

Solutions

Winter 2016

Vol. 13, No. 1



TWC Early Education Initiatives
Support Quality Options for Texas Families



Table of Contents

Building the local workforce with their own two hands 4

Empowering Texans with disabilities 5

Nurturing young lives with outdoor classrooms6-7

Highlights of the Annual Texas Workforce Conference 8-9

TWC launches new season of Texas Business Conferences throughout Texas 10

Workforce news 11

On the Cover:

Care 4 Tots Learning Center Assistant Director Kim Robinson instructs children in their outdoor classroom as part of an award-winning initiative by Workforce Solutions of Central Texas. See story on page 6.

Photo courtesy of Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

Texas Workforce Commission

- Andres Alcantar**
Chairman, Commissioner Representing the Public
- Ruth R. Hughes**
Commissioner Representing Employers
- Julian Alvarez**
Commissioner Representing Labor

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Designer & Photographer | Lori Najvar |
| Editor | Debbie Pitts |
| Writer & Photographer | Brenda Brantley |
| Writer | Ronnie Burchett |
| Writer | Justin Minsker |
| Communications Director | Lisa Givens |
| Deputy Communications Director | Debbie Pitts |

Email Solutions staff at solutions@twc.state.tx.us

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Relay Texas: 800-735-2989 (TTY) and 711 (Voice). Copies of this publication (03/2016) have been distributed in compliance with the State Depository Law, and are available for public use through the Texas State Publication Depository Program at the Texas State Library and other state depository libraries.

Solutions also is available via the Internet at www.texasworkforce.org under Reports, Plans, and Publications.

This publication is recyclable.

Submissions, suggestions and address changes should be sent to:

Solutions Editor
 Texas Workforce Commission
 Communications Dept.
 101 E. 15th St., Room 665
 Austin, TX 78778-0001
 512-463-8942, phone
 512-463-2710, fax

20 YEARS AND COUNTING...

Texas building on momentum over two decades of workforce service delivery solutions



We start 2016 with many accomplishments and anniversaries to celebrate that are a testament to the strength of our workforce and our employers here in Texas. First, I am pleased to welcome the new Commissioner Representing Labor Julian Alvarez of Harlingen. His leadership, knowledge and experience will be a great value to Texas workers and to the Texas Workforce Commission.

In 2016, we will mark the 20th year of the current Texas workforce system model with 28 local workforce development boards and TWC partnering together and collaborating with stakeholders from all over Texas to provide first-rate workforce service delivery. Our market-driven, locally controlled integrated service approach is a model for replication as the new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act legislation guides state workforce programs.

This year also marks 20 years of the Skills Development Fund, Texas's premier job training resource for delivering in-demand skills to Texas workers. More than 330,000 individuals have upgraded their skills as a result of this customized

job training and more than 4,100 employers have benefitted from these partnerships with community colleges.

In 2016 we will continue to see innovation and success in workforce development. Our Workforce Solutions network of local workforce development boards will continue to implement new strategies that align with local priorities and provide a boost to local economies. We will continue to expand partnerships with other state agencies, economic development entities, and training and education providers to build a more competitive workforce.

During this year we will maintain a focus on our veterans and continue to deliver solutions that ease their transition into a Texas job. We will build partnerships to ensure that our children are ready to learn as they enter our public education system and work with our local partners to enhance career information services to our students. We will work to strengthen our adult education and literacy strategy by continuing to expand successful solutions. We will work to support our small business

owners and invest in industry- aligned partnerships that advance regional economic priorities.

This year we are excited to add employees and programs from the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services to the TWC family, opening up a new opportunity for us to serve the people of Texas. We know that the system will gain insight through strengthened collaboration and the state's workforce network will benefit from this new expertise and a deeper understanding of how to assist individuals with disabilities in securing employment.

So while we reflect on the last 20 years, we remain steadfast in our determination that ALL Texans will have access to innovative services that support participation in the expanding Texas economy in a manner that reflects our mission. Let us work hard to make 2016 another year we can all be proud of. ■

Andres Alcantar | Texas Workforce Commission
Chairman and Commissioner Representing the Public



Photo courtesy of Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County



Photo courtesy of Klein Tools

Left – Students on tour: Mr. Richard Robertson at Cam-Tech Manufacturing, a precision aerospace machine company located in Mansfield, Texas, briefs the Mansfield ISD’s practicum for precision metal manufacturing students. Cam-Tech is mentoring six students—two students during each of the spring semester’s three six-week practicums.

