

# Spectrum

*Training and Evaluation Center of Hutchinson*

## Enough is Enough!

*by Brenda Maxey, TECH President/CEO*

In the last issue of the Spectrum, I shared with you the path of destruction and devastation that laid in the wake of the close of the 2009 legislative session. I wondered then, could it get any worse? I had no idea just how bad it would get.

When the Legislature adjourned in May, it had battled against a poor economy and state revenues that had fallen further and further behind the anticipated projections. No one was spared from the devastating “across the board cuts”, including Kansas’s most vulnerable citizens--children and adults with disabilities. The impact upon TECH was a loss of \$300,000 in annualized revenue. Difficult decisions had to be made. Nine full time positions were eliminated, we had to ask everyone to do more with less, two programs were discontinued, and a speech language therapist for the infant and toddler program could not be hired, despite the need. Difficult, but necessary decisions, in order to operate the organization with a balanced budget.

It was a challenging summer and fall for everyone at TECH. So many changes had to be made--changes that could not compromise the quality of the services we provide. The task was great, but the TECH team rose to meet that challenge and by October, everyone had adjusted to the increased workload and quality of services continued to be the number one priority. Then the unthinkable occurred.....

On November 23, 2009, due to state budget shortfalls, Governor Parkinson was forced to issue a Governor’s budget allotment. This drastic allotment cut social services funding to tens of thousands of Kansans. Among these cuts, \$1.3 million of state-only funded supports for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Even more devastating was the \$7.8 million cut in the state’s primary funding stream that supports persons with

developmental disabilities--the HCBS MR/DD Waiver, a Medicaid funding program. This cut returns us to funding levels of the late 1990’s. Along with the cut in Medicaid funding, dental services for persons with developmental disabilities were discontinued, as well as respite services that were available to families.

In my 22 years of service with TECH, I have never seen such a drastic cut to programs and services as what was unfolding before me as I listened to the news conference being held with Governor Parkinson. My question from May, “Can it get any worse?” had been answered. Yes it can, and it just did. This was truly the unthinkable.

Emotions ran high as I met with members of the TECH management team to discuss the impact of the allotment. Roughly \$500,000 annualized revenue would be lost effective January 1, 2010, in addition to the \$300,000 lost earlier in 2009. As I looked at the faces of the people sitting around the table, my management team, the best of the best, I was struck by how quickly the sheer look of panic left their eyes, and determination set in. This team is solution driven!

Once again we began looking at cost saving that we could derive internally. What positions could be consolidated? Who was eligible for early retirement? What line items in the budget could be eliminated? There had been so many cuts to the budget already; truly there was little left to cut, we were already bare bones. During all of this, our focus has remained on providing quality supports and services to the people with disabilities we serve. Have we cut enough expenses to absorb the \$500,000 in reduced revenue? No, and I am not sure we can without compromising the quality supports and services TECH has always

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# Enough is Enough!

(con't)

offered to the men, women and children with disabilities in our community. I am counting on the Kansas Legislature to also help us, by restoring the devastating cuts to the developmental disabilities service system.

TECH began meeting with our Reno County legislators in December 2009, educating them on the serious impact the systems cut would have on our organization and the people we serve. We needed their help and their support to look at other options, other solutions to the state revenue shortfall, something other than reducing rates on the HCBS MR/DD Waiver, and balancing the state's budget on the backs of those most vulnerable.

When the legislature went into session in January, advocacy efforts statewide focused on restoration of the funding cuts made to programs for people with developmental disabilities. As the legislature wrestled with the funding issues and how to restore funding to our programs, it became apparent there were no good solutions, and all of the solutions available would have negative consequences. The "solution" on the table as of the writing of this article allows a swapping of funds (Medicaid Funds for State General Funds) within the MR/DD funding system. While it would restore Medicaid funding to the roughly 9,500 people with developmental disabilities statewide who are served with the HCBS MR/DD Waiver, it would eliminate the entire State General Fund grant used to serve the approx 2,200 people with developmental disabilities statewide who are not Medicaid eligible. There are no good solutions. What would happen to those 2,200 people whose services are funded with the State General Fund grant? That question has not been answered.

