

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WINTER—VOL. 11, No. 4

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CTD LEGISLATIVE
AWARENESS DAY

DART Celebrates One Year of Service

This past November, the DeSoto-Arcadia Regional Transit (DART) system marked a major milestone celebrating its one year anniversary as the newest fixed route public transit service in Florida. DART, a service of DeSoto County Government, operates Monday through Saturday from 7:30 am to 6:30 pm in and around the City of Arcadia. The route deviated service is operated by Veolia Transportation Services, Inc. and is open to the general public at a fare of only 50 cents per rider.

DART provides residents with a low cost travel option and access to health care services, recreation, employment and educational activities, government services, commercial centers and connects neighborhoods to a variety of activity centers and destinations. During the first month that DART was in operation, ridership was extremely low as residents of the area got familiar with the new transit system. Routes and schedules were adjusted based on feedback received to better meet the mobility needs of the community. Peggy Waters, DeSoto County Social Services Director and Tim Banks, General Manager of Veolia, continue to be amazed and delighted at the resulting steady increase in ridership being transported on DART. August 2013 was the highest month recorded to date with over 1400 passenger trips, and that number has only slightly decreased in the months that have followed.

DART drivers have shared stories about individuals whose lives have been changed because they now have access to a reliable, cost-feasible transportation option. This access has allowed

them to pursue educational opportunities, enter the workforce, and provide them the personal freedom and independence to move about their community for all types of trip purposes and destinations.

Recent discussions between DeSoto County Government, Veolia, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) staff have focused on improvements for the DART system, including improved route/schedule information, consideration of seasonal schedules, installation of bus stop signs, and other passenger amenities such as benches and shelters. The DART service will continue to be funded for two more years by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) State Transit Service Development Program grant funds, U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 “Non-urbanized Area Formula Program” grant funds and fare box revenue.

Over the past year, the DART system has lived up to its slogan—“We’ll take you there!”



Holiday Spirit at Sunshine Line

For the past several holiday seasons, Hillsborough County's Sunshine Line employees have presented gifts and/or gift cards to deserving families and persons who have used the Sunshine Line service. The selection is based upon input from drivers and call center staff who have identified such persons. When the Sunshine Line staff has its holiday luncheon, some regular riders are also invited and presented with gifts from the staff.

Last year a special box of treats and necessities was sent to the troops in Afghanistan, who thanked the Sunshine Line with a special flight mission named for the Sunshine Line team.



Afghanistan troops send Sunshine Line a big thank you.



Sunshine Line present gift basket to Yes America client.



Sunshine Line drivers take client Holiday shopping via gift card.

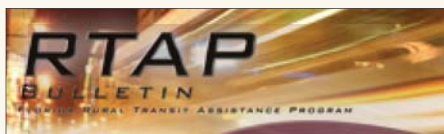
Amber Reep Off to Oklahoma

The USF Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) and the Florida RTAP's loss was the Transportation Safety Institute's (TSI) gain. In October, after spending over 13 years at CUTR, Amber Reep traveled west to the Sooner State (Oklahoma) to assume the position of the Transportation Safety Institute Transit Safety and Security Division Manager.



It's ironic that Amber's predecessor at TSI, Mike Nolan will be coming to Florida to enjoy his retirement.

Amber's new contact information is amber.reep@dot.gov or (405) 954-9268. Join us in wishing Amber the best in her new position!



Vol. 11 No. 4, Winter 2013

The **RTAP BULLETIN** is produced by the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research.

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RTAP BULLETIN

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OUR MISSION

The Florida RTAP provides training, continuing education, and technical assistance to those who provide or assist in the provision of public transportation services in rural and small urban communities in order to promote the coordinated delivery of safe, efficient, and effective transit services.

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SPOTLIGHT—Ed Wisniewski, Division Manager, Sunshine Line

Each SPOTLIGHT edition highlights one of our many energetic Florida RTAP transit professionals and allows these individuals to introduce themselves in their own words. In this issue, the SPOTLIGHT is on Ed Wisniewski, Division Manager, Sunshine Line.



Name: Ed Wisniewski, Division Manager, Hillsborough County Family & Aging Services, Sunshine Line – the Hillsborough County CTC

Background: Grew up in the St. Paul Minneapolis area.

Graduated from Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin with a degree in Business Administration and Human Services

3-year Transit Fellowship National Transit Institute at Rutgers University

Served on numerous committees with the TRB, TCRP, APTA, CTAA, ADA Peer panels, and Easter Seal projects; in addition to several conference presentations.

Professional History: After graduating from college, Ed was a middle school teacher for four years. After the fourth year, he took a summer job as a driver for elderly and disabled in Milwaukee and liked it so much he never went back in the fall to school teaching. Ed ended up expanding with the private service contractor operating paratransit services in 3 states.

With the initiation of American with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services in 1994, Ed joined Broward County Transit (BCT) for its' first day of the new service and managed the BCT ADA / TD service for the next 12 years. During that period, the BCT ADA and CTC transitioned from a single private contractor to multiple service contractors. The program earned high marks and recognitions for the service improvements, including an "Outstanding Achievement Award" from APTA. Broward's service was also recognized by Easter Seals Project Action, CTAA, and NACO with outstanding service awards.

Ed relocated to Tampa in 2006 to manage the Hillsborough County Sunshine Line, the County agency and CTC program providing TD service for Hillsborough County. This year the Sunshine Line received the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged's "Urban CTC of the Year" award. Hillsborough County's program has also been recognized by RTAP, BOCC, and the National Transit Institute.

