



## Texas Ramp Project Newsletter

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**Dear Friends,**

This month I would like to talk about reporting your builds. It may seem that the task is done once you have provided safe access for one of our clients, but that is only part of the job. It is really important that we get your completed build report so that we can get the data into our database. Here is a sample report of the information we need:

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Name of client                          | 7 Source of volunteers               |
| 2 Address                                 | 8 Team leader                        |
| 3 City/Zip                                | 9 Date built                         |
| 4 Length of ramp including all flat areas | 10 Does client own home              |
| 5 # of volunteers on site                 | 11 Has referral source been notified |
| 6 # of hours to build                     | 12 Funding source for ramp materials |

Once it is there, the information is used to write the grants that pay for the lumber that you need. It also allows us to provide accurate information to other parties that send volunteers to help build the ramps—places like churches, civic organizations and schools. Thanks in advance for helping us to create the best report possible about your dedicated efforts. Have a good month and stay safe.

John Laine, Executive Director

### Grants Received in September

The Bryan/College Station region has received a \$5,000 grant from the Waldon and Adele Orr Charitable Trust. In addition, the United Way of the Brazos Valley has renewed its \$7,000 annual grant to the same region for 2020–21. Other recent grants have come from the W.D. Kelley Foundation, \$5,000 for Williamson County in the Austin Central region; TVEC Charitable Trust, \$5,000 for Kaufman County in the North Central Texas region; PenTex Energy Foundation, \$3,000 for Cooke County in the Texoma region; Heart of Texas Electric Trust, \$2,500 for the Waco South region; and Texarkana Kiwanis Club, \$500 for the Texarkana East region. A hearty thanks to all these supporters of the Texas Ramp Project.



## Gearing Up for 100 Miles of Freedom!

Planning for the Texas Ramp Project's 100 Miles of Freedom campaign is in full swing. The 100 Mile committee, with help from Vince Bray of Toyota's marketing group, is working on a press kit that will be sent to newspapers and other media outlets across the state. The press release will invite the media to send reporters and photographers to document the ramps **YOU build between November 15 and December 15** as part of this campaign.

We will also provide press release templates for you to send to your local papers, either inviting coverage during the campaign or providing photos and stories after the fact. This is a huge milestone for the Texas Ramp Project. With all of you joining in the celebration, we can extend our message of building freedom for the homebound across the state.

And, of course, there will be T-shirts. Area and county coordinators will shortly be receiving information on how to order. The front of the shirt will feature a special 100 Miles of Freedom logo. The back will contain logos of sponsors, which so far include State Farm, Toyota and St. David's Foundation. The shirts will be shipped in early November.

Board member Sandy Knutson is chairing the 100 Mile committee. If you have questions, or especially if you have ideas on how to celebrate this event, you may contact her at [sjkbits@aol.com](mailto:sjkbits@aol.com).

### Update on 'Rocket Scientist' Ramp Builder

When TRP entered the East Texas Tyler region in 2009, Jeff Howman showed up to build. With him came his young son, Colin. Colin built faithfully with the Ramp Project until graduating from Tyler's Gorman High School. He went off to Rice University and interned summers in California at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Upon graduation from Rice, JPL selected him to pursue a Ph.D. in engineering sciences. Colin, former ramp builder, is finishing up his first year at Oxford University in England, on his way to becoming a rocket scientist.

### Meet TRP Board Member: Gary Stopani with #1 Team Member Linda

Dependable. That's one of many words we can offer to describe Gary Stopani, TRP board member since 2013 and Dallas region coordinator. Including organized, industrious, dedicated, knowledgeable and efficient.

And you can't say Gary without adding his wife, Linda. Gary handles site surveys, musters the volunteers, builds ramps, and writes grant requests for Dallas and Collin counties.



Linda schedules surveys and ramp builds and enters construction data into the database—not a small task, as Dallas volunteers built 347 ramps last year. Often Linda partners with Gary on surveys and builds.

Gary started building with the Dallas Ramp Project in 2004, and became more involved after joining King of Glory Lutheran Church, a founding supporter of TRP. Linda got involved in 2013, when TRP needed help transferring years of data into the new Salesforce database.