Above – Dylan Deen, a team member at Klein Tools, was offered a full time job after completing a mentorship through the Mansfield Manufacturing Partnership.

BUILDING A LOCAL WORKFORCE with their own two hands By Justin Minsker

As a senior at Mansfield High School, Dylan Deen wasn’t sure what he wanted to do after graduation. He knew he liked working with his hands. So when he participated in an internship through the Mansfield Manufacturing Partnership, he knew right away he had found his true calling.

The training program is a partnership of five local companies (Klein Tools, Trinity Forge, Drill King, Camtech and Fluidic Techniques) in conjunction with Workforce Solutions Tarrant County (Tarrant County), Mansfield Independent School District (MISD) and Mansfield Economic Development Corp. (MEDC) and addresses a longtime industry need for highly skilled manufacturing positions, and in particular, a local need for computer numeral control (CNC) machinists. Representatives from the five companies provide guidance and ongoing feedback about the curriculum, classrooms and internship hours; as well as valuable hands-on training to the students throughout the year.

High-school seniors enrolled in the program receive classroom instruction and job shadowing through internships, and hands-on experience in manufacturing processes, programming, blue print reading, OSHA safety requirements and more. Not only are students exposed to opportunities to gain real skills they could use toward a career path with high wages, they also receive workforce services to prepare them for immediate employment upon graduation such as interviewing skills, résumé preparation and workplace ethics – all while still in high school.

Frontier High School Principal Catherine Hudgins sees the benefits are not only for the students, but for the community as well.

“Our students participating in the manufacturing program are being introduced to a realm that they did not even know existed. Manufacturing is a field that most students know nothing about and are not exposed to through traditional education,” Hudgins said.

“The need for CNC workers in our community was immediate and without our partners in industry, we would have had to wait until our CNC lab was finished, which would have

delayed producing viable candidates into the manufacturing field by three years.”

Based on 2014 data, the statewide average annual wage for a CNC machinist is \$38,293 and in Tarrant County that same average annual wage is \$42,276. An experienced CNC machinist can expect a statewide wage range of \$32,350-\$52,059 annually.

Legislation passed in 2013 has opened up doors to big changes in school curriculum and has paved the way for educators, industry and state entities to work together to create more opportunities for Texas students to access high-demand jobs with competitive wages, while also meeting the needs of employers to have a skilled workforce now and in the future.

“I really enjoyed the manufacturing internship program because the students got to go to the factories and get experience by doing the real work that we were learning about,” said Deen. “I would definitely recommend this to any student interested in manufacturing because it allowed for me to work with my hands, which is what I enjoy most.”

One of the partner manufacturing companies, Klein Tools, a leading global tool manufacturer, offered Dylan a full time team member position to operate their automated plastisol equipment.

Even students who don’t choose a manufacturing career will benefit from the internships and hands-on experience gained through the program as it will increase their skill level in both postsecondary education and in the workplace.

“Without the internship program in place, it would have been unlikely for Klein Tools to find great employees like Dylan,” said Klein Tools Plant Manager Matt Marinovic. “The internship program has a twofold benefit: Our employees work hard to educate, coach, motivate and advertise the exceptional career opportunities that manufacturing has to offer students in our community and students like Dylan have an opportunity to show employers their energy, motivation, intelligence and strong attendance.” ■



EMPOWERING TEXANS with disabilities

By Brenda Brantley



As Kris Eades diligently goes through the paces of sorting belt tips for military issued belts, he pauses to consider what he likes best about his job with the Travis Association for the Blind (TAB) in Austin. He thoughtfully explains that he loves the end of the day the most, not just because it means going home, but because it marks the end of another productive and satisfying day of work. Eades is one of more than 6,000 individuals with disabilities employed through Texas' Purchasing from People with Disabilities Program.

