Richmond Remembered for Humor, Humanity

Greg Richmond, long-time employee and director of TTI Human Resources, lost his courageous, three-year battle with cancer on June 25. Richmond was undergoing a cancer-related surgery at the time of his death.

In an email he wrote to employees the week before he left for the surgery, Richmond, 54, described the rare procedure and why it was taking place at the University of Florida in Gainesville. At the end of the email, Richmond quipped, “Because the Aggie softball team eliminated the Florida softball team at the Women’s College World Series this year, we have decided that we will not wear any Aggie clothing or caps until after the surgery has been completed. I don’t think anyone there would let that fact cloud their judgment or refuse their services, but we figure there is no reason to take the chance.”

To the many friends he made while working at TTI over the last 30 years, that kind of humor was classic Greg Richmond. “He faced his battle head-on,” says his friend and colleague, Wally Simpson, human resources manager. “He never felt sorry for himself, and he always looked on the bright side of things. Over the last three years, because of his unbelievably positive attitude, we often forgot that he was ill and struggling. This is a sad time for all of us.”
TTI has set up an account at Wells Fargo Bank to accept donations from TTI employees and retirees for Richmond’s family to use as desired. If you would like to contribute, please send your check made out to the Greg Richmond TTI Memorial Fund to Janice Konecny in the TTI Business Office.

Also, if you wish, please post your personal memories of Richmond in his memory book on TTINet. We will compile the entries and share them with his family.

Nominated for his tireless service to fellow employees and his dedication to their well-being, Richmond received the TTI/Trinity Charles J. “Jack” Keese Career Achievement for Agency Support Award last year.

Richmond served on the Texas A&M University System Employee Benefits Advisory Committee as its chairman, the Personnel Administrators of Texas Senior Colleges and Universities as treasurer and president, the Human Resources Council and the A&M System’s Diversity Council. He was also a volunteer for his daughter’s school activities, including serving as president of the school’s parent-teacher organization (PTO).

“Greg was a major reason why TTI functions so smoothly,” says Agency Director Dennis Christiansen. “But he was much more than our director of human resources. He was a friend and a solid force that we all admired and appreciated. Our hearts go out to his family and his huge group of friends.”

A standing-room-only crowd attended the funeral services for Richmond, held June 30 at First Baptist Church of College Station. Psalms and other music Greg specifically chose for the occasion were sung and played in his memory. Speakers remembered him for his sense of humor, love of all things Aggie, and community service, particularly when it came to working with children through organizations like the Future Farmers of America. He is survived by his wife, Sharon; two daughters, Carrie and Anne; mother, Dina Richmond; brother, Mark Richmond; and sister, Sandy Richmond.

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2. Christiansen Highlights Issues during Q&A
During his quarterly “Q&A with the Director,” Agency Director Dennis Christiansen told employees about two Texas legislative exceptional items that will be presented to Texas A&M University System Chancellor Mike McKinney in mid-July. TTI’s appropriations request will seek a significant increase in funding for the Center for Transportation Safety, funded initially in large part due to Sen. Steve Ogden.

TTI also will request funding for a new Center for Strategic Transportation Solutions, which would research “big picture,” long-range transportation issues such as high-speed rail, border improvements, congestion, and freight transportation and planning.

Christiansen also reiterated the good news that Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) management will fully fund the research program in FY 2009, which will result in an additional $2 million to $2.5 million, which is a strong expression of support for the research program, given TxDOT’s financial difficulties. Regarding interagency contract (IAC) funding for FY 2009, Christiansen said that TxDOT is leaving the funding decisions up to the district engineers and division directors. TTI leaders are meeting with these individuals to determine IAC funding levels.

Other items mentioned in the Q&A:

- The new TTI State Headquarters and Research Building should be completed and ready for occupation in October 2009.
- The hiring freeze for student workers has been lifted.
- The agency will continue to focus on the research diversification effort to attain a more balanced research portfolio.

Asked about the status of TTI’s role in Qatar, Christiansen said the possibility of a research center there is still promising. “We plan to have some TTI staff members working in Qatar within the next fiscal year to begin to develop a presence,” he said. Christiansen told employees that there has also been significant interest from individuals in Qatar who would like to work for TTI.