If you have not written, emailed or called your legislator to ask for restoration of ALL MR/DD funding affected by the Governor's budget allotment, I urge you to please do it now. The Invisible Kansan website, [www.invisiblekansans.org](http://www.invisiblekansans.org), created last legislative session is up and running again. The site allows you to email your legislator directly and provides you with up-to-date information on legislation affecting people with developmental disabilities. **Enough is Enough!** People with developmental disabilities have been invisible for too long.

This is a challenging time. We have many obstacles ahead and our journey over the next year will be a difficult one. However the TECH Board of Directors and the TECH staff remain committed to the children and adults with disabilities that we serve. We appreciate your continued support, prayers, and trust in the work we do and the mission that we serve during these very challenging times.

# Your Voice Can Make a Difference!

## Getting Involved in the 2010 Legislative Session

Our voices alone are not enough, our legislators need to hear from YOU! We need you to contact your legislators and let them know how valuable the services offered by TECH are to your family member who receives them, as well as how important they are to you and our community. There are many ways to contact your legislator; correspondence can be via phone, mail, or e-mail. You can also visit [www.invisiblekansans.com](http://www.invisiblekansans.com) to send a pre-composed message to your representatives. This website will automatically look up your representatives when you enter your address. Below is contact information for representatives from Reno County. If you would like assistance in finding your local legislators please contact Patty Kueck at (620) 663-1596 and she'll be happy to assist you.

The Reno County delegation of legislators is listed below.

Rep. Bob Bethell  
55-S Capitol Building  
Topeka, KS 66612-1504  
Phone: 785-296-7616  
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[terry.bruce@senate.ks.gov](mailto:terry.bruce@senate.ks.gov)

# Staff Service Awards

## TECH Staff Celebrate 178 Years of Service in 2009!

The annual Staff Service Awards Banquet was held on Thursday, January 29th, at the Downtown Sampler. The celebration honored 32 TECH staff, who had 178 years of combined service with TECH. Congratulations to the honorees were offered by their co-workers, families, members of the TECH Board of Directors, and the TECH Foundation Board members.

Congratulations to the following for achieving their years of service milestones.

### 3 Years

Jessica Fowler  
Jasmine Reed  
Randy Woods  
Tammy Boehm  
Linda Lusk  
Kari Thorpe  
Larry Dilbeck  
Melissa VanWey  
Sandy Perry  
LeeAnn Schulthess  
Terri Langley  
Cindy Hays  
Susan Orr  
Beth Kern  
Alleshia Fox  
April Green



### 15 Years

Ella Mae Mounts  
Jim Suppes

Following dinner, each of the honorees was presented with a gift and a certificate noting years of service with TECH.

Ella Mae Mounts, direct service provider at the Adult Life Skills, with 15 years at TECH, laughs about her initial thoughts of working at TECH for a year or so. It didn't take long for Ella Mae to realize that TECH was where she belonged. "The clients just drew me in and I believe that TECH staff and clients are my family and TECH is my home. I can't think of a more rewarding or fulfilling career."

Jim Suppes also came to TECH over 15 years ago desiring a maintenance position. The position available at the time also included working directly with clients at the training center. Jim was unsure how he would do working with people with disabilities. But ask him today and Jim says, "The number one reason I love my job and always want to stay at TECH is the clients. I would not want to work anywhere else."

A special recognition was also paid to 3 year-award recipient Beth Kern, who unexpectedly passed away just two weeks prior to the banquet. Beth's family attended the celebration and accepted her gift and certificate. The evening concluded with a video montage that included photos of all the award recipients.

TECH President/CEO, Brenda Maxey said, "People that choose to work in the field of developmental disabilities soon learn it's not just a job - it's a rewarding and challenging career. TECH is blessed to have the dedicated staff that have chosen this career."