Last year, the 84th Texas Legislature transferred oversight of the program to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). An advisory board composed of disabled workers, advocates and program employers will provide guidance for the program. Through this program, individuals with varying levels of disabilities, like visual impairments, hearing loss and mobility disabilities are able to achieve independence through employment opportunities where they produce products or services distributed through the Works Wonders program.

Works Wonders, often referred to as the State Use program, was implemented in 1978 by the Texas Legislature to create jobs for people with disabilities. The program provides products or services

produced by disabled individuals through Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). These products or services are purchased by city, county, state or federal agencies, schools and political subdivisions.

Eades works for TAB, a CRP contracted by TIBH Industries Inc. and is one of many people employed statewide through approximately 114 CRPs, producing items such as office supplies and skin care products, as well as more customized products such as safety shirts and vests.

"I love the sense of accomplishment of getting a great amount of work done," said Eades. "At the end of the day, I can say 'hey, I did the best I could for my pay.'"

For many people with disabilities, employment through the CRPs brings independence, good wages and opportunity for advancement.

TAB Executive Director Jerry Mayfield says that the atmosphere there is centered on a person's desire to succeed.

"A common misconception about the program and employees is that these are low-paying jobs with no room for advancement," said Mayfield. "For TAB, building on the strengths of our employees has allowed for the transitioning of many staff jobs,



Left – Kris Eades at the Travis Association for the Blind (TAB) unpacks steel tips used for military issued nylon rigger belts. Eades has worked nearly 15 years for the TAB.

Above – Ethan O'Neal and his canine companion, Fizz, wrap military belts prior to packaging. In March, O'Neal will celebrate ten years with TAB.

traditionally filled with sighted individuals, to individuals that are blind and visually impaired."

Working with TWC and the Purchasing from People with Disabilities program, TIBH Industries CEO Fred Weber looks forward to growth, expansion and job opportunities for Texans with disabilities. Weber sees firsthand how individuals with disabilities can provide the same quality of service and job performance as individuals without disabilities.

"Hearing the success stories of individuals who have been able to transition to independent living because of the job opportunities available through the Works Wonders program is what makes me the most proud of the work that TIBH does," said Weber.

Services provided by CRPs range from landscape maintenance and custodial services to mail room services and temporary employment. ■

Nurturing YOUNG LIVES WITH OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS

By Ronnie Burchett

With the help of local community partners, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (Central Texas) is committed to helping programs meet the quality requirements of accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Central Texas created a model for others to follow in developing nature-based child care learning programs in Texas.

Growing up with working parents has some unexpected challenges; especially if parents are in military or medical professions. For most families in the Killeen and Temple area, parents are either employed at the Fort Hood military base or stationed on the post. Fort Hood is the largest active-duty military post in the United States Armed Services, housing more than 45,000 assigned soldiers and employing nearly 9,000 civilians.

Of the 2,202 children receiving child care services in this area, many are from military families with rigorous schedules and parents with prolonged absences.

Enlisted families and employees of the base deal with extensive work schedules and lengthy commuting arrangements which can create anxiety and worries for young children. These rigorous schedules do not leave much time for therapeutic activities to meet their special needs.

The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Child Care Services division partners with local workforce boards, like Central Texas, to ensure that quality child care is available for families in Texas. Military families are of special importance and to assist in meeting the unique needs of these families, Central Texas partnered with the military to create a highly successful NAEYC accredited program. Central Texas partnered with a number of organizations to create an award-winning Nature Explore® outdoor classroom at participating provider sites. Nature Explore® offers a therapeutic atmosphere for learning, creativity and health.

Central Texas' Child Care Policy and Quality Assurance Manager Sherry Trebus had a vision to create nature-based learning to promote positive health, growth and learning for young children living in Central Texas.

"Being part of the project gives the providers an opportunity to extend their comprehensive programming, based upon the developmentally appropriate practice principles of NAEYC, to the outdoors," said Trebus

In partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation, Dimensions Educational Research Foundation and the base commander at Fort Hood, Trebus assisted



Children at Care 4 Tots Learning Center in Harker Heights riding outside and playing on an outdoor xylophone.

