

WorkQuest FOCUS

on Jobs for People with Disabilities

WorkQuest Newsletter LIII
August 2021

E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises: Serving customers by placing employees at the forefront

E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises, Inc. is a San Antonio-based vocational rehabilitation nonprofit that is also a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) in the Texas State Use *Works Wonders* Program. As a CRP, E.Q.U.I.P. is a respected employer of veterans and others with disabilities while also ensuring the highest level of quality service for its customers.

Fernando Rodriguez has been an employee of E.Q.U.I.P. for the past six years, where he oversees the Live Oak County Safety Rest Area just outside of San Antonio, making sure it's clean, that restrooms are stocked with soap and paper products, and the grounds are maintained. As part of his daily tasks, he replaces toilet paper, takes out trash, scrubs windows, mops floors, rakes gravel, sweeps sidewalks and pressure washes the parking lots.

Raul Tintori, E.Q.U.I.P.'s CEO, says it's employees like Rodriguez who help the organization achieve its mission.

"I've always credited the success of this company to the employees themselves," Tintori said. "It all comes back to them."

Founded in 2007, E.Q.U.I.P. currently oversees 20 safety rest areas across Texas and offers custodial services, grounds and facility maintenance, and IT services to state agency customers including the Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Texas Department of Public Safety and Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services. These contracts are facilitated by WorkQuest.

In addition to being given a job placement within E.Q.U.I.P., employees also receive job training that prepares them for a future



Fernando Rodriguez of E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises maintains the grounds of the Live Oak County Safety Rest Area.

job in the private sector, if they so choose. Mike Stevens, vice president of E.Q.U.I.P., says this practice is important to E.Q.U.I.P.'s goal of making sure everyone in the disabled community has access to the opportunities in which they're interested.

"As a company, we're always pursuing areas where we can reach out and expand our mission," Stevens said. "Those in the disabled community are often the hardest-working and sincerest employees. They really just want to be given a chance."

Rodriguez is thankful for his second chance at a fulfilling career. After suffering a stroke 11 years ago, he was unable to continue working as a flooring contractor. He later learned about E.Q.U.I.P. at a job fair and thought it could offer him some stability and a renewed sense of purpose.

"I've had previous experience working with people who needed my help," Rodriguez said. "It was rewarding to care for people, and now I do that in a different way."

Tintori says that serving employees with respect and dignity ensures that customers receive the same level of service, which strengthens the relationships E.Q.U.I.P. has with its customers and solidifies continued job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

"We like to come up with new ways to grow in our ability to serve our customers and our employees," Tintori said. "Whether that's adding new lines of services or building relationships with other communities around Texas, we want to be the employer who gives people a chance."

A Message from President and CEO **Fred M. Weber, Jr.**



In May, the Texas Legislature completed its 87th legislative session. As always, WorkQuest closely monitored all legislation with the potential to impact the State Use *WorksWonders* Program in an effort to keep you up to date on any changes, and we will continue to advocate for the growth of the Program year round!

WorkQuest will offer its annual compliance and training seminars beginning this summer and continuing into the fall. These seminars were developed to help new and existing *WorksWonders* Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) better understand the guidelines and requirements that allow the Program to operate successfully. Planned seminars will review a range of topics including the statutes and rules that govern the Program, the role of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities (PPD) Advisory Committee, and the role that WorkQuest plays as a liaison between TWC, the PPD Advisory Committee, state agency and political subdivision customers, and the CRPs themselves. Please visit WorkQuest.com to find out more about seminars offered online or in your area.

On behalf of WorkQuest leadership and staff, I would like to thank each of you for your continued partnership throughout the year. Your dedication has enabled the *WorksWonders* Program to persevere during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Weber'.

Fred M. Weber, Jr.

WorkQuest celebrates 20-year partnership with E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises

This June, E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises (E.Q.U.I.P.), a *WorksWonders* Program Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP), celebrated its 20th anniversary.

E.Q.U.I.P. opened its doors in 2001 with just one employee, and since then, the organization has demonstrated its commitment to establishing an exemplary partnership with WorkQuest within the *WorksWonders* Program—and to employing Texans with disabilities—again and again.