*Photos (clockwise from top): Ella Mae Mounts with Brenda Maxey, Jim Suppes, Sylvia & Scott Vesper, Janea Gordon & Marsha Hill, Monica Oliva with Brenda Maxey, and Beth Kilbourn & Ana Yoder.*

### 5 Years

Michelle Call  
Diana Stover  
Billie Elliott  
Tina Stapleton  
Patty Caswell  
Delena Harms  
Sara Call  
Charlotte Meininger

### 10 Years

Marsha Hill  
Ana Yoder  
Gloria Bush  
Sylvia Vesper  
Monica Oliva  
Marcy Kauffman

# Gift of TECHnology

Since beginning the Computer/TECHnology Lab in a remodeled storage room in August of 2002, it became very clear that the six-station lab and part-time staff person were not going to meet the needs of the people we serve. This program was needed and wanted by many more than could be accommodated in the small lab and by one part-time staff. Today, the lab has settled into what had previously been a large conference room. It has 22 working stations and 3 full-time staff working with each consumer on their specific TECHnology goals and desires. The community was invited to participate in this program by donating computer equipment and supplies. The response has been wonderful. Because of the amount of items donated, TECH staff and consumers have been able to pull working parts of many computers to make several nice systems.

Once the lab was full of good working systems, more systems were put together to be given away in the newly founded “Gift of TECHnology (GOT)” program. The goal of this program is to put computers in to the homes of consumers so they could put the skills they were learning in the lab into real life use and continue to increase their independence. The GOT computers have been used to make communication boards, shopping lists, resumes and more. They have also helped clients stay in touch with family and friends through e-mail and Facebook. For the longest time, the world of TECHnology was difficult to access for the people we serve, but thanks to our community, businesses, and local service clubs, TECHnology is now a reality for the people we serve.

To date every qualified applicant has been able to receive a system.

*Following are just a few of the recipients that have benefited from this program.*



Just 4 days after Stan received his system, the TECHnology Lab received this update from Stan’s team leader, Janea. “Stan is thrilled with his computer. He is so happy that he wants to spend all of his time on it and even so happy that he cried ‘tears of joy’. Stan reports that he uses his computer ‘all the time’ and enjoys playing games. He said he is really happy to have it.”

Forrest’s parents assisted him in picking up his GOT system. Since receiving it, he has been on a home computer maintenance goal. During the last year Forrest has learned how to use some of the system tools, troubleshoot some problems using the device manager and Microsoft Help and Support. He has also been set up with a Facebook account in which he has over 200 people on his friends list and does online chat within the site. Forrest also uses his computer to e-mail his parents and staff. Having the opportunity to have his own home computer has proven to be a true enhancement to Forrest’s life.



Ashley received a GOT computer this summer. Within a month, she connected with an old friend she graduated with who now lives in North Carolina. The social connections that she has made with her GOT computer have lifted her to a new level of understanding and personal responsibility. Ashley uses her computer everyday for recreational purposes and social networking with many friends, classmates, church members and family. She also utilizes the internet for research on her special diet and information related to Asperger’s Syndrome. She recently received training in the TECHnology lab on safe internet practices and security

software and says that her system works much better as a result.

Timothy was the first teenage recipient of a computer through the GOT Program. He received a Dell Pentium 4, and a 17 inch flat screen with built-in stereo speakers. Additionally installed on his computer were three games that had been generously donated to the TECHnology Lab for consumers’ use.



# United Way Work Day 2009

Each year, United Way asks the community to volunteer for a day to help member agencies with special projects that will benefit the agency and the services they provide. TECH has been fortunate to have a project completed by volunteers for the past several years. The most recent project was putting up a privacy fence and painting at TECH's Training & Work Center on Avenue B.

A huge thank you to the volunteers from Northminster Presbyterian Church for volunteering to spend a full Saturday giving TECH's Training & Work Center a fresh look with paint and a privacy fence. The fence also helped define the public area around the building. The efforts have been appreciated by clients, staff, and visitors coming out to the training center.



*Before*



*After*



# Holiday Festival

The 2009 holiday Festival was more exciting than ever as the event moved to a new location—Cottonwood Court at the Kansas State Fairgrounds. Volunteers spent hundreds of hours making plans and decorating for the event, and were rewarded with a repeated chorus of “Wow’s” on Saturday night as festival guests entered the doors and were mesmerized by the winter wonderland that unfolded before them. The winter wonderland included the enchanting sounds of a brass quintet, whose music floated down from the balcony above. Guests also enjoyed an assortment of heavy hors d'oeuvres and beverages as they perused the items in the silent, quilt and live auctions.