Christiansen reminded employees to complete the Climate Assessment Survey, which has been sent to all employees via email. Survey responses are due on July 16. He also reminded eligible employees to order their years of service gifts by August 31. Notes from the Q&A session are on TTINet.
3. TTI Aids Mexican Government with GPR

In an effort to make sure its new road construction meets specifications, the Mexican state of Coahuila has turned to TTI for help in obtaining a ground penetrating radar (GPR)–equipped vehicle. Officials from Coahuila took possession of the system June 4. TTI also trained Mexican transportation personnel to operate the system and its software, COLORMAP and PAVECHECK. The software was developed by researchers at TTI led by Tom Scullion, manager of TTI’s Flexible Pavements Program.

GPR is a nondestructive geophysical method that “sees” underground and produces a record of subsurface features — without drilling, probing, digging or coring. Since 1988, researchers at TTI have been developing, testing and implementing GPR technology for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to use in its road repair and maintenance activities. GPR can monitor changes in layer thickness of pavements and detect areas of either trapped moisture or air voids beneath the roadways. Keeping track of these factors is vital to efficient roadway maintenance.

“We are receiving worldwide interest in GPR,” Scullion says. “An official from the Malaysian government visited just a week ago to take a look at our Texas system.” Scullion acknowledges TxDOT’s efforts to spread the word about GPR as being a big reason for the technology’s growing popularity.

“We are excited about having GPR in Mexico,” says Ricardo de Leon Garcia, Coahuila’s verification director. “It will allow us to inspect new and old roads very quickly, and will save us time and money.” De Leon Garcia says the GPR vehicle cost his government $82,000, but it will more than pay for itself in the long run.

TTI employees that were crucial in helping with the Mexico project were Wenting Liu, Lee Gustavus and Lupe Fattorini.
4. TTI Anniversaries

10 Years

Carol Court, Senior Office Associate (HUA)
Karen Parker, Assistant Controller (BUS)
Cesar Quiroga, Program Manager — Infrastructure Management Program (GIM)

15 Years

Dolores Hott, Publishing and Distribution Supervisor (KWE)
Laura Higgins, Associate Research Scientist (HSP)
Dennis Perkinson, Program Manager — Transportation Modeling Program (HMP)

20 Years

Kay Fitzpatrick, Program Manager — Roadway Design Program (FRD)

25 Years

Dan Middleton, Program Manager — System Monitoring Program (DTO)
Stephan Ranft, Assistant Research Specialist (HSO)

30 Years

John Holmgreen, Associate Research Specialist (CEF)

5. High Five Video, TDS Earn Tellys for TTI Communications

The High Five construction project video and the Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) public service announcement (PSA) campaign have been awarded prestigious Telly Awards. Tellys are the most coveted recognition in video production. TTI Communications’ video group, headed by Coordinator of Electronic Media David Dennis, produced the segments.
“The Dallas High Five — Engineering Marvel/Transportation Masterpiece” is a 16-minute video chronicling the five-year Dallas High Five construction project from groundbreaking to completion. It won the bronze award in the Telly’s public relations category. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) uses the video to show how a major road project can be completed ahead of schedule and on budget. The project, which was the most ambitious highway development in North Texas history, set new standards of excellence for major construction projects.

“This truly was a joint project with our group,” says Dennis. “Over a five-year period the video was shot by Clyde Hance and David Martin, and the script was written by Jack Hodges and me. But it was the editing work of David Martin that made it all happen.”

The TDS PSA campaign consists of two 30-second videos describing the dangers associated with teen driving. In one of the PSAs, a teenage girl stands in a field with jetliners that have crashed nose-first. “It demonstrates that the number of teens that die each year in car crashes is like a passenger jet crashing each week of the year, every year,” says Bernie Fette, a research specialist with TDS Public Affairs.

The PSAs were produced in both English and Spanish and are aired on Texas Association of Broadcasters–affiliated stations across the state. “This bronze Telly Award is a huge honor for Teens in the Driver Seat, and it says a lot about the talent we have in TTI Communications,” Fette says. (You can view the PSAs by going to t-driver.com, clicking on the TV screen icon on the top right of the page and browsing through the videos.)