Photo courtesy of Workforce Solutions of Central Texas



Quality Child Care Initiatives

TWC's Child Care Services programs support quality child care services and provides child care assistance for low-income families. As managed and developed by local workforce development boards, education, guidance and support is provided to participating families in selecting quality care for their children. TWC provides resources to assist families in making important decisions regarding the care and early learning of children. Some of the quality initiatives are listed below:

Texas Rising Star The Texas Rising Star (TRS) program is a child care quality rating system of child care providers participating in TWC's subsidized child care program. The TRS provider certification system offers three levels of certification (Two-star, Three-Star and Four-Star) to encourage providers to attain progressively higher certification requirements leading to a Four-Star level. Child care providers, parents and other individuals can learn more about the TRS program by visiting the Texas Rising Star website.

TexasChildCareSolutions.org The TexasChildCareSolutions.org parent portal connects Texas parents with up-to-date parenting information, ideas and resources to help families seeking information to meet the needs of children. The new website is an online resource to assist families in making informed choices for early childhood education, quality child care, children with special needs and child care financial assistance.

Texas Early Childhood Learning Summit TWC will be building the foundation for excellence at the Texas Early Childhood Learning Summits in Houston (June 28–29) and Dallas (July 26–27). The events will support the immediate need for increased access to child care professional credential training. For more information about the learning summits, visit the TWC's Events page.

Texas School Ready! Texas School Ready! (TSR) is a comprehensive preschool teacher training program that combines a research-based, state-adopted curriculum with ongoing professional development and progress monitoring tools to better prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. Since 2003, TSR has positively impacted nearly 500,000 children and 25,000 early childhood teachers in Texas.

several local child care facilities in creating outdoor classrooms to support children's learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) as well as language, literacy, arts, social and emotional development. The project promotes the nurturing of a young child's sense of wonder about the natural world.

"This quality-focused child care initiative was a collaborative effort of our workforce team and the community, creating an essential part of our overall commitment to continuously improving early childhood education in Central Texas," said Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Executive Director Susan Kamas.

Through the project, Central Texas works with several local, state and national organizations to target child care facilities serving high-risk children. Through TWC's Texas Rising Star (TRS) provider certification and Texas School Ready! (TSR) programs, the project incorporates training, portfolio development and improvement resources to help these child care providers meet the needs of local civilian and military families and achieve a four-star rating for top quality child care standards.

There are 16 certified Nature Explore® outdoor classrooms at child care facilities, including three Central Texas facilities—Care 4 Tots Learning Center in Harker Heights, Creative Child Learning Arts Academy in Killeen, and Kid Grace Learning Center in Temple. The project was so successful that the Arbor Day Foundation presented Trebus and Central Texas with the 2015 Rachel Carson Award. This award recognizes individuals or organizations whose exemplary leadership and efforts guide the nurturing of a young child's inborn sense of wonder about the natural world.

Kim Robinson, Assistant Director of Care 4 Tots Learning Center, explained that the children are more active and use their imagination during class. The children become aware of their surroundings and relate new discoveries to things in their everyday life.

Sabrina McAfee, Creative Child Learning Arts Academy owner, remarked that the nature project allows the teachers to have an outdoor and indoor classroom.

"We achieved our four-star rating with the TRS Provider Certification program, providing an enhanced learning program for the children," McAfee said. "The children come from military and medical families who work extended hours. The shaded gathering, growing, water and rolling hill areas are calming for the children. Our parents are very happy with this new program."

During the 2015 Annual Texas Workforce Conference, Central Texas was also recognized for outstanding board performance, receiving the Child Care Quality Incentive award for \$75,000, and third place prize for Workforce Investment Act Exemplary Performance Recognition. ■

HIGHLIGHTS of the Annual Texas Workforce Conference

By Justin Minsker

As Texas continues to rank among the top states for job growth, pro-business environment and economic climate, workforce professionals from around the state highlighted two decades of Texas Workforce Solutions partnerships with a conference focused on developing the workforce from the inside out.

“Pushing Beyond Limits” was the conference theme as workplace professionals and employers came together Nov. 17–20 at the 19th annual Texas Workforce Conference in Dallas.

The conference, co-hosted by the Texas Chapter of the International Association of Workforce Professionals, featured nationally recognized speakers who presented on employee engagement, workplace culture and building public-private partnerships to address current and future workplace demands.

