



## **Texas Ramp Project Newsletter**

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April 2021

**Dear Friends,**

As we move into April, things seem to be getting a bit stronger with respect to volunteer involvement. All we have achieved has been borne on the tide of volunteer endeavors, and the pandemic's insidious impact has weakened our volunteer numbers. Now, as people get their vaccinations, we appear to be turning the tide back toward earlier times, when the pandemic was not such a difficult factor.

Regardless of their participation in building ramps, we need to encourage our volunteers to get vaccinated for their own safety. The vaccinations are becoming more widely available day by day, so we need to make it a goal to have each of our volunteers receive them. I have received both Moderna shots with absolutely no negative reactions whatever.

We hope that you all will join us in this measure to protect your own health. It should also be noted that building out of doors in the fresh moving air is one of the safest activities that you are a part of. The most dangerous situations occur indoors among large numbers of people in still air.

So please get vaccinated as soon as possible if you have not already done so.

Happy Easter, John

John Laine,  
Executive Director

### **Grants Received**

TRP has received a \$25,000 challenge grant covering 14 East Texas counties from the Carl C. Anderson, Sr. and Marie Jo Anderson Charitable Foundation. A part of this funding is being offered as a match for East Texas Giving Day, set for April 27, 2021. The five area coordinators are being advised to look for local funding so TRP can claim these challenge funds.

TRP has also received two \$10,000 grants from our corporate sponsor, State Farm. One is for the Dallas region, which is hoping that State Farm employees will be able to return as volunteers as soon as the pandemic is under control. The other is for Central and South Texas, where ramps will be built with the participation of State Farm agents. The Dallas region also received a \$5,000 grant from the Numotion Foundation.

## Meet TRP Board Member: Matt McGillen

Matt McGillen is a man with a lot of interests. That's one of the reasons TRP is glad Matt took an interest our work.

Matt started building ramps about 13 years ago as part of a Random Acts of Kindness group. He was invited to participate when another volunteer learned Matt had worked for 10 years as a carpenter. Within a few months he was a team leader.

Matt has been on the TRP board since 2015 and in March 2021 assumed responsibility for ramp construction in Denton County.



In just the first month of his new role he has led five builds and has two 40-foot ramps scheduled for April. He has a backlog of about 25 referrals

Matt grew up in Seattle and graduated from Central Washington University with a degree in communications. He spent two decades as a sportswriter. In addition to this stint and the carpentry, he has been an installation technician for AT&T and, most recently, facility manager of a large 24 Hour Fitness. He also studied at Trinity Lutheran College in Seattle to be a youth and family leader.

An inveterate athlete, Matt has been competing in Masters Track and Field (for people 35+) for 17 years. He has won state championships in Texas, Florida, Oklahoma and Louisiana in high jump and javelin. He finished as high as third at the USATF Masters national track meet in the high jump and second in javelin. He has also played fastpitch softball for 45 years. His teams have won several national and world championships, most recently in 2020.

As if that's not enough, Matt plays piano and builds furniture. He has three adult children and three grandsons, ages 14, 8 and 20 months.

"I've done several kinds of volunteering," Matt says, "but building ramps (maybe 250 in the last 13 years) is the most rewarding. You go to someone's residence that doesn't have a ramp and in four hours they have one, for people with special needs who likely couldn't afford one. And the TRP volunteers, who come from all kinds of backgrounds and world views, are so generous with their time and energy."

## Lumber Costs Have Skyrocketed

To illustrate the dramatic jump in costs, here is a comparison of the initial cost of an 8-foot ramp in February 2020 and what the same ramp cost in March 2021.

COST OF 8' SECTION OF RAMP			
	#	Feb-20	Mar-21
2X6X8'	5	29.69	61.38
2X4X8'	6	26.85	73.65
2X4X10' (uprights)	1.5	8.32	17.84
4x4x8'	0.75	5.33	10.96
4x8' plywood	1	34.12	56.60
Lag Bolts(110/BX)	8	3.84	3.84
Screws(1000/Bucket)	96	9.22	9.22
concrete 8x8	2	1.92	2.31
TOTAL		119.29	235.79
% INCREASE in COST: 98%			

These numbers courtesy of TRP's Austin & San Antonio regions.

We suggest teams consider building smaller ramps during this time of higher costs. Instead of building a 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 and address the backlog of those waiting to be built, while spreading our limited funds among more clients.

Additionally, consider finding sites close enough to one another to reduce the driving time spent when surveying and building. The weather seems to be moderating nicely, so let's keep masking up and make some sawdust fly. See what can be done to add more of the shorter ramps to your builds.

Consider using this cost comparison chart when you go into potential local funding sources. Remind them that the Texas Ramp Project provides a safe way for people with mobility issues to remain in their own homes. An \$800 to \$1,000 ramp from TRP can save taxpayers up to \$80,000 a year for a person to live in a nursing facility.