Once the live auction concluded and guests were leaving with their newly purchased treasures, each was given a one-of-a-kind handmade ornament. The beautiful ornaments were gifts from the people served by TECH, a small way to say “Thank You” for supporting TECH. Buhler High School students volunteered their time to assist TECH clients with making the beautiful ornaments.



Friday night's Wassail Party invited the public to preview all of the auction items and enjoy holiday carols performed by the graduating class of the Early Education Center. For the first time, Faces of Faith, a mime troupe from TECH's Adult Life Skills program, also entertained with two holiday selections.

The Holiday Festival is TECH's largest fundraiser each year, and is held the week-end before Thanksgiving. The money raised “fills the gaps” that exist when other funding sources aren't enough to meet needs of those served. The event is possible because of the many, many hours volunteered by committee members, supporters of TECH, staff, Teens for TECH, students in Communities that Care, and HCC Circle K Club. But most of all, the event is a success because of the continued support of the community, both businesses and individuals, who understand and value what TECH provides to individuals with developmental disabilities.



# THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS!

The following businesses and individuals have contributed (non-event donations) to TECH from 06•13•09 - 02•19•10

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Employees of H&R Block

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## Become a Fan of TECH on Facebook!

TECH, Inc. now has a page on Facebook. Information about TECH, our services, and upcoming special events will be available on our page. TECH had more than 200 fans in less than one week. We hope you will become a fan too!

To find us, log on to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for TECH, Inc.

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Although we make every effort to include all (non-event) donors in this publication, please let us know if you were inadvertently left out or your name was misspelled. We will correct it in the next issue of the Spectrum.

# TECH Welcomes New Board Members

TECH welcomed four new members to the TECH Corporate Board of Directors in January 2010. "We are very pleased to have such a diverse group of community members serving on the TECH Corporate Board of Directors. Each member brings a strong set of skills, talents, and perspectives to guide TECH in our mission to provide impeccable services to men, women and children with developmental disabilities in Reno County," said Brenda Maxey, TECH President/CEO.



**Jeff Brewer**  
Sales  
Luminous Neon

I have been a member of the Hutchinson AMBUCS (American Business Clubs) for 25 years. We have had TECH as one of the charities that we chose to help with funds most of those years. We (AMBUCS) have always felt that TECH was an organization that closely mirrored our own slogan "Dedicated to creating mobility and independence for individuals with disabilities".



**Regan Marshall**  
Director of Finance  
The Kroger Co.

Being the parent of a child with disabilities, my family has had many opportunities to work with this wonderful organization. That being the case, I was honored to be asked to serve on the TECH Operations Board. This will allow me an opportunity to give back to an organization that has helped our family in so many ways and continues to do so on a weekly basis.



**John Montgomery**  
Publisher  
The Hutchinson News

I was pleased to accept an invitation to join the board because of the significant and meaningful impact TECH has in the community in the mission of serving people with developmental disabilities. I know that the social service importance of TECH's mission in-turn will be personally meaningful and rewarding.



**Connie Richman**  
Teacher  
Obbe School

My initial introduction to TECH began in 1993. Within a year, the Hearts and Hands Auxiliary was created with co-founder, Janet Whisenhunt, and 25 charter members as a vision of former CEO, Maurice Cummings. Over the years, my family and I have shared a passion for serving TECH consumers through Holiday Festival, Teens for TECH, and many special events. As I rejoin the board of directors, I am honored and look forward to the future of TECH.

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## **Maurice Cummings Named Lifetime Honorary Foundation Board Member**

Maurice Cummings has been named as the first ever Lifetime Honorary Member of the TECH Foundation of Kansas Board of Directors. Maurice was TECH's first President/CEO and played an instrumental role in getting TECH's doors open in 1973. Maurice continued in that role for 26 years.

Since retiring in 1998, Maurice has stayed very active with TECH by serving on the TECH Foundation

*Maurice receives framed proclamation from  
TECH President/CEO Brenda Maxey and past  
foundation board chairman, Darren Wicks.*

Board, serving as chairman of the Fall Golf Classic committee, and attending many of TECH's events and activities. Maurice said, "This is a wonderful honor and it is a pleasure to be of service to TECH and the clients served." **CONGRATULATIONS & THANK YOU MAURICE!**

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