Keynote speaker Marci Rossell opened the conference with personal anecdotes and a discussion on economic optimism centered around oil prices, the job market and trade.

TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Ruth R. Hughs addressed the need for collaboration in Texas’ diverse economy.

“In today’s rapidly changing marketplace, it is vital that employers have the skilled workforce they need to grow their business,” said Hughs. “Through the valuable partnerships between our Texas employers and the workforce system, we are able to prepare for a changing economy and workforce to continue to make the Lone Star State one of the best places to do business.”

The conference recognized employers across the state that are actively involved with Texas Workforce Solutions and have made a positive impact on employers, workers and the community.



Chevron Phillips Chemical named Texas Workforce Solutions 2015 Employer of the Year

Pictured from left: Chevron Phillips Chemical Talent Acquisition Manager Kip Welch; TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Ruth R. Hughs; Chevron Phillips Chemical Human Resources Manager-Baytown Julie Fleet; Chevron Phillips Chemical Training and Development Superintendent-Baytown Roy Watson; Chevron Phillips Chemical Community Relations Representative-Baytown Heather Betancourt; Chevron Phillips Chemical Vice President of Human Resources Greg Wagner; TWC Chairman and Commissioner Representing the Public Andres Alcantar.



Pushing Beyond Limits 19TH ANNUAL TEXAS WORKFORCE CONFERENCE

Chevron Phillips Chemical Co. LP (Chevron Phillips Chemical) received the top honor as 2015 Texas Workforce Solutions Employer of the Year. Chevron Phillips Chemical was nominated by the Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast and chosen as the Employer of the Year from among five exemplary finalists, and out of 26 private-sector employers nominated by 28 local workforce development boards.

Headquartered in The Woodlands, Chevron Phillips Chemical has eight manufacturing facilities and one research and technology center in Texas. Chevron Phillips Chemical is building its \$6 billion U.S. Gulf Coast Petrochemicals Project, which will support 10,000 temporary construction and engineering jobs and

400 long-term jobs in Baytown and Old Ocean.

“Through its innovative partnership with local schools and Workforce Solutions, the Chevron Phillips Chemical Company’s powerful, local approach to workforce development supports a highly skilled workforce while creating jobs for their region,” said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar. “I commend Chevron Phillips Chemical for its leadership and contributions to the Texas economy. I extend my sincere congratulations.”

Awards were also presented to workforce boards for outstanding service to business, workers, community, and industry sector outreach, and child care quality initiatives. A complete list of winners may be found on page 9. ■

2015 Texas Workforce Conference Award Winners

Youth Inspiration & Career Awareness

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend
Workforce Solutions Cameron
Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley

Service to Business Award

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas

Service to Workers Award

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend

Service to Community Award

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

Industry Sector Outreach Award

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Exemplary Performance Recognition

*Workforce Solutions Middle Rio Grande - **First Place***
*Workforce Solutions Cameron - **Second Place***
*Workforce Solutions of Central Texas - **Third Place***

Child Care Quality Incentive Award

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas
Workforce Solutions of Central Texas
Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas
Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas

Performance Incentive Awards

Claimant Reemployment

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas
Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area
Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas

WIA Adult/Dislocated Worker Training-Related Employment

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley
Workforce Solutions Cameron
Workforce Solutions for South Texas
Workforce Solutions Concho Valley

WIA Youth Preparedness

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley
Workforce Solutions Capital Area
Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Workforce Solutions Middle Rio Grande

Choices Employment

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County
Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend
Workforce Solutions for South Texas
Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent

Partnership Awards

South Texas College
Austin Community College

Adult Education and Literacy Incentive Awards

Employer Partnership

*Community Action, Inc. - **First Place***
*Socorro Independent School District - **Second Place***

College Integration

*Socorro Independent School District - **First Place***
*Austin Community College - **Second Place***

WIA Youth Preparedness

*Southwest Texas Junior College - **First Place***
*Texarkana Independent School District - **Second Place***

Employer of the Year: Top 5 Finalists

Campbell Soup Supply
Chevron Phillips Chemical Co.
*Embassy Suites by Hilton San Marcos Hotel,
Spa & Conference Center*
Lockheed Martin Lufkin Operations
Providence Healthcare Network

TWC launches new season of Texas Business Conferences throughout Texas

By Lori Najvar

What does it take to run a successful and efficient business in Texas? Employee training, payroll management and efficient handling of daily business operations are only a few pieces of what can be a complicated puzzle for employers. To help Texas businesses identify all of these pieces and put them together to build a successful picture for their companies, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is launching a new season of Texas Business Conferences (TBC) to be held at locations throughout the state in 2016.

