



Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

I have two topics to discuss with you this month – fundraising and building.

The TRP now has a \$25,000 challenge grant, courtesy of the Carl C. Anderson Sr. & Marie Jo Anderson Charitable Foundation of Austin. The funds can be applied anywhere in the state. Matches must be a minimum of \$500; the foundation then awards your region an additional \$500. The maximum match for any region is \$2,000. This challenge is good for 60 days. You may submit multiple checks simultaneously so long as the sum of those checks is \$500 or greater. First-come, first-served on this opportunity!

I built for the first time in quite a while Saturday in Longview and really enjoyed myself. I have another build planned for this coming Saturday. Other than that, I am looking for other sites to start to refill my schedule, which at this point is largely empty. I will be working in the Victoria region and would welcome suggestions from any of you if you would like me to come to your region, either to develop a new build team where you have none or to restart an existing team that has been idle. All the tools needed for the volunteers are bouncing around the back of my car. Just send me an email!

Please remember to wear masks and to carry hand sanitizer as well as spray disinfectant for the tools. The primary method of contracting the virus is by inhaling airborne droplets. Your mask protects others from you, but NOT you from others. So it's best that all volunteers are wearing masks if possible.

With best regards,
John Laine, TRP Executive Director

May Grants Boost San Antonio Region

TRP is pleased to announce a \$50,000 grant from the Kronkosky Charitable Foundation and a \$12,000 grant from The Greehey Family Foundation, both of San Antonio. The Kronkosky Foundation has provided grants of this magnitude since 2010. The Greehey Foundation has been a generous funder since 2013. Their donations have been instrumental in allowing the San Antonio Project to build more than 1,700 ramps over the years. A big thank you to both of these generous foundations.

Meet TRP Board Member: Treasurer, Donna Burton



Managing finances at the Texas Ramp Project is a complex assignment. Not only does the treasurer have to track all income and expenses, she must do it for 40 different regions and, in many cases, for scores of individual counties. Not to mention budgeting, writing checks, filing taxes, and managing audits.

So TRP is most grateful to Donna Burton, who has adeptly filled the role of treasurer for the past two and one-half years. In addition to her own private clients, Donna spends untold hours each week handling Ramp Project finances. She has spent over 20 years in financial management, including as accounting manager for Federated Department Stores.

A native of Illinois, Donna came to Dallas to attend SMU and, except for a few years in Washington state, she has lived in Texas ever since. She earned a master's degree in business administration and finance from the University of North Texas and has been a Certified Public Accountant since 1987.

Donna lives in Dallas with her husband, Russell, a retired Pepsico executive. They have three adult children and a 2-year-old grandson in Oregon. Donna and Russell enjoy spending time at their Hill Country retreat on the Frio River, on property that has been in Russell's family for 60 years. In her spare time, she likes to read, travel and play tennis.

A member of King of Glory Lutheran Church in Dallas, Donna serves as treasurer of the church's foundation and is former treasurer, audit committee chair, and finance chair for the church. She also served as co-chair of the King of Glory Impact Dallas! Committee, which includes the Texas Ramp Project as one of its outreach programs.

Getting Back to Business

Ramp construction started picking up May 1 when Gov. Abbott lifted some of the state restrictions on group gatherings. For instance, Dallas region volunteers built 24 ramps through May 24, with another nine scheduled before month-end. Area coordinator Gary Stopani reports that while most company employee groups have canceled their planned builds, many regulars continue to participate. Especially willing are moms and boys from the Young Men's Service League.

Gary says that referrals were down in April but appear to be rebounding as social workers return to the field. Team leaders have surveyed 60 ramps in the past three weeks, with about two-thirds of them viable and ready to go. Masks on site are optional, but there is plenty of spray disinfectant and hand sanitizer. Close contact with the client is avoided. As in the past few months, please remember as you open up to observe all federal, state and local regulations, maintain social distancing to the extent possible, and keep disinfectant on hand. **Your safety is our first priority.**

A Great Commission for Ramps

Gary and Nancy Strunk moved to San Marcos in 2013 to be near family. Since then the retired couple have made their mark by helping others. The Strunks immediately threw themselves into service, joining the San Marcos Kiwanis, working with the Salvation Army, tutoring at local apartments, and mentoring at the juvenile center.

And building ramps. The Strunks have participated in over 80 ramp builds, including many by Gary and Nancy working alone. Kay Geurin, area coordinator for the Austin South region that includes Hays and Caldwell counties, marvels that the pair recently built a 36-foot ramp by themselves in just seven hours.



Nancy in blue and Gary in red, hard at work on a ramp.



The Strunks' volunteering led to an April article in the San Marcos *Daily Record*. In it Gary cited the Bible as his guide. "I work on commission—the great commission, giving God all the glory," he said. "He gave us hands to help one another. He gave us hearts to love one another."

