



## Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 2  
February 2020

**Dear Friends,**

We will start this column with a money-saving tip on delivery charges. When we buy from Lowe's on our black Accounts Receivable card, we only get charged \$20. If you advise Home Depot when you order, I believe that they will match this fee based upon their competition policy. It is not unusual to have Home Depot charge us \$80 for a delivery. Please let me know what you find out: \$60 is a lot for two sheets of plywood!

I conducted my first conference designed to meet with existing team leaders and potential new team leaders in San Antonio January 24–25. It is designed as a four-hour classroom session on Friday afternoon and then a build on Saturday, putting into practice what was discussed the day before. We went into it expecting to both teach and learn.

And I did learn. I need to do a better job of clearly stating my objectives up front by showing how and where to find new volunteers. Handing out a binder to each participant would help as well. My next effort will be in the Tyler region, sometime in the next 90 days.

One result that was very beneficial was simply getting all of the key volunteers together in the same room, as many did not know each other—and now they do.

Still learning, John



Roland Guzman (L), Elvia Obregon and George Swarmer



Tom Hagy (L), Tom Canfield and John Laine

## Meet TRP's Newest Board Member: Madison Lopez



The TRP board of directors welcomed a new member at its January meeting, courtesy of Southern Methodist University. Madison Lopez will spend a full year on TRP's board as an SMU Board Fellow—attending meetings as a nonvoting member and participating in committee meetings and other TRP activities.

Madison is a junior at SMU, majoring in political science and human rights with public policy specialization and minoring in history. She is also one of 10 students selected to earn a minor in public policy and international affairs.

Among other highlights, she is co-founder and vice president of justice sector outreach for the SMU Student Alliance Against Human Trafficking. Madison has interned at the George W. Bush Institute in Dallas and the McCain Institute for International Leadership in Washington, D.C.

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. The program allows students to apply skills learned in the classroom to real-world experiences in the nonprofit sector and make a lasting impact on the community.

As Madison attends board meetings and engages with other aspects of TRP operations, she will gain a greater understanding of how the nonprofit fulfills its mission and goals. In return, Madison will have an opportunity to lend her perspective and knowledge, as a young person who has studied nonprofit management, to projects and problems facing the board.

### Phone Inquiries Keep Coming

As reported previously, Gary Gatzlaff is now taking calls that come in via TRP's new website contact number (214-558-0339). Many of the calls are from referred clients asking about the status of their ramp. Gary first checks the database for the referral date and any updated information, such as site survey, scheduling or build status. He has then been referring the caller to the area coordinator.

In some instances, this has resulted in multiple calls to the coordinator, with some clients believing that "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." To prevent this from happening, *Gary will no longer give out the coordinator's name and contact information.* Instead, he will contact the coordinator himself by telephone, text or email. He will ask the coordinator to contact the referral source about the ramp's status. Gary hopes this will relieve coordinators who might be receiving repeat calls.

The whole process would be made even easier if status information, such as a site survey, schedule, or comment about the property, were entered directly into the database as it is learned. Given that information, Gary would be able to answer inquiries without ever asking the coordinator to follow up. It's a winning strategy for everyone—referral source, client and coordinator.

### **Another Way to Help Our Clients**

Gary often gets asked if he knows of organizations that will install small ramps, hand rails or other modifications inside a client's residence. As you know, TRP does not handle these types of modifications. But in the interest of better serving our clients, Gary is compiling a database of providers, contractors or individuals who can provide that service. The database will contain both nonprofit and for-profit resources and will be searchable by area or city. If you know of any resources, please contact Gary at [GaryGatzlaffTexasRamps@gmail.com](mailto:GaryGatzlaffTexasRamps@gmail.com).

# Congratulations

## **2019 Builds Top 2,000**

Volunteers took the Texas Ramp Project to another record year, reporting 2,061 ramps as of mid-January. When final builds are entered into the database, we expect to exceed our goal of 2,100 ramps for the year. Ramps were built in 109 of Texas's 254 counties. Overall, volunteers built over 10.6 miles of ramps in just 12 months. They contributed some 59,000 hours of donated labor, a value of \$1.5 million.

The Dallas region again led the pack, with 347 ramps, followed by East Texas Tyler with 184, Tarrant County with 155, Austin Central 138, Abilene 125, and San Antonio Central 112. But even the less populated of TRP's 42 regions turned in stellar performances, helping boost total output. Amarillo, Austin South, Bryan/College Station, North Central Texas (East and West), Texoma and Waco all contributed at least 50 ramps to the total.

Texas is home to more than 1.6 million older adults and people with disabilities, at least a quarter of whom can't afford a ramp. Congratulations to volunteers in every corner of the state who made it possible for these vulnerable people to receive safe access and a much improved quality of life.

### **TRP Model Thriving as New Mexico Ramp Project**

The New Mexico Ramp Project was formed as a New Mexico nonprofit corporation in July 2019. Doug Rowley, the New Mexico executive director, had more than four years of experience working with the Texas Ramp Project before moving to Las Cruces. Currently, NMRP is actively building ramps in Laguna, Las Cruces, metro Albuquerque, Carlsbad and Sandoval County, with the long-term goal of building ramps throughout New Mexico. The NMRP can be contacted at [info@nmramp.org](mailto:info@nmramp.org).

## Ramps of the Month: Travis and Williamson Counties

Ms. Betty U. is 84 years old and lives in Austin, Travis County. Betty has cancer, has a feeding tube and uses a rollator walker. Her home has five steps, and it was dangerous for her to try and navigate the steps with the walker. Donna Taylor's team worked with a new group of volunteers from Task Rabbit, who call themselves "Taskers." The Taskers partnered with volunteers from Redeemer Lutheran Church to build Betty's new 43-foot ramp. They contributed a total of 84 volunteer hours. The St. David's Foundation sign (bottom right picture) announced to the neighborhood who was responsible for funding Betty's ramp. The referral was from Wellmed, another strong supporter of TRP's work.



There was a lot of excitement at the build site, as Betty's happy spirit was contagious for everyone at the build. Smiles all around!

Young Alessandro R. is a 5-year-old boy with cerebral palsy. His mother was carrying him up and down the five wooden steps to their modular home in Georgetown, Williamson County, which wasn't safe for either of them. Alessandro does have a power wheelchair, but he is not able to use it at school as his mom has been unable to get it out of the house. So he has had to rely on his manual wheelchair and pediatric walker when at school or in the community. Eleven volunteers from the Georgetown Rotary, led by George Lourigan, built Alessandro a 56-foot ramp, donating 55 hours of volunteer labor. Alessandro and his family are now able to come and go safely from their home, plus he now has the opportunity to use his power chair. This is yet another ramp funded by St. David's Foundation. Aveanna Healthcare made the referral.



Alessandro is enjoying his new ramp, surrounded by happy volunteers.

## **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.