Everyone who operates a business must be aware of state and federal labor laws, and in our fast-paced society, keeping up can be a never-ending challenge. No matter the number of employees, businesses can learn about resources that will help employers build, train, and manage employees at an affordable event near them.

“We are committed to providing employers’ the information they need to succeed,” said TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Ruth R. Hughs. “Texas Business Conferences bring valuable resources to effectively help employers navigate through state and federal employment laws.”

The TWC Commissioner Representing Employers’ office presents a series of TBCs at locations throughout Texas that offer practical, up-to-date information for operating a successful business and techniques to more effectively manage employees. Seminar topics at each conference address: Texas employment law and the basics of hiring; federal and Texas wage and hour laws; the unemployment claim and appeal process; and independent contractors and employee policy handbooks. Participants receive the *Especially for Texas Employers* publication, which addresses basic legal issues regarding hiring, post-employment and work-separation policies. Typically the conference is one to two days. Certified Public Accountants can earn six hours of continuing education credit, and other conference participants may qualify for general professional credit.

Cindy Smith of the Panhandle Crisis Center has attended three TBCs over the past few years and has found them to be an invaluable resource.

“The TBC is one of the most valuable employment law seminars that any employer can attend,” Smith said.

Smith also uses other resources provided through TWC’s Commissioner Representing Employers’ office including the employer hotline and the *Especially for Texas Employers* online reference book.

“When employees assume supervisory positions, an essential part of their training is to review TWC’s *Especially for Texas Employers* online manual and attend a TBC. As a small nonprofit located in a rural area, with no HR staff or access to employment law attorneys, we look to TWC and the online manual to reference when questions arise. We also call the employer helpline for additional assistance. The ability to speak to an attorney with expertise in employment law is an invaluable resource. The attorneys are outstanding and there is no charge for this service,” Smith said.

For information about the services offered by the office of TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Ruth R. Hughs, call toll free **800-832-9394** or go to www.texasworkforce.org/employercommissioner. ■



Photo above – Kayla Drash of Cavender Auto, San Antonio
Waco 2015 TBC session

Conference Topics

- Advanced topics in wage and hour laws
- Independent contractor misclassification
- Employer policies and procedures
- The unemployment claim and appeal process
- Workplace privacy issues
- Important new information regarding the Affordable Care Act
- Drug testing
- Requirements for salaried exempt employees
- Recent decisions regarding the National Labor Relations Act

2016 Conference Locations

Schedule of events are subject to change. Please check www.texasworkforce.org/tbc for updates.

- Austin: March 11
- Corpus Christi: April 8
- Longview: May 6
- Victoria: May 20
- College Station: June 10
- McAllen: June 24
- Amarillo: July 1
- Arlington: July 21-22
- Fredericksburg: August 5

Rene A. Ayala, TWC Individual Star Award Winner – 4th Quarter 2015

The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Star Award for the fourth-quarter of 2015 was presented to McAllen Tele-Center supervisor Rene Ayala (right). TWC's Star Award program recognizes employees who perform above and beyond expectations at promoting agency systems and solutions and provide outstanding customer service and support.

Ayala created a performance tracker in Excel utilized by supervisors to monitor their employees' work performance along with a tracker for supervisors to monitor leave balances to initiate timely administrative actions. Most recently, he designed a new hire tracker utilized by trainers to record the trainees' daily progress and performance in the training class.



UIL Robotics Announcement



Students at more than 1,400 Texas high schools now have an opportunity to compete in a new statewide robotics championship and earn deserved recognition for flexing their mental muscles, thanks to the launch of the University Interscholastic League's (UIL) pilot program.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is proud to support youth education and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs that prepare students for high-demand careers as demonstrated through its partnership with after-school robotics programs.

