

Thomas & Lewin Associates, Inc., Quality Care Community Services

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As part of our Private Provider Showcase series, I get the opportunity to get first hand knowledge of the various options open to families in Fort Bend County when choosing a private provider. This month, I am highlighting Thomas & Lewin Associates, Inc., Quality Care Community Services, which is located at 810 Highway 6 South, Suite 110, Houston, Texas 77079. I met with several members of the staff who graciously gave of their time so I could get an insider's glimpse at the services they provide. I met with Anne S. Lewin, Owner/Vice President & Clinical Administrator, Rosa Wells, Director of Residential Services, Karen Lewis, Case Manager Supervisor and Tom Stearns, Case Manager, who just happened to conveniently be in town from the Brenham location. What I learned and experienced I will share with you.

Thomas & Lewin has a large service area with only the Texas Panhandle and Far West Texas excluded. However, the majority of their services are provided to individuals living locally in Pasadena, Tomball, Spring, Bay City, El Campo, Richmond, Rosenberg, Needville and Brenham. As with all HCS providers, they provide a complete array of HCS/Medicaid Waiver services throughout their service area. They prefer to place their emphasis on demonstrating their unique experience, extensive knowledge and dedication to serving those with disabilities in a superior manner.

Owners Athena M. Thomas and Anne S. Lewin have combined experience of more than thirty-five years; in the private sector as well as with local authorities. Both have been instrumental in the development and implementation of services and HCS programs currently used within the State of Texas. They've gone from Direct Care Staff to Consultants in the industry; from Private Providers to Owners. For this reason, Thomas & Lewin believe they are the leading choice for families when choosing a private provider.

Currently, Thomas & Lewin employ 75-80 Direct Care Staff and another 18 in Administration. Their Clinical Staff is extensive as well with the majority of them being long-term. They also have a separate Respite Staff. We talked about turn-over and how keeping dedicated employees can be a difficult feat. Thomas & Lewin have that covered though. They offer a variety of incentives and benefits to their employees. Among the highest coveted benefits and incentives are medical, dental and vision benefits, paid vacation and sick time, life insurance, cash incentives, annual bonuses based on tenure, shift differentials, employee recognition, cost of living raises and last, but not least, paid over-time. I could see that the smiles on the employees' faces were genuine. They are afforded respect and in return give their best to the individuals they serve.

Thomas & Lewin manages 13 group homes located throughout their service area. Some are owned and some are leased for the long-term. I visited two and was impressed with the tidiness of each and how each individual's room was fully decorated. It was apparent that individuals

are supported and given the freedom to express their own personalities in their private rooms. I took some pictures of the homes. They're included herein.

Those individuals receiving Day Habilitation services from Thomas & Lewin have a choice as to where they receive those services. Day Habilitation is available at two locations for individuals living near Fort Bend County, Craig Millennium Enterprises Inc. and Diversity Day, with another choice located in Brenham for those in the northern service areas.

I visited Craig Millennium Enterprises, Inc., who contracts with Thomas & Lewin to provide these services, to get a feel for their operation. I was met by Leslie Creekmur, who showed me around the different classrooms and activities. Basically, individuals have three classroom settings. One is geared toward assessment of individuals, either on an intake basis or a transitional basis, which normally involves up to 30 days of assessment. The next classroom is for individuals who are learning life skills to become more independent. Activities might include counting or matching objects and doing basic math worksheets. Individuals are supported in their personal quest and provided the tools needed. The last classroom is geared toward providing skills necessary to work in the community. Activities might include budgeting or learning maintenance duties like vacuuming and laundry folding. All individuals are assessed regularly; as many as three times per week, to be sure each is progressing toward their personal goals. Throughout my visit, the main focus seemed to be in supporting the individual's choices and providing a forum to succeed in those personal choices. Individuals are encouraged to participate in exercise and other activities outdoors daily, as weather permits. Leslie was very informative and willing to answer my many questions. She informed me that currently 50 individuals from various programs are receiving services at this location on any given day. You can reach Leslie at 281-561-9600 for more detailed information on their program.

The Brenham location is a Thomas & Lewin Day Habilitation Program. Tom Stearns, Case Manager, lives and works in Brenham. He was in town on an unrelated business matter and was able to provide me with some great details about that program.

All Staff and their families at the Brenham location live locally. Brenham provides that small town feeling with a close knit community. Tom believes that is one of the factors leading to the high involvement level of families of individuals with disabilities in the area. Staff, consumers and their families have a variety of choices when it comes to social recreation in Brenham. Numerous community events, movies, parties, dances, attending the individual's church of choice and social functions are amongst the preferred activities.

Brenham also offers individuals a choice of work opportunities. In the workshop, individuals can choose to do piece work for local businesses. They have individuals who do piece work for Blue Bell, "The Little Creamery" and some who work on the county "Road Crew." The Road Crew is responsible for helping to keep the community maintained, clean and beautiful. Tom spoke of individuals who do very well financially due to the many options and their personal dedication to supporting each individual's choices.

In Summary, Thomas & Lewin Associates, Inc., Quality Care Community Services is another option for families in Fort Bend County when choosing a private provider. I thoroughly enjoyed my visits and meeting the great staff. If you would like more information or want to schedule a visit, Thomas & Lewin can be reached at 281-679-1309.