



Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

April 2019

Welcome regional coordinators, team leaders, volunteers and everyone who wants to be part of "Building Freedom for the Homebound" to our first monthly newsletter. Feel free to liberally pass this newsletter on to others within your region. Hopefully, you will find that it is filled with useful information, building hints and tips, data collection updates and processes, client stories, and special announcements and recognitions.

Be sure to check out the *Question and Answer Forum*. It will be a place where we can discuss issues that are relevant to your work, ask questions, hopefully, support and help improve the way the TRP does the great work it does. Watch for future issues on how to submit questions and responses for the *Q&A Forum*.

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

Greetings from John Laine, Executive Director

Our first attempt at creating a Texas Ramp Project newsletter brings to print something that we have desired to do for some time – sharing the thoughts of our board members with the many volunteers who support our efforts across Texas. The ramps that you provide for the elderly and disabled are the very soul of our project. It brings us into widely spread communities across our state to share our vision that no one in Texas should lack safe access for financial reasons. As a follow-up to our recent statewide meeting, this newsletter will further our efforts to bring all of us closer together in our shared service to others.

I have had the opportunity to meet many of you while traveling on behalf of the project. I never leave a build site without feeling buoyant about what you have accomplished there. There is so much need for our ramps that one always feels gratified to have been able to provide that assistance in a short span of time.

Future messages will be more directed at special needs and ways to improve our process. This message is far more general. I just want to share my personal gratitude

for all of the time and talent that each of you bring to the Texas Ramp Project. You have provided nearly 17,000 ramps to our fellow Texans and brought relief to countless caregivers while relieving many EMS crews of the necessity to go to a home and bring someone out safely. What you have really done is provide access to a world that has been blocked to our clients. You have helped them to get medical care, to get out and go shopping, to go to a movie and to visit friends. We share the thanks of our clients for what you do each month – you give them back their hope. There is no greater gift.

Thank you all, John

Statewide Texas Ramp Project Conference – a Great Success

On a blustery weekend over February 8 and 9, 84 TRP regional coordinators, team leaders, supportive spouses, volunteers and TRP board members met together in Austin at the Marriott Austin South for a day and a half of sharing building stories, celebrating accomplishments, and learning about the many facets of running the Texas Ramp Project and how each region is an integral part of this work.

Attendees were welcomed at Friday evening's banquet by John Laine, TRP's Executive Director. He in turn introduced the three speakers for the evening: Dr. Judith Voress, President of the Donald D. Hammill Foundation, Sandi Gray of Heart to Heart Hospice, and Pete Gonzales of Bexar County Juvenile Probation Services. The cadre of speakers illustrated the various perspectives that comprise the underpinnings of TRP: funding, volunteer and referral development, and community service.

Saturday's agenda was divided into four topics with several presenters for each session. In the morning we heard about several approaches to volunteer recruitment, team development and support, followed by a session on the multiple aspects of funding TRP's work. The afternoon sessions focused on administration and ramp construction.

Each session had some time for Q & A. Excellent questions were raised, as were beneficial suggestions. To provide answers to the questions raised along with information that may be useful in the regions, TRP is planning a monthly newsletter that will both address questions raised at the conference and share the happenings of TRP throughout the state.

One attendee commented on the evaluation form: "Very informative conference that re-energized my appreciation of TRP. A highly constructive conference."

Thank you to Linda Stopani, for being our conference photographer. Maybe you can see yourself in one of them below?



Pre-Conference Conversations with John Laine (almost visible, second from the right)



John's Welcome and Dinner



Volunteer Session, Presenters in Readiness



Construction Session, Module Building



Attentive Conference Attendees



Submitting Evaluations and Back to the Regions

Special Recognition: TRP Receives GuideStar's 2019 Gold Seal of Transparency.

GuideStar has announced that the Texas Ramp Project has earned its 2019 Gold Seal of Transparency. GuideStar is the world's largest source of information on nonprofit organizations. A GuideStar Seal of Transparency indicates that a nonprofit has provided key information in its nonprofit profile. By providing up-to-date information, nonprofits allow potential donors and funders to make educated decisions about the work they do to make the world a better place.

Make sure to liberally share this information with your referral sources, TRP funding sources and potential funding sources. This is really a wonderful accomplishment for which you can be very excited and proud.

Question & Answer Forum

Calculating Volunteer Hours

The number of hours volunteers donate to the Texas Ramp Project is a vital statistic. It helps us convince foundations and other donors that our work is valuable, and it helps us determine if we are building efficiently.

We have found over the years that the total number of volunteer hours comes out to be roughly one hour per foot of ramp.

Correctly calculating volunteer hours, however, is part science, part art. The simplest formula is to multiply the number of volunteers by the number of hours it takes to build the ramp. If you have six volunteers and it takes four hours to build your ramp, the total number of volunteer hours would be 24. The hours typically start when the volunteers reach the site and end when the obligatory group photo is snapped.

Although our average ramp might meet the approximation of one hour per foot, each ramp build has its variations. For instance, if we have to tear down an old ramp or a porch, trim a tree, clear out trash or brush, it will add hours on the site and increase total hours worked.

Conversely, if there are far too many volunteers at a site, it may artificially inflate the number of hours because only a few workers will probably be fully engaged. It would then be reasonable to reduce total hours closer to the one-hour-per-foot guideline, based on the team leader's judgment.

Travel time to and from the build site is not included. Nor is time spent to survey the property or prebuild modules away from the site by other volunteers, as is sometimes the case. This time is accounted for by our database system, which automatically adds 15% to the total time when the hours are entered.

Once you've figured out the total number of volunteer hours, simply enter that number into the database for "Hours to Completion."