Summer 2020 Youth Mission Ramp Building

Youth mission work will be "going local" this year with churches being encouraged to find ways for their youth groups to serve without traveling to other parts of the state. As of May 15, all major organized youth mission trips involving multiple churches have been cancelled, but we will still have opportunities to build ramps with youth members of our respective communities.

If you have worked with youth mission groups before, there will likely be some differences from previous years. Because of this, every church does not necessarily have trained adults. This means TRP volunteers may need to fill in the gaps for church youth groups to build in their home area this summer. Additionally, sharing material costs may be needed this summer due to these changes.

We are working on two possible engagements in Houston and Dallas where TRP will be providing survey, design and possibly construction team leadership to supplement the adult leader skills for youth to build in their communities.

If you hear of any churches in your community that normally send youth out to other parts of the state for summer mission work, use this opportunity to invite them to work with Texas Ramp Project. If you need help setting it up or have any questions about building with youth groups, please don't hesitate to contact me at royh85@verizon.net.

Ramping Up Publicity

The Brown County Ramp Project got some good publicity in the *Brownwood Bulletin* online on May 18. After completing a ramp for a 79-year-old client in the town of May, Texas, one of the volunteers sent a photo and article to the *Bulletin*. The volunteer, Don Holland, does this frequently for the Pecan Valley Kiwanis Club, where he is current president and long-time publicity chair.

This is not the first time the Brown County Ramp Project has gotten publicity. Morris Horton, local coordinator, finds the local media very cooperative. "Every now and then we give them a call, and they always show up," he says. "They've always been good about it. Our newspaper is very supportive of us and other activities in the community."

"We are very thankful that the Brown County community supports us through participating in our annual fundraisers," the club said in a statement. "Without them, we could not do these worthwhile projects."

To learn more about the Pecan Valley Kiwanis Club, check out their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/PecanValleyKiwanisClub.



Members completing the ramp were (from left) Emmett Miller, Royce Roberts, Doug House, Don Holland, Morris Horton, Ralph Watts and Rusty Roberts. [Photo contributed]

This is an example of how easy it might be for TRP projects, especially in smaller towns, to get local publicity. Newspapers and TV stations are always on the lookout for a good success story, and TRP has some of the best. Local publicity can generate new volunteers, referrals and even funding.

You can contact the media prior to a build and ask for coverage. Or, like Don Holland, you can send a photo and information afterward. And as an added bonus, think about mentioning the source of funding for the ramp. It never hurts to give our donors an extra pat on the back.

Texas Ramp Project on Instagram: Use Your Voice to Spread the Word

By Madison Lopez, SMU Board Fellow

Instagram is a great tool to visually share about the Texas Ramp Project and the great work that is being done. TRP is new to this platform and excited to share photos from builds happening in different regions! Be sure to follow us @tx_ramp_project and encourage friends and family to follow as well. Not only will this platform allow us and our committed volunteers to stay visually connected, but we will also be able to reach new, potential volunteers, donors and organizations that want to partner.

The unique thing about social media is that as more people begin to post about something, the number of people that it reaches continues to increase exponentially. We want to leverage this tool for TRP's volunteer and fundraising growth. Word travels fast on Instagram, especially if you follow these three tips to boost TRP's social media presence:

- 1. Use our hashtag and post often!** By using #TexasRampProject, anybody who clicks on the tag will be able to see hundreds of posts about our work and individual builds. Many of these posts are from individual volunteers sharing their experience with TRP or organizations that are proud to work with us. Take part in the action by using the hashtag to spread our message further.
- 2. Take eye catching, colorful pictures and smile!** Based on Instagram data analytics, people are more likely to "like" the picture and click to learn more about TRP if your pictures are bright, clear, and have people! Have a friend take your picture while building, or better yet, take a group photo! If you use the hashtag on your post, you may get your photo featured on the official TRP Instagram account.
- 3. Use "Instagram Stories" to share TRP page content!** Stories are a fun and useful tool on Instagram. When you post a story, it lasts for only 24 hours, but it can encourage your followers to learn more about TRP. Here's how it works: When TRP posts a photo, click on the paper airplane button found just below the photo. This will give you the option to "Add post to your story." Click this option and voila, you have expanded TRP's reach and boosted our social media presence.

Ramp of the Month: East Texas Tyler, Henderson County

Ms. Reba T., an 83-year-old woman, was referred by the Hand Up Network as Reba currently uses either a walker or cane. But her mobility is deteriorating, and she will eventually need to use a wheelchair. A combined team of six volunteers from Smith County Juvenile Services, Immaculate Conception Cathedral, New Days Community Church and Hand Up Network built Reba a 56-foot ramp. It took a total of 30 man-hours to complete this extra-long ramp.



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.

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