Ed would be the first to acknowledge that all great program accomplishments are due to the dedicated staff in both agencies, call-takers who first received the transportation request, to drivers who meet the challenge day in and day out, and to all the others who support the service delivery.

One valuable lesson Ed learned over the years, is that training, and then more training is critical to the service's success. Sunshine Line managers and support staff routinely take advantage of the valuable training programs offered by RTAP / CUTR in Tampa. Several of the Sunshine Line's management team senior drivers are cross-trained and certified in multiple facets of paratransit training programs. Hillsborough County's training program was named a "Model Program" by the National Transit Institute in 2008.

Paratransit is tough service to run; everyday it requires solving a giant puzzle to make all the little pieces work together successfully by the end of the day. Then if you are successful, your reward is that you can come back tomorrow to face a brand new puzzle to solve! But the rewards of working in special needs transportation is that everyday you realize you have actually helped those who are transportation disadvantaged.

On The Personal Side: Ed and his wife Joan recently completed their 12th annual European adventure which included three weeks of hiking, biking and exploring the pubs along the west coast of Ireland.

Final Note: After 37 years in the specialized transportation industry covering seven states (of which 19 years with two heart attacks were within Florida's Coordinated Transportation system) Ed retired on November 1st. A springtime move back to Wisconsin is planned to be closer to family.



1977 Ed drives elderly passenger in Milwaukee, WI

Ed looks back on his TD career saying that "if it wasn't for vehicle problems, driver issues, and customer concerns, it would be a great job!"

Your Attitude - How successful are you?

8 Steps to Get You There

By: Nancy Friedman, The Telephone Doctor

We've identified 8 characteristics that those with a great attitude have in common. Stick with us - believe you'll enjoy this!

1. **Choose to have a great attitude** - Successful people have chosen their attitude. Many folks tell me, "Gee, I'm usually in a good mood." Catch the difference there? Right - 'usually.' You see, a mood is temporary and an attitude is permanent. What we have found is that successful people with a great attitude are able to get out of a bad mood quicker than those who don't have a great attitude.
2. **Visualize success** - Successful people visualize themselves being successful. It doesn't mean you'll always get what you visualize, but it really helps to visualize what you need. Think about American Idol. Every one of those contestants firmly believes they have a chance of winning. And the successful cyclist Lance Armstrong, winner of 7 Tour de France, never saw himself losing. Visualizing success does help.
3. **Energy, humor and enthusiasm** - Successful people walk differently. Watch how people walk - even in the parking lot. It's a special energy. Those who keep their head up high and have a gait that's a tad faster than just lollygagging along seem to have the attitude that makes them successful. Show me the slow, drag your feet, head down walker and I'll show you someone who, in all probability, isn't as successful as he'd like to be. And we know from all the very successful comedians, successful people laugh a lot. They enjoy making others

laugh. Laughter is contagious. Successful people with a good attitude tend to find humor in things quickly.

4. **Resist negative tendencies** - Successful individuals stay away from negative tendencies. Successful people with a good attitude resist becoming part of others negativity. They feel better for it and their attitude stays in check.
5. **Be a 'whatever it takes' person** - Seems it's real easy to turn customers (or anyone) down and not make a second effort. Successful people are what we call double checkers. They look for positive alternatives. Their attitude tells them to double check the situation and offers a positive alternative.
6. **Accept change** - Things didn't go your way? You couldn't/didn't get what you want? Successful people can accept change and move on or forward much better than others.
7. **Be grateful for what you have** - Those that are successful with a good attitude are most often void of jealousy. They share. They help. They donate. They are genuinely happy for others. Are you?
8. **Smile** - We know the most successful individuals with that great attitude SMILE - a lot!

**Start 2014
with a
Positive
Attitude!**

And please remember that a "Phony smile is better than a real frown!"

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2014 UPCOMING EVENTS

The classes and conferences listed below are sponsored by the Florida Department of Transportation and the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida in Tampa. If you would like to attend any of the courses, you will find a course announcement and registration form for each course at www.floridartap.org in the Training Calendar section. Click on the course name to download or view training class details. If you have an idea for a training course or would like to host a course, please contact Lisa Staes at staes@cutr.usf.edu.

January 13-17, 2014

Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation (FT00435)—Tampa, FL

February 10-14, 2014

Transit Supervisor Certification Course—Tampa, FL

March 10-14, 2014

Instructor's Course (FT00562-A)¹—Tampa, FL

March 17-19, 2014

Substance Abuse Management & Program Compliance (FT00465-A)—Fort Lauderdale, FL

April 4-5, 2014

2014 Triple Crown Rodeo—VOTRAN, Daytona, FL

June 2-4, 2014

Florida Transit Safety Summit and FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop—Tampa, FL

¹ Required course for the Florida Transit Operator Trainer Training Certification

SAVE THE DATE: Transportation Disadvantaged Legislative Awareness Day – March 13, 2014

The 2014 Annual Transportation Disadvantaged Legislative Awareness Day will take place at the State Capital Building in Tallahassee on Thursday, March 13, 2014. This event, which is hosted by the Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems (FACTS), is a gathering of transportation vehicles, mobility advocates, and the transportation disadvantaged community to bring awareness and support to the transportation disadvantaged program.

It is so important for legislators to hear from the actual people this program helps! Food and entertainment will be provided to all attendees.

Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns on any of the information above, please call (800) 983-2435 or email john.irvine@dot.state.fl.us.