Over the past 20 years, E.Q.U.I.P. has grown its operation to include 161 employees and currently facilitates 26 contracts through the *WorksWonders* Program, creating job opportunities for hundreds of individuals with disabilities during that time.

Offering a selection of services that include janitorial, grounds maintenance, landscape maintenance, litter pickup, and picnic and rest area maintenance, E.Q.U.I.P. has developed long-standing relationships with multiple state agencies that contribute to the *WorksWonders* Program's ongoing success, including the Health and Human Services Commission, Texas Department of Transportation and Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

WorkQuest is proud to partner with E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises, and we look forward to the next 20 years.

2021 Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner & Products and Services Expo

WorkQuest is excited to announce the Artie Lee Hinds Award dinner and Products & Services Expo will once again be held in person this year (with COVID-19 safety protocols in place). The events will also be hosted at a new location—the Hilton Austin Airport Hotel, located at 9515 Hotel Drive, Austin, Texas 78719.



The 14th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award dinner will take place on Monday, Sept. 13. Each year, the dinner honors the exemplary *WorksWonders* Program Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) employees who personify commitment and dedication to their job providing products and services for the state of Texas. Additionally, WorkQuest will recognize new and existing state agency and political subdivision customers whose partnerships enable the Program to succeed year after year.

The following day, WorkQuest will host its 33rd annual Products and Services Expo on Tuesday, Sept. 14. The event features CRP products and services on contract through the *WorksWonders* Program and allows Program customers to interface with the CRP representatives and employees, demonstrating the benefits of the Expo for the CRPs and agency purchasers who utilize the Program.

Both events function as a way for WorkQuest to recognize and promote the exemplary employees who provide the products and services available through the *WorksWonders* Program, and we are excited to be able to hold them in-person again! We will continue to monitor COVID-19 activity across Texas in order to ensure the safety of our guests.

WorkQuest 2021 CRP Compliance & Training Seminar

WorkQuest is excited to announce our 2021 CRP Compliance and Training Seminars, which will have both in-person and virtual attendance options for Program participants. This training will give CRPs a detailed overview of requirements for participation in the *WorksWonders* Program, governmental contracting practices, and procurement procedures and laws. Due to the seminar's importance relating to reviewing TWC's Rules update, changing reporting requirements, and other Program initiatives, WorkQuest strongly encourages a representative from all certified CRPs attend a seminar or participate via webinar.

Each seminar will consist of a morning session intended for all CRPs, which will outline Program compliance requirements, review changes to TWC Program Rules which may affect CRPs, and help attendees better understand contracting through the Program. After lunch, provided by WorkQuest, an afternoon session for CRPs new to the *WorksWonders* Program will dive deeper into how the Program works and ways new CRPs can maximize opportunities with WorkQuest.

Seminar Agenda

State Use Compliance Training

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

- Ch. 806 Rules Amendments
- CRP Program Participation Requirements
- Required State Use Documents
- TWC Staff Reviews of CRPs
- Program Performance Measures
- Employee-Centered Vocational Assessments
- Service and Product Cost Proposals

Lunch (provided)

12:00 – 12:30 p.m.

New CRP Training

12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

- How the Program Works
- Ongoing CRP Requirements
- Contracting through the Program
- Adding Products & Services
- Understanding WorkQuest's Role
- Working with Regional Marketing Managers
- Identifying Potential Customers

Locations & Dates

Arlington – August 19

Lakeview Event & Conference Center
1200 Viridian Park Ln., Bldg. A
Arlington, TX 76005
214.769.7733

Austin – August 26

Holiday Inn Austin Midtown
6000 Middle Fiskville Road
Austin, TX 78752
512.451.5757

Houston – September 8

Houston Marriott Westchase
2900 Briarpark Dr.
Houston, TX 77042
713.978.7400

Webinar – September 23

10:00 – 12:00 – Compliance Training
1:00 – 3:00 – New CRP Training



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14th Annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner
Monday, Sept. 13
6 p.m.

New location:
The Hilton Austin Airport Hotel
9515 Hotel Drive, Austin, Texas 78719

33rd Annual Products and Services Expo
Tuesday, Sept. 14
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

New location:
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