“The High Five construction project and Teens in the Driver Seat are both TxDOT-sponsored initiatives,” says Communications Director Richard Cole. “Both of these projects were very much cooperative efforts on the part of TTI and TxDOT. We couldn’t ask for a better client than the Department.”

The 29th Annual Telly Award competition received more than 14,000 submissions by ad agencies, production companies, TV stations, cable companies and corporations from around the world.
6. Ellis Evaluates Texas Gas Consumption

With gasoline prices up dramatically, Associate Research Scientist Dave Ellis is anxiously awaiting the May gasoline consumption figures from the Texas Comptroller’s Office. Ellis has been studying raw consumption data (going back to 1997) and adjusting the figures for population growth and other factors in order to get an accurate idea of how Texas motorists are responding to changing gas prices.

April 2008 figures (the last month available) showed an estimated 3.2 percent per-capita decline in gasoline consumption. It’s the largest decline since September 2007, when there was a 3.4 percent decrease from the previous September. At the time, gasoline averaged $2.80 per gallon, up 8.4 percent from 2006. April’s average price of $3.41 was up 19 percent from April 2007.

“At $4.00 a gallon now, it could be that April’s figure was the beginning of a trend of declining per-capita gasoline consumption in Texas,” Ellis speculates. “However, we simply don’t know. This is all unfolding in real time. We’ve never had gasoline this high, and we simply don’t know if this is a blip or the beginning of something else.”

In most Texas cities where transit and other commuter options are readily available, drivers are already seeking cheaper options. Cities are reporting record-level bus and commuter train ridership, as well as increased use of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes.

“It’s impossible to speculate if this is a permanent change in driver behavior. I think it will be based on the future cost of gasoline,” Ellis says. “I believe it will take a decline in summer consumption before we can say for sure because of the discretionary driving that takes place in the vacationing months of June, July and August.”

May results will be available soon.

View KBTX news story:
http://www.kbtx.com/home/headlines/20663914.html
7. Leadership Retreat Looks to Near-Term Future

Members of TTI’s Leadership Team focused their June 30 retreat on the Institute’s three- to five-year future. Discussions at the annual meeting included ways to strengthen TTI’s relationships with the members of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) research program, as well as ways to diversify sources of research funding. Other topics at the retreat included effective involvement of the TTI Council and the importance of a diversified employment base.

The Leadership Team analyzed the past year’s progress on meeting the goals of the strategic plan, especially as it relates to defining and sustaining a quality research program. The members of the team brainstormed various ways to grow the non-TxDOT funding base and discussed possible new areas to be included in the strategic plan. A list of perceived risks and potential solutions were outlined during the retreat. Potential opportunities for the Institute were developed for future discussions.

Agency Director Dennis Christiansen indicated that TTI will need to continue to evolve to meet current agency goals, address new opportunities and ensure that TTI will continue to be a strong and viable organization.

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8. TTI in the News

There have been numerous mentions of TTI and our experts in recent media reports. Here are links to some of the stories.

Wharf approved for Port of Houston (GlobeSt.com) July 2

Plano City Council retreat (Plano Courier Star) July 2

Electric cars on monorail (Dayton Daily News) July 1

Nashville commuter rail line (The Tennessean) June 26

‘Green’ drivers ranked (Portland Business Journal) June 24

Transit popularity growing (Asheville Citizen-Times) June 21
9. STI Sparks Imaginations, Encourages Careers

A record number of students attended the 11th Annual TTI Summer Transportation Institute (STI), which was held on three campuses in June — Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Texas A&M University-Kingsville and The University of Texas at El Paso. In all, 155 students attended TTI’s STI.

“The Summer Transportation Institute is filled with success stories every year,” the program’s director, Debbie Jasek, says. “And this year was no exception. We had a record turnout and a great group of young people who got a lot out of it.”
The students range from 6th- to 11th-graders who take part in activities that have an engineering or transportation focus. For example, after learning information about buoyancy, the students build canoes out of cardboard and packing tape. The canoe races are judged on which boat, with two students aboard, can travel the longest before sinking. The students also create their own cement and build bridges made of Popsicle sticks. Mentors take the students on field trips to see local Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) district operations and other transportation agencies, where they learn firsthand about opportunities for careers in transportation.

