

A Virtual Tour of Richmond State Supported Living Center

by Louise Abt Clay,
parent and unofficial “tour guide”



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Climb in, fasten your seat belt, and let's go. This tour is being offered to family members and other interested people – and to those who can't visit in person – to show what Richmond SSLC's vast campus is all about.

We enter the front gate of Richmond State Supported Living Center, passing some fenced pasture land on the left and some open land on the right, and we come to the guard station. Passing that, we come to a fork in the road. Either way we will be on Tejas Trail, which makes a big circle of about a mile around the Richmond SSLC campus. Let us go left.

The first building we pass on our right is the **Administration** building (not pictured), which houses the main switchboard and the offices of the Richmond SSLC Director, Assistant Directors, Security, Director of Residential Services, and others. It is also where the campus-wide security cameras are monitored 24-7. And there is the Administration Conference Room, with artwork on the walls done by Richmond SSLC individuals.

Across from the Administration building, on our left, we see fenced pasture with **horses**. And then we come to a large covered arena, which houses the **Therapeutic Riding Center**. This facility, operated by an outside organization called SIRE, uses horses to provide therapy for residents of Richmond SSLC and also non-residents from the community. This is an impressive amenity, which was built in 1992 and subsequently renovated by Richmond SSLC's Volunteer Services Council (VSC). The VSC raised the money to build the arena.



The Therapeutic Riding Center

On our right, directly across from the Riding Center, we pass the **gymnasium**, which is used daily for **recreation** and also for parties, dances, festivals, and other events.



The gym, operated by the Recreation Department

Just past the riding arena there is a small gazebo, which is enclosed at Christmas time and serves as “***Santa Land***” (shown left) for Project Noel, the annual tour of the Christmas displays for the public. (And Santa himself is on hand several evenings!)



Santa Land



The cabin in Family Park

And on our left ahead, among the trees in Parent Park, we see a **screened-in camping cabin** -- a donation from the parents of one of the Richmond SSLC residents. The park area has picnic tables and grills that are used by residents and their families.

As we keep going, we come to a street on our right, and we turn onto it. This is Navajo Trail, which cuts through the middle of the campus. On our left we see a cluster of five red brick buildings, some of which are visible from the road. These lovely **cottages**, built in 2000, each have a full kitchen, a dining room, and a living room; each one is home to 8 people in private and semi-private rooms.



*One of five
residential
cottages*

Looking on our right side, the next thing we see appears to be a joined pair of utilitarian-type buildings plus an outbuilding. This is the **workshop** complex. We'll get back to it later.

After we drive across a covered walkway, the building on our left is the Colorado building, which has many functions all by itself. The leftmost portion is the **wheelchair shop**, which repairs and modifies the hundreds of wheelchairs and other adaptive devices used by practically every resident. Another part of this building serves as space for **Volunteer Services** (the fund-raising group for all our "extras") which is a complete story in its own right, and the **Country Store**, where residents and staff can buy donated items. In the very back of this building are a **coffee shop with internet service** for those who can benefit from those things and a separate, very protected **workshop for those residents with "pica"**, the disorder of eating inedible objects.

Moving forward, we come to a driveway and large parking lot on the right, and we turn into that area. The workshop complex mentioned earlier is the site of the **campus workshop**, where residents work on piece goods via contracts with approximately 20 outside companies. The individuals really enjoy working, earning money, and being able to spend the money as they wish. In another part of this building is a 1950s retro coffee area called the **"Light Rock Cafe"**, where parties and gatherings can take place. There is a jukebox with a great many selections. At noon during the week, this area becomes a sub sandwich shop for those residents who want that kind of lunch - it is their option.



The Campus Workshop complex

To the left of the workshop, there is a brick building with a large enclosed structure behind it. That covered structure is the **Natatorium**, originally built with Volunteer Services funds and recently refurbished largely with VSC funds. In the beautiful pool area there is a chair which can lower an individual into the water, and there is a ramp so that a shower chair can be rolled into the water. The pool is heated by solar panels, which were donated several years back. Outside the pool area is a new, covered **splash pad**, so the residents can enjoy the various sprays of water in hot weather while protected from the sun.



The Natatorium (with reflection from the water)

In the parking lot, left of the natatorium and solar panels, we see a long walkway leading to the site of the **infirmary** and various **clinics**, including the dental and radiology departments. There are doctors and nurses, dentists and hygienists, among others. There is also a fully staffed **pharmacy**. Behind the infirmary, between it and the administration building, is the “**DPC**” building. In that building are training classrooms, doctors’ offices, the financial office, the rights office, and various other support functions that are necessary but not visible.



Infirmary, Clinics, and Pharmacy

Back on the road, the buildings on the right and left are residences or offices. On the right is the Angelina building, which has a big area devoted to **physical therapy** and all of its equipment. **Behavior Services** and **Music Therapy** are also on Angelina. Keeping on straight and passing various buildings till the street dead-ends, we see lots of vans and several small Metro buses parked on the left, and a building and garage on the right where they are kept in repair. This is the **Transportation** department, with an inventory of 83 vehicles. Each of the small buses can accommodate a number of individuals in wheelchairs; one or two of the buses also have some regular seats. Each day many vehicles are in use. Residents make frequent visits to stores, entertainment venues, restaurants, medical specialists, and other destinations in the local and Greater Houston area -- plus on-campus sites in bad weather.



