



SETTING THE STANDARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

STS EXPRESS

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Plan Ahead to Get the Most Out of the Conference and Vendor Show April 7, 8, and 9, 2008

Have you ever gotten to the end of a conference and realized you missed the one presentation you were most interested in attending? A little planning ahead using the information in this article can help you make the most of your conference experience this year.

A four hour pre-conference session called “*IDEA and the Thirteen Disabilities*” will be presented by Kathy Furneaux of PTSI between 8 A.M and noon on Monday.

The Conference starts Monday afternoon at 1:00 P.M. with two general sessions, both about Cynthia Susavage. Cynthia was a young disabled girl who choked on the harness that was meant to keep her upright in her car seat. Cynthia’s mother will present a *Keynote Address*; it will be followed at 2:30 by “*Ensuring Student Safety on the Bus – Susavage Update – What Did We Learn?*”

Tuesday morning starts with another general session. Kathy Furneaux will tackle a difficult topic in her presentation, *It’s Not Just Looking. Exploring the Challenges of Avoiding Leaving Children on the Bus.*

Tuesday afternoon is when you will need your pre-planning skills. There are five different breakouts to choose from, but only enough time to attend two.

A brief description of the five breakouts follows:

1:45-2:45

Before the Crash: Establishing a Unified Command for Emergency Response – Planning activities to prepare personnel to respond appropriately to crash situations.

State Update with Greg Fera and Ray Zirilli

Top 10 Security Questions Only Drivers Will Ask: A Security Reality Check – Based on drivers’ actual questions about security.

3:00-4:00

Before the Crash (repeated)

Student Medical Issues – Deals with transporting medically fragile children.

3:00-4:30

Diesel Risk Reduction Program – Key strategies to reduce the amount of particulate matter (known as soot) emitted by diesel vehicles.

Cal LeMon will present the last general session, “*This Is Not a Dress Rehearsal,*” at 9:00 A.M Wednesday morning.

See Page 2 for Other Conference Highlights

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For STS, the year 2008 is the most exciting year yet!

Our organization has grown to an impressive 364 members. Our Membership Committee Chair Don Todd is working hard to attract even more members.

The Driver Seminars, which were held in the South on February 16 and in the North on March 1, were extremely successful, drawing almost 250 drivers and aides. Through the efforts of STS members, these drivers and aides were afforded the opportunity to receive driver training they would otherwise go without. (See the article on page 3.)

On April 7, 8, and 9, it will be the Supervisors' turn to update their skills and increase their knowledge at the annual STS Conference and Vendor Show at Trump Marina in Atlantic City (cover story.)

A number of us in the organization are working closely with Rutgers to provide a certification program. We'll bring you updates as our efforts progress.

The STS Express is back after a lengthy hiatus. Look for a new issue approximately every two months. We've also hired Charles J. Kelly of EarthSpec to redesign our website. Look forward to having access to more useful information on an easy to navigate website.

The information you will find in these pages can be invaluable to you as a transportation professional. Visit the STS website daily and read the organization's newsletter to stay informed. Issues in our State are constantly changing.

CHANGE WITH THEM!

Remember that your involvement is always welcome, your questions will not go unanswered, and any and all inquiries will be acknowledged.

KEEP THE DATE

May 3rd Mechanics' and Drivers' Roadeo

June 6th STS General Meeting

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS continued from Page 1

Vendor Activities	Monday 4:00-7:00 and Tuesday 10:00-1:30
Mechanics Program	Monday 9:00-4:00
Dancing at the Wave	Monday night
Wear Your Colors**	All Day Tuesday
STS Store	Monday 10:00- 4:00 and Wednesday 8:30-10:00
STS Banquet	Tuesday 6:00-???
	Country Western Theme

**** pack an outfit the color of your school's colors to wear on Tuesday**

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

During the School Bus Driver's Seminar at the Burlington School District Middle School, STS Express had an opportunity to talk with Jerry Ford, Director of the Office of Student Transportation.

Express: Did your job change require any personal adjustments?

JF: There have been several changes to adjust to. One is a longer commute. I'm using the time productively by listening to some very good books on tape. My office space is very different from what I'm used to. In my previous jobs my office was always close to the bus yard, where getting in and out of the building was easy. Now my office is many stories above the ground in a large building in downtown Trenton. The biggest adjustment is the very different pace of work. I'm enjoying the challenges of my new position, but I do miss the kind of immediacy an operational job requires.

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School Bus Drivers' Seminar

When Sandy Hanson and Kathleen Warrick, co-chairs of the annual School Bus Drivers' Seminar, were planning this year's seminar, there was no question about who their first choice for presenter would be.

Their choice was Dr. Linda Bluth, one of the country's foremost experts on transporting children with disabilities. She is currently the Director, Office of Quality Assurance Monitoring for the State of Maryland and the President-Elect of NAPT. She has authored three editions of "Transporting Children With Disabilities," a copy of which she gave to each seminar participant. Just as important as Dr. Bluth's professional qualifications is her ability