Funded by the Federal Highway Administration and administered through TxDOT, the Texas program is also conducted at Prairie View A&M and Texas Southern University, which also reported record attendance.

“Students get hands-on experience at the institute that really shows them what it’s like to be an engineer,” explains Dr. Raghava Kommalapati, civil engineering professor and Prairie View STI’s director. “Our goal is to get them to think about the future of transportation and how they can make that dream a reality.”

10. “Drive Clean Across Texas” Recognized by EPA

The TTI-managed Drive Clean Across Texas (DCAT) campaign has been honored with an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Clean Air Excellence Award in the education/outreach category. The DCAT campaign is a partnership between the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

DCAT is the nation’s first statewide public outreach and education campaign designed to motivate drivers to take steps to reduce their personal vehicle emissions.

EPA’s Clean Air Excellence Awards Program, established at the recommendation of the Clean Air Act Advisory Committee, annually recognizes and honors outstanding, innovative efforts that help to make progress in achieving
cleaner air.

Employees responsible for TTI's role in the DCAT campaign are Brian Bochner, Kelly West, Michelle Hoelscher, and Laura Higgins.

Full story: http://www.epa.gov/caaac/recipients.html#outreach

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11. Editor's Corner: Report Resources Update

Just in time for the upcoming Research Management Committee (RMC) year-end technical reports, we've updated the editorial resources on TTINet. For template files and editorial guidelines on reports applicable to RMC projects for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) — which can be used as a basis for other reports as well — see http://ttinet.tamu.edu/communications/editing/txdot_report_development.stm.

Here are a few highlights on the updated files:

• Editorial guidelines — TTI's editorial guidelines offer guidance on everything from process to punctuation. The 2008 edition of the guidelines reflects the latest information regarding report requirements, presents material in an online-friendly format, gives expanded tips for word processing and explains electronic accessibility compliance.

• Report template — The editorial resources page contains both a basic template file, which has limited text to be deleted when starting your document, and an explanatory template file with instructions on maximizing use of the template file in creating your document. Both files contain identical updates to heading styles and the technical report documentation page plus changes based on user comments.

• PSR template — The updated project summary report (PSR) template has minor changes that match our current PSR submittal process.

• Tech memo template — TxDOT RMC projects often require
a technical memorandum at task completion. You may follow any standard format for a tech memo, but TTI Communications prepared a template that reminds you what identifying information to include and provides a framework for displaying that information. (This file is not revised from the earlier version.)

Template files give you organizational structure as well as predefined word-processing styles. Template files on the editorial resources page contain form fields. To use them, tab from one field to the next, completing information as you go. When you reach the body of the document, field text prompts you to unlock the file, delete the field and begin entering freeform information. To unlock form-field files:

- In Word 2003, select the padlock icon on your Forms toolbar. If you do not see a padlock, open the Forms toolbar by choosing View/Toolbars/Forms.
- In Word 2007, choose the Review ribbon and select the Protect Document menu. When you mark Restrict Formatting and Editing, a reading pane will appear on the right side of your screen. Click the Stop Protection button at the bottom of the pane. You can close the pane to clear it from your screen.

Editor’s Corner is written by Rhonda Brinkmann, research editor in TTI Communications. Rhonda is happy to respond to requests for column topics.

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12. Reminders/Calendar

**July 11** — TTI Day planning meeting
   Gibb Gilchrist Building, Rm. 103
   9:00 a.m.
   k-fillp@ttimail.tamu.edu

**July 14** — University Transportation Center for Mobility Colloquium
   “Older Road User Safety Mobility in Australia and Japan”
   Gibb Gilchrist Building, Rm. 103
   Noon–1:00 p.m.
July 21 — Research Development Seminar on Intellectual Property
   Gibb Gilchrist Building, Rm. 102
   Noon–1:00 p.m.

July 23–25 — Texas Ports and Waterways Conference
   For more information,
   http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/pw08/

July 23–24 — 2008 Public Transportation Regional Coordination Conference
   For more information,
   http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/tpa08/

July 31 — Annual benefits enrollment deadline
   w-simpson@tamu.edu

CenterLine is a production of TTI Communications.
We encourage your comments and suggestions for articles about TTI people and research efforts.
Please send email to news@ttimail.tamu.edu or call Rick Davenport at (979) 862-3763.