



## Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

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**Dear Friends,**

Here it is August and we are now enjoying a bit of a break from traditional Texas weather patterns, with daily highs in the 80s. Whoda thunk? Let's try to take advantage of this meteorological largesse and build some ramps.

I have been building with families, and you can all see on the referral forms which clients are able to provide volunteers. While our traditional sources of volunteers, businesses and churches have dwindled due to concerns about the virus, we still can find volunteers if we build for those clients who have expressed an ability to provide volunteers.

You are all volunteers, and I do not want to minimize your own health concerns at this time. On the other hand, folks still need to get out of their homes safely and, in many cases, you are their only hope.

Please do what you think is best and make sure that you wear a mask and disinfect the tools after each build.

Have a good month

John Laine, TRP Executive Director

### **Grants Received in July**

The Texas Ramp Project has received the first half of a two-year, \$50,000 grant from the Carl C. Sr. and Marie Jo Anderson Charitable Foundation of Austin. The Anderson Foundation has provided challenge grants for 10 years, starting with \$5,000 in 2009. The foundation awarded TRP \$25,000 for 2019, which was matched and recently received. We are now working on getting matches for \$25,000 for 2020. The matches are offered to encourage partners to secure local funding for their region.

Other grants received in July:

- Helen Irwin Littauer Education Trust, \$10,000 for Tarrant County
- Farmers Electric Charitable Foundation, \$5,000 for Hunt and Kaufman counties
- HILCO Electric Trust, \$3,000 for Waco North – Hill County

## Meet TRP Board Member: Peter Heinkel, Vice President



Peter Heinkel is TRP's go-to guy for any kind of analysis, whether it's figuring average cost per foot of ramp or being sure our expenses aren't running away from us. Part of that is because Peter spent 10 years as TRP treasurer, so he knows the ropes. And part of that is because Peter possesses the board's most analytical mind.

As current vice president, Peter offers expertise on general business and financial analysis. He also manages TRP credit cards and U.S. Treasury investments. Peter saw TRP's considerable monetary assets languishing in checking and money market accounts, and his actions over the past few years have yielded good investment income—more money for ramps.

Peter has been building ramps for over 20 years and has been on TRP's board since incorporation as a 501(c)(3) in 2006. He says TRP is the most fulfilling volunteer work he has ever been involved with. That's saying a lot, because he is also a long-time volunteer builder for Habitat for Humanity and a volunteer tax aide for AARP.

Peter was born in Evanston, Illinois, but has lived in the Midwest, Florida and Texas. He even made his home in Milan, Italy, for a while. He settled in Dallas over 25 years ago, working as controller and vice president of finance for Occidental Chemical Corp. Most of his work was in engineering and in business, financial and market analysis. He earned a B.S. degree in civil engineering from Carnegie Mellon University and an M.B.A. from the University of Wisconsin.

Peter and his wife, Jean, have two adult sons and four granddaughters, the oldest just 7. Spare time is spent with the grandchildren and the Heinkels' other love, traveling. Peter and Jean are active members of King of Glory Lutheran Church, Dallas.

### **Texas Ramp Project: Tasting the Effects of Social Distancing** By Madison Lopez, SMU Board Fellow

As we continue adjusting to the realities of social distancing, it is difficult to downplay the impact the past few months have had on many of our lives, perhaps most obviously our social lives. With the onset of quarantine and social distancing measures, we realized many day-to-day interactions were human moments we took for granted. From setting up Zoom meetings and FaceTiming with loved ones to figuring out how to spend endless hours alone at home, something became all the more apparent: Isolation is difficult, and we all need community in our lives.

For many older adults and others with disabilities who may be homebound, this seemingly new reality of isolation is not new. As one CNN writer describes it, an “epidemic of isolation and depression” already existed among this population. Much of the country has felt the shock waves of not being able to come and go from home at will—which gives new impetus to the meaningful and important work of TRP.

The head of MIT’s aging lab, Joe Coughlin, argued in *Forbes* that the suddenness of COVID-19 may help younger generations recognize the everyday impediments that others have long experienced—those whom TRP’s work is directly impacting. He writes, “For the first time, finding a way to overcome social isolation becomes a concern worth thinking about—one that often becomes more pressing as the years pass, mobility becomes a challenge, and social circles shrink.” The parallels between the inconveniences imposed by the pandemic and those of being homebound present a new opportunity to gain a sense of the difficulties our community members who are homebound experience.

The challenge and invitation for TRP is to offer these parallels to those in your social circle and bring up the conversation on social media. As so many people have experienced this taste of what it is like to be unable to leave one’s own home, encourage friends to get involved with TRP’s mission of providing accessibility through community-based action.