"I applaud the UIL's decision to implement a robotics pilot program, which will equip students with hands-on, STEM applied learning and provide them with valuable lifelong skills," said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar. "Programs like these inspire and prepare students for future high-demand occupations and are a critical part of ensuring Texas remains economically competitive for generations to come."

Texas is the fourth and largest state to create a robotics state championship and has the potential to grow exponentially. The UIL's endorsement of this first ever UIL robotics pilot program will begin during the 2015-2016 academic school year with the first competition set

for July in concurrence with the nationally recognized Foundation for Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (*FIRST*) Division Robotics competition.

TWC sponsors robotics teams and competitions through *FIRST* in Texas and the Robotics Education and Competition Foundation. Last year, TWC supported 444 teams, 4,807 students and 22 events.

All UIL high schools will have access to the UIL robotics pilot program. The UIL Robotics Championships: BEST Division will take place in the late fall of 2016 and the UIL Robotics Championships: *FIRST* Division will take place at the Austin Convention Center on July 28–30, 2016.



Solutions Blog

Keeping up with workforce related issues in Texas has just gotten easier. Offering social media connections on a

variety of platforms, now you can connect with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) online for information and resources on programs, services and initiatives statewide. Learn about Skills Development Fund grants supporting high-demand jobs to labor market information and Texas Business Conferences. Stay up to date, wherever you are, with TWC. Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, connect to the official TWC LinkedIn page and subscribe to our latest online addition - the Solutions blog! For online visual communication, follow us on YouTube and Flickr.

For a list of all of our online platforms and TWC social media disclaimer, go to www.texasworkforce.org/social. ■

TEXAS
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

* * * * *

Texas Workforce Commission
 512-463-2222
www.texasworkforce.org

Coastal Bend
 361-885-3016
www.workforcesolutionscb.org

Heart of Texas
 254-296-5300
www.hotworkforce.com

Rural Capital Area
 512-244-7966
www.workforcesolutionsrca.com

Alamo
 210-272-3260
www.workforcesolutionsalamo.org

Concho Valley
 325-653-2321
www.cvworkforce.org

Lower Rio Grande Valley
 956-928-5000
www.wfsolutions.org

Southeast Texas
 409-719-4750
www.setworks.org

Borderplex
 915-887-2600
www.borderplexjobs.com

Greater Dallas
 214-290-1000
www.wfsdallas.com

Middle Rio Grande
 830-591-0141
www.wfsmrg.org

South Plains
 806-744-1987
www.spworkforce.org

Brazos Valley
 979-595-2800
www.bvjjobs.org

Deep East Texas
 936-639-8898
www.detwork.org

North Central
 817-695-9184
www.dfwjobs.com

South Texas
 956-722-3973
www.southtexasworkforce.org

Cameron County
 956-548-6700
www.wfscameron.org

East Texas
 903-218-6400
www.easttexasworkforce.org

North East Texas
 903-794-9490
www.netxworkforce.org

Tarrant County
 817-413-4400
www.workforcesolutions.net

Capital Area
 512-597-7100
www.wfscapitalarea.com

Golden Crescent
 361-576-5872
www.gcworkforce.org

North Texas
 940-767-1432
www.ntxworksolutions.org

Texoma
 903-957-7408
www.workforcesolutionstexoma.com

Central Texas
 254-939-3771
www.workforcelink.com

Gulf Coast
 713-627-3200
 888-469-5627
www.wrksolutions.com

Panhandle
 806-372-3381
www.wspanhandle.com

West Central
 325-795-4200
 800-457-5633
www.workforcesystem.org

Permian Basin
 432-563-5239
www.workforcepb.org

The Texas Workforce Commission, in partnership with 28 local workforce development boards,
 forms Texas Workforce Solutions.

If you would prefer not to receive a hard copy of Solutions each quarter, but would like to subscribe to it online, please email Solutions@twc.state.tx.us and request to be removed from the postal mail distribution list. Then, subscribe to receive the online version of Solutions by email or choose to subscribe to any of TWC's other publications or information updates by using this link: public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXWC/subscriber/new and providing your email address.



Texas Workforce Commission
 101 E. 15th St., Room 665
 Austin, TX 78778-0001

