are able to shine a ray of needed light. This can come in the form of a fellow TRP volunteer, who finds themselves discouraged for any reason, lighting up at

the sight of the great TRP work shared on Facebook. It can come in the form of your social media post about an exciting and impactful volunteer experience putting the idea to volunteer in the mind of someone who has not served their community in a long time. It can come in the form of a TRP Instagram post that reminds a college student that we can still serve our neighbors even during difficult times. The possibilities are endless for how one positive TRP post can change someone's day or desire to volunteer. Small things can make a big difference. Let's utilize social media as one of the means to create big differences.

March's Social Media Feature: East Texas Military Veteran Peer Network



The East Texas Military Veteran Peer Network is new to Instagram this month, and they are already sharing about their local builds. Way to go, guys! This post was captioned "Teamwork makes the dream work!!! MVPN had the veteran, and TRP had the service. We came together teamwork and made it happen."

#MVPN #Veteran #Teamwork #GreaterGood

@east_texas_mvpn

We are so thankful for your service and commitment to your local communities. Well done!

Keep sharing your fun TRP pictures, so our newly found social media momentum continues to grow in 2021. Tell your friends to follow us on social media here:

Instagram:
@tx_ramp_project

Facebook:
Facebook.com/texasramps

Twitter:
@TexasRamps

LinkedIn:
Texas Ramp Project

SMU Board Fellow: Natalia Martinez

The Texas Ramp Project is welcoming another SMU Board Fellow in 2021. Natalia Martinez is a graduate student in Southern Methodist University's professional program, studying strategy and analytics. She will spend the year as an ex officio member on TRP's board, offering her considerable skills and insights while getting real-world experience in the nonprofit world.

Natalia has spent eight years at American Airlines in Fort Worth, the last six as a senior financial analyst. She is responsible for building budgets and forecasts and producing monthly financial summaries. She has created accounting manuals, implemented new processes, and developed training classes. She also served as a cultural improvement team leader.



These are all skills that can be brought to bear at TRP. Natalia's technical expertise, as well as her finance and analytical skills, are a welcome addition to the board. One of her early thoughts is to run a design thinking session to generate ideas on how to attract volunteers. She is also interested in long-term strategic planning and development of a Google ads program.

Natalia is a Jersey girl, having grown up in the Atlantic City area as the oldest of eight children. She made her way to Utah Valley University, where she earned a degree in political science. She ended up in Dallas when her first employer, US Airways, merged with American.

What she loves about the Texas Ramp Project is that it's entirely volunteer-based and very hands-on. Before joining TRP, she volunteered at the Oak Cliff Veggie Project, a community garden and food distribution organization in South Dallas. When not working, attending school or volunteering, Natalia enjoys reading, attending music festivals and concerts, skiing, hiking, rock climbing, snorkeling and traveling.

"I hope to offer the board another set of hands to push things across the finish line, no matter what it is," Natalia says. "Experiences like those always help center me and help me to continue to cultivate that gratitude for life that is so important."

The Board Fellows Program was started in 2018 by SMU's Hegi Family Career Development Center and the Office of Social Change and Intercultural Engagement. Last year's SMU Board Fellow, Madison Lopez, is now a regular member of TRP's board and manages our social media program.

Volunteer Team Spotlight: San Antonio Central Region/Abiding Presence Lutheran Church

Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in San Antonio has been building with TRP since 2015, but it could have faltered in 2017 when the team leader was no longer able to lead the team. At that time, leadership of the team fell to Spike Hubenak, who had been building with the team for several years. Abiding Presence is a great team of well-seasoned volunteers who continue to build faithfully one weekend a month.

Spike reports that the team has approximately 30 members with about one-third of them showing up consistently every month. In the last six years, this team has built a total of 87 ramps, with a total length of 2,425 feet (just shy of a one-half mile) and 2,721 volunteer hours. During 2020, the team took a five-month hiatus but has now returned to a regular building schedule.

The team knows this is a rewarding mission, plus they have fun doing it. But the best gift comes when a client says it has made all the difference in their life as they have freedom to safely come and go from their home.



Spike making sawdust fly.



Spike (blue 100 Mile Celebration shirt) and team.

Ramp of the Month: North Central Texas Region: Parker County



The sign says it all: "Let's ramp."



Call to Action!



Edward's new 56-foot ramp was built by 14 members of the Parker County team, who donated a combined 42 hours of volunteer labor.



“Ultimate Gift” Service Project: You don’t want to miss seeing this

Last week, we sent this video out to the newsletter mailing list. In case you missed it or haven’t watched it yet, now is the time. It is so well done, it deserves another look.

The Young Men’s Service League Cedar Park Chapter joined with Travis and Williamson County TRP team leaders for an “Ultimate Gift” service project. During two days in November, YMSL youths and their moms built four extra-long ramps. YMSL provided this terrific video of their service on those days. Find it at:

https://youtu.be/T3W0_16vqh0

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 sjkbits@aol.com.

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