Gary retired from Texas Instruments after nearly 25 years in engineering, finance and production planning. A native of Rochester, New York, he earned a degree in industrial engineering from Rochester Institute of Technology and an MBA from SMU. Linda taught math and computers and managed a school library for Dallas ISD. She has a bachelor's degree in computer science and a master's in library science.

Gary and Linda have been married for 42 years and have one son, David, and a 13-year-old granddaughter, Claire. Their favorite pastime is travel, which since retiring has been extensive. They are active in the TI Alumni Association. Gary is a past president and treasurer, and both he and Linda serve on the travel and community service committees. Linda is treasurer for the Friends of the Garland Library and heads up their annual used book sale. They are both active at King of Glory, where Linda serves as librarian.

Gary sums up their involvement like this: “We both feel we have been blessed by God to be able to not only do His work through TRP but also to enjoy retirement with no regrets.”

## **Texas Ramp Project: Our Social Media Presence Is Growing**

**By Madison Lopez, SMU Board Fellow**

The month of September saw a high increase in social media engagement from students and school organizations, highlighting just how impactful TRP's work is for every person and age group involved. Yet again, this month was stellar for post engagements and reach, especially on Facebook and Instagram, continuing to pave the way for exciting growth as the social media campaign built around the **100 Miles of Freedom** celebration approaches. Check out some of the highlights from this past month's social media reach.

### **Instagram Highlights:**

- TRP posts and tags from other organizations reached a combined audience of 1,280 people.

- Student and school-based organizations increased our continuous, secondary audience reach by over 400 people through their story mentions of TRP.

### Facebook Highlights

- TRP's posts directly reached 2,400 people, a 5% increase from last month.
- Monthly page likes increased 22% from last month.
- Monthly page views increased 10% from last month.

We are thankful for the shout-outs and tags that continue to spread the word about TRP. As a reminder, the exponential nature of social media algorithms means the more you interact with TRP content, the more and more of an audience we will reach. What an easy way to reach more volunteers and organizations! So, remember to keep smiling for the pictures and continue sharing, tagging and liking! Your commitment makes a difference.

Follow us here -

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

### Volunteer Spotlight: Greg Hinders, Amarillo Area Coordinator



When John Laine contacted Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Amarillo in 2007, Greg Hinders was one of the guys who started to build ramps, at least on weekends when he wasn't at work. In 2008 the crew actually built 17 ramps. But by 2010 new leadership was needed, and Greg stepped up.

Since then the vast Amarillo region, which includes 26 counties, has built nearly 600 ramps, thanks to Greg's leadership and commitment. Greg coordinates with team leaders, trains new volunteers, handles reporting, and watches the finances. He's also attracted a lot of funding to the region. But he says building ramps is still his favorite part.

Greg is still a working person. Fresh out of Texas Tech with an agricultural engineering degree, he joined the USDA Soil Conservation Service. He spent 10 years in Kansas before moving to Amarillo, where he has been for the past 27 years. He is retiring from the USDA in November.

Greg and Diane have been married for 39 years and have two adult children. Their daughter Jessica and her husband live in Washington with the Hinders' 3-year-old granddaughter. Son Johnathan and wife Brittani live in Amarillo. Johnathan builds

ramps most months, and even Diane and Brittani get a piece of the action. So the Amarillo Ramp Project is a family affair.

“I like helping and I like building things and working with my hands and figuring things out, so the Ramp Project was a good fit,” Greg says. “It’s always a blessing to help someone get a ramp, and I get to work with a lot of wonderful team leaders and builders.”

Greg enjoys hunting, fishing and camping and is a member of the Amarillo Area Photography Club. In retirement he plans on making more visits to Washington and doing more photography in addition to building ramps in the Panhandle.

### **Ramp of the Month: Austin Central: Travis County**

Jordan G., 29, of Elgin was referred by The Arc of the Capital Area as Jordan has spina bifida with hydrocephalus, which results in his needing to use a wheelchair. He can walk a little with crutches and stand with assistance. Jordan’s ramp was an exceptional build as volunteers not only built a 44-foot ramp to the front door but also added a porch outside his bedroom for use in case of emergency. Fourteen volunteers from Redeemer Lutheran Church donated a total of 67 hours of labor to bring freedom to Jordan.



Jordan trying out his new ramp.



Porch for emergency use.



What a great crew! Thanks so much.

### **DO: Please 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.



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