



## Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

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**Dear Friends,**

It is September and we continue to bear the brunt of a Texas summer. Referrals continue to pour in and thousands of clients across the state are trapped in their homes with no safe means of egress. We are locked into this COVID-19 situation, which is crippling that part of our volunteer base revolving around the business workers who come out collectively to help. We should start to see temperatures moderate and have some relief in sight. Over-staffing our build teams is one option to building in the climate since that will allow builders to rotate out and take a break from the harsh conditions. This past Saturday I was on a site that constructed a 54-foot ramp in less than four hours. I think two things helped us – use of canopies, and rotating volunteers hourly, giving everyone a break in the shade.

Please continue to look for referrals that advise us that the family can provide volunteers. Every referral form for the past several months has shown this information at the bottom of the form. This is one way to offset the loss of our traditional workforce provided by churches and businesses.

Please be safe and do what you think is best. Make sure that you wear a mask and disinfect the tools after each build. Additionally, make sure that you keep yourself hydrated. Have a good month  
John Laine, TRP Executive Director

### **Get Ready, Get Set: We're Reaching 100 Miles of Freedom**

This winter the Texas Ramp Project celebrates a huge milestone: construction of 100 miles of ramps! It has taken 35 years to reach this point, including the nearly 2,900 ramps that were built by the Dallas Ramp Project starting in 1985 and the 16,500 built by the statewide Texas Ramp Project since incorporating in 2006.

Because every TRP region has contributed to this milestone, we are asking every region to build at least one ramp in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> Mile. It will take about 200 ramps to complete the whole mile—plenty of opportunity for you to build as many ramps as you want and to celebrate however you wish. The campaign will start on November 15 and run through December 15.

This milestone presents an opportunity for TRP to inform and educate health care providers, volunteer organizations, funding sources and the public about how we serve low-income older adults and people with disabilities in communities across Texas. What a perfect time to invite people to “Come build with us.”

The 100<sup>th</sup> Mile presents a great publicity and photo opportunity. We will be calling upon you, our volunteers, to notify your local newspapers and TV stations about your significant builds. We will provide you with media materials and other assistance in increasing awareness about the Texas Ramp Project.

Watch for more information, email blasts and special notices. We encourage you to think about how you can help celebrate this exciting event. Send your ideas to the 100<sup>th</sup> Mile committee chair, Sandy Knutson, at [sjkbits@aol.com](mailto:sjkbits@aol.com).

### **Meet TRP Board Member: Myron Knutson**

Steady he goes. That’s Myron Knudson, Texas Ramp Project board member since 2012. Myron was inspired to join the board after building ramps with the Dallas Rammers and seeing the joy of recipients with disabilities who could finally leave their homes. As a board member he assists John Laine and treasurer Donna Burton by seeing that all incoming checks are properly accounted for, deposited and assigned to various regions. And he’s really good at it.

Myron joined the board after 50 years of government service in public health and the environment. During that time he worked out of Atlanta, Boston and, finally, Dallas. He retired as senior policy advisor of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6, having previously served as director of the EPA’s Superfund and Water Management divisions.



Myron grew up in Hamilton, in central Texas. Both grandparents were farmers, and Myron spent summers working on their farms. He earned a civil engineering degree at UT–Austin and a master’s from Northeastern University in Boston. Myron and his wife, Doris, have two grown children and three grandchildren.

A long-time member of King of Glory Lutheran Church in Dallas, Myron has served as treasurer, council member, and board member of GUSTO!, which runs a speaker program for the church and community. Myron has long been active in charity and social justice issues. He has been involved with Dallas Area Interfaith since 1992, serving as treasurer and board member.

Why add the Texas Ramp Project to his long list of post-retirement activities? He says: "It is a great joy for me to help in a small way to allow homebound folks to be able to leave their homes and have a more productive life."

## **Texas Ramp Project: Tasting the Effects of Social Distancing**

**By Madison Lopez, SMU Board Fellow**

The month of August proved to be one of the best yet for TRP's social media engagement, paving the way for exciting growth as we approach the start of a social media campaign built around the 100th Mile celebration. Check out some of the highlights from this past month's social media reach.

**Instagram:** TRP posts and tags from other organizations reached a combined audience of 1,170 people.

**Facebook:** TRP's posts directly reached 1,977 people.

**Twitter:** Posts that mentioned TRP reached an audience of 4,356 people.

**LinkedIn:** Tags from other organizations collectively reached an audience of over 4,700 people.

This is exciting news, and the reach of our posts and name are only growing. We are thankful for the shout-outs and tags from several organizations that especially helped contribute to August's social media reach, including Communities Foundation of Texas, Texadia Systems and Dallas Jesuit.

Remember to keep sharing, tagging and liking! Your social media engagement with TRP helps boost visibility to new volunteers, donors and organizations. Keep up the good work.