## **Young Men’s Service League in the Dallas Region**

Young Men’s Service League (YMSL) has been an integral part of the Dallas region for many years. YMSL is a service organization that incorporates young men and their mothers. We currently have 15 chapters partnering with us. Last fall we had an organizational meeting at King of Glory Lutheran Church to set expectations with the individual chapters and Texas Ramp Project. The chapters were then given the opportunity to reserve dates for 2020.

During the school year, we limit YMSL volunteers to 16 total for each scheduled build. The maximum any one chapter can reserve is eight. During the summer months there is no restriction after May 1. In addition to volunteering, some chapters have provided some of our needs (bits, screws, hardware, etc.). YMSL is a ready source of volunteers. To find out if your area has a chapter, go to <https://ymsl.org/find-a-chapter>. You may be pleasantly surprised.



This 29-foot ramp was built on July 11 with two team leaders and 10 YMSL (North Dallas Chapter) volunteers, who provided 35 hours of labor.

## **Volunteer Spotlight: Kay Guerin, Area Coordinator**

If you want a good example of a servant leader, look no further than Kay Geurin, region coordinator for Austin South (Hays and Caldwell counties) and San Antonio Northeast (Comal and Guadalupe counties). Kay decided about 10 years ago that she wanted to give her time in retirement to a human services organization where there aren't paid employees and most funds go toward helping others. Luckily for the Texas Ramp Project, she chose us.



Kay worked as victim assistance coordinator with the Wichita County criminal district attorney's office, where she started a victim-witness program and represented the DA on numerous boards. She ended her career as a supervisor with Adult Protective Services, first in San Antonio and then in New Braunfels. There she helped start a new nonprofit called Central Texas Advocates for Seniors.

In New Braunfels Kay also became involved with the SOS Food Bank, an ecumenical group of churches and service clubs that distributes food to people who do not have enough. She also joined the New Braunfels Kiwanis and has chaired its service committee for several years. She is a lay reader at St. John's Episcopal Church. She makes several mission trips each year to Mexico, where she gives out food, clothing and other items she and her daughter have collected for the poor.

Kay has always gone full tilt. She earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Midwestern State University, all while working a full-time job and raising two daughters. After retirement she moved to Cibolo to be near her family, which includes five grandchildren. She keeps involved in all their activities. Her other love is travel, and she has enjoyed visits to several Middle Eastern and Asian countries. She lived in Thailand during the Vietnam War.

As area coordinator for four counties, Kay handles all the recordkeeping, assigns teams, and manages four warehouses. She also loves to build ramps. "It just makes my heart swell when I see a client come out of their home and onto the ramp for the first time," she says. "It is a God-giving experience."

## Farewell to Beverly Ford

Long-time volunteer Beverly Ford is stepping back from her duties as region coordinator for Tarrant and Denton counties. Beverly has been with the Texas Ramp Project almost since its beginning in 2006, and up until a few years ago, she supervised the entire North Central Texas region.

Beverly is the consummate volunteer leader. She not only schedules builds for different teams in her area, but also does most of the material buying and can be found building on a site somewhere several times a month. She has also handled the exhaustive paperwork for the local Area Agencies on Aging. Her shoes will be hard to fill.

Beyond the Texas Ramp Project, Beverly volunteers with the Lewisville Fire Department. Two years ago was given a national volunteer of the year award from Hospital Corporation of America for her many years of volunteering at Medical City Lewisville. Beverly has two speeds—stop and go—and with the Texas Ramp Project, it has always been full-speed ahead. Beverly, we wish you and Ron a wonderful retirement.

## Ramps of the Month: Amarillo Region: Potter County

Mr. Gary A., a 53-year-old veteran who lives in Pampa, was referred by Vibra Rehabilitation Hospital. Gary has had both legs amputated and requires a wheelchair, a problem with the three steps at his door. TRP needed to obtain permission from his landlord to build the ramp, which they did. The new 24-foot ramp was built by 10 volunteers from West Texas A&M University, who contributed 30 hours of labor to make Gary's life easier.



Gary and volunteers celebrating the new ramp.

Ms. Carole S., 69, of Amarillo was also referred by Vibra Rehabilitation Hospital. Carole has an above-the-knee amputation and uses a wheelchair. At some point she will be fitted for an artificial leg. Carole lives alone, and the house had two steps and an unsafe ramp. It was difficult and dangerous for her to come and go from her home. Her new 20-foot ramp was built by 10 volunteers from Polk Street United Methodist Church, who donated 40 hours of labor.



Much joy and increased safety for Carole.

## 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).

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