One of the metro buses used to transport more than 160 RSSLC individuals who use wheelchairs

We have reached a dead-end from Navajo Trail into Tejas Trail, the big circle. We'll turn right. If we had turned left we would have passed mostly residential areas. These residence buildings were named for Texas rivers: Pecos, Trinity, Brazos, San Antonio, Neches, Nueces, Leon, etc.

Turning right onto Tejas Trail, we see on our right the large **Maintenance** area plus the **Central Laundry** in the back (which also does laundry for Brenham and Corpus

Christi SSLCs). And we will pass the central **Food Service**, which prepares a couple of hundred special-diet meals (in addition to regular food) three times a day plus snacks – and then transports the food in special trailers to the living areas 365 days a year.

Continuing past the maintenance area, we come to Cherokee Trail on the right and turn. On our left we will pass residential buildings and the Neches building, which houses **Recreation, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Active Treatment** (day programming), and several other services. We are now in an area called the Quadrangle, which is composed of four sprawling mostly-residential buildings. In an area of Neches are two residential areas for people with “pica”, protected so that the residents cannot eat objects which could kill or injure them. Another building in the Quad area is called Trinity, which is home to mostly medically fragile individuals. Inside Trinity is a special area called a **Snoezelen room** (pronounced like “Snoozlin”), which provides pleasant sensory stimulation with lights and sounds for those who need that.

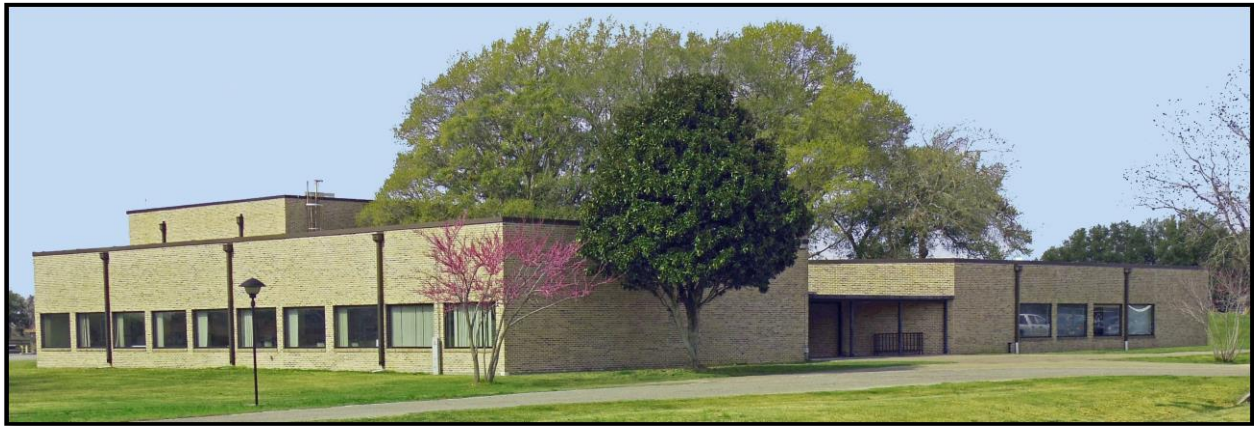
In the middle of the Quad area is a very large, lovely **gazebo**, where lots of events are held in favorable weather. This structure, with a diameter of about 40 feet, was built with funds raised by Volunteer Services. Bricks in the pavement around the gazebo with the donor’s name molded into the brick were sold for \$100 apiece at the time to raise money.



***The big gazebo,
where events are
held***

Continuing past the Quad area, on our right we see the **Chapel complex**. A roomy, sunlit building houses the **“Forever Young”** program for those age fifty or older, and then there is the chapel, which holds non-denominational services on Sundays,

services for Catholic residents on Mondays, and services for Jewish residents twice a month. There is a chaplain and an assistant. The Chapel complex was built with donated funds raised by Volunteer Services.



The RSSLC Chapel Complex (3 buildings)



The Forever Young center for "senior citizens"

Having passed the Quad area and having turned a right-hand corner to get back on Tejas Trail, we see vacant land on our left which is supposed to be used at some point for a Texas-run retired veterans' home.

Continuing our drive, we see a couple of ranch-style houses in the distance on the left – houses we passed along the road before we entered the facility. These used to be occupied by the Director and Assistant Director. One of them is occupied by the head of Security. The second, called the ***Family House***, is used by families visiting their loved ones at Richmond SSLC. This house is beautifully furnished with items donated by a major home builder and a major furniture retailer.



The Family House

Looking ahead, we finally come to the guard shack again, and our tour is done. Can you think of anything Richmond SSLC **doesn't** have? We have only looked at the physical facilities but not at all the services – which would require another tour!

The completeness of the facilities and the variety of services at RSSLC are truly amazing. I have been coming to Richmond SSLC since my son came in 1977, and I am still blown away. ***One thing that is staggering is the amount of community support enjoyed over the years*** -- the millions of dollars raised by the Volunteer Services Council of RSSLC and put into new facilities and services -- in addition to what the State of Texas has provided and individual donors have generously contributed.



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***My son Walt Wingo
at Richmond SSLC***

(For privacy reasons, no other
RSSLC residents are shown.)

(more pictures below)



Central Kitchen and Supply



Central Laundry, which services three SSLCs



A distant view of Richmond State Supported Living Center