Follow us here!

- ✓ **Instagram:** @tx\_ramp\_project
- ✓ **Facebook:** Facebook.com/texasramps
- ✓ **Twitter:** @TexasRamps
- ✓ **LinkedIn:** Texas Ramp Project

## **Grants Received in August**

The Union Pacific Foundation has awarded \$5,000 to the Texas Ramp Project, to be split between our East Texas Tyler and Jacksonville regions and Ellis County in North Central Texas South. The grant was awarded under UP's Local Needs program. The foundation provides this funding to cities and counties served by its railroad system. In 2018, the foundation reported distributing \$8.3 million to more than 600 organizations.

We were glad to become one of their grantees this year. East Texas also benefited from a \$25,000 grant from an anonymous donor

### **Volunteer Spotlight: Ray Cox, El Paso Area Coordinator**



Ray Cox has been around the El Paso Ramp Project for a long time. After an initial foray into El Paso in 2008, John Laine returned in 2010 to recruit more leadership, and he found Ray Cox at Trinity-First United Methodist Church. Ray's church initially took on management of the warehouse and module construction. Ray, in turn, recruited the Rotary Club of El Paso, which has provided volunteers and generous funding ever since.

In 2017, El Paso's area coordinator, Leonard Yanez, passed away, and Ray stepped up as area coordinator for the El Paso region. Two years later Ray lost his wife, but he was soon back to the Ramp Project—a tribute to his perseverance and dedication.

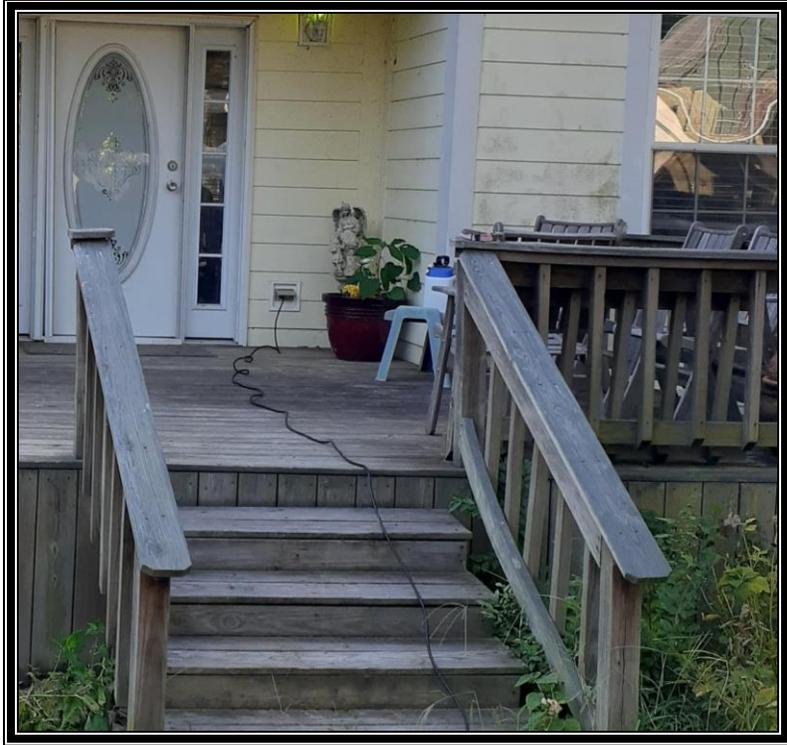
A child of the Southwest, Ray was born in Phoenix but was raised in El Paso. He earned a bachelor's degree in physical education, with 60 hours of music, and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Texas at El Paso. He and his wife, Karen, were married for 47 years. They have two children—a son and a daughter—and two young grandchildren in Katy, Texas. Ray spent 29 years with the City of El Paso Parks and Recreation Department, serving as section, division, manager and director across a broad swath of the organization.

He is a member and past board member, committee chair and president (2015–16) of the Rotary Club of El Paso. He is a leadership committee member and sings in the choir of Trinity-First UMC.

Over the years volunteers at the El Paso Ramp Project have built nearly 300 ramps. What a gift to the community that raised and nurtured Ray Cox for so many years.

### **Ramp of the Month: East Texas – Emory Region: Rains County**

Ms. Betty M., 70, was referred by CHRISTUS Healthcare as Betty has been confined to her bed for the past 2-½ years. When she has to leave home for medical appointments, she uses a manual wheelchair. A family member built a ramp, which was leaning to one side because it was not supported properly and had no railing. Coming and going for Betty had been difficult and precarious. Nine volunteers from the Mineola Broad Street Church of Christ built Betty a new 34-foot ramp, with a combined 32 hours of labor.





A job well done, making life safer and a little easier for Betty.

### **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.