## Walmart: Funding Source for You

Recently, Roland Guzman secured a \$1,000 grant from the local Walmart in Castroville. All he had to do was go to the store and tell TRP's story to the manager. The store manager said yes, apply for a \$1,000 grant. Roland notified Kay Champagne, who wrote the grant. Within a week the store manager had OK'd the request, and two weeks later a check arrived. Simple? Give it a try. For more information, contact Kay at [kfchamp@iit.net](mailto:kfchamp@iit.net).

## Texas Ramp Project: Your Build Pictures Tell Our Story

By Madison Lopez, Social Media Editor

Is Instagram easier to use than Facebook? Many of us use Facebook to stay connected to TRP, but you may not know that Instagram is one of the easiest ways to see some of the great TRP builds happening across the state. The simplicity of Instagram lies in its sole focus on visual media. By joining the TRP Instagram community, you can see short "stories" that capture recent builds. "Stories" only last for 24 hours, so consider them exclusive content. You can tell when these stories are available to view when a bright colored circle surrounds the TRP profile photo at the top of your screen.

If you search "#texasrampproject" on Instagram, you will see pictures from other groups' recent builds, an exciting way to connect with fellow volunteers. And the best part, you can share your own photos and videos for other TRP folks to see. We will share your post through the "stories" feature, so even more people can see your amazing work. We can't wait to see what you will share!

Check out this month's social media feature. The group My Brother's Keeper has been a longtime Instagram poster of some great TRP builds. We love their photos! The captions noted that the ramps pictured here were the group's 22nd and 23<sup>rd</sup> completed ramps. Way to go guys!

Give them an Instagram follow @mbk\_fumc.







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

## **Remember to Sign Up for AmazonSmile:**

AmazonSmile is a way for customers to support their favorite charitable organization every time they shop with Amazon.

Shoppers who start at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) will find the same Amazon they know and love, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the price of eligible purchases to the charity of your choice.

Signing up is easy. Use the following link to sign up with AmazonSmile so a percentage of your Amazon purchases goes to the Texas Ramp Project.

<https://blog.aboutamazon.com/community/how-to-sign-up-for-amazonsmile>

## Volunteer Spotlight: Roland Guzman, San Antonio South Regional Coordinator



If you want to meet a real hustler, look no further than Roland Guzman. Just in the last few months, he took possession of two semi loads of lumber donated by Home Depot. He got Home Depot to fund and build a ramp for a veteran in Corpus Christi. He mustered employees from the local Medina Electric Cooperative to build five ramps in April.

Roland contracted polio as a baby and has faced many obstacles to access. As a wheelchair user, he knows what hurdles stairs, curbs and uneven terrain pose to a person with a disability. When the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law in 1990, Roland was overjoyed.

Roland was born in Edinburg and grew up in Corpus Christi. He earned a degree in vocational education from the University of Texas – Pan American in Edinburg and taught until Texas phased out his program. After a stint selling Western hats, he became an aircraft mechanic at Corpus Christi Army Depot, where he chaired the People with Disabilities group. He retired in 1998 after a diagnosis of post-polio syndrome and moved to San Antonio.

That same year he was appointed by Texas Gov. George W. Bush to the Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities, where he served for 12 years. While at a committee meeting in Austin, he ran into John Laine. Roland helped build a ramp at an Austin expo, then demonstrated it in his wheelchair. Before long he was building ramps in San Antonio and, when asked, took over as coordinator of the four San Antonio South counties.

Roland's partner in ramps is Susie, his wife of 38 years. Susie is a retired elementary schoolteacher, having served 30 years in both Corpus and San Antonio schools. She retired in 2008 and now accompanies Roland on nearly all surveys and builds. The Guzmans have two adult sons and a daughter and two year-old grandsons.

The Guzmans have partnered in another role as well. They have hosted 38 foreign exchange students, including a young man from South Korea this year. They are currently regional coordinators for Education First, a student exchange program. Roland has also been active in the Knights of Columbus for over 35 years.

"As a person with a disability and in a wheelchair, I understand the need of accessibility by use of a ramp first-hand," he says. We are so glad Roland and TRP found each other.



## Ramp of the Month: Houston Region, Harris County

Mr. Antonio G., 81, was referred by Davita Denver Harbor Dialysis because he was unable to walk by himself without assistance. Before he actually got to use his ramp, he passed away. However, his wife, Erlene, also has mobility issues, which could be helped with a ramp. So Erlene is now enjoying her new 24-foot ramp, built by five volunteers from Christ Memorial Lutheran Church. These volunteers donated 27 hours of labor. Out of her loss came a gift that will allow her to safely come and go from her home.



A moment of thanksgiving with Erlene and the volunteers.

## Fourth Year in a Row: GuideStar Gold Seal of Transparency



The Texas Ramp Project has been awarded the 2021 GuideStar Gold Seal of Transparency for the fourth year in a row. TRP has had a presence in the GuideStar database of U.S. nonprofits since 2006. To earn the Gold Seal of Transparency, however, TRP must update its information and financials on a regular basis. GuideStar is the world's largest source of information about nonprofit organizations and a reference source for foundations that award grants to nonprofits. In February 2019, GuideStar merged with Foundation Center to become Candid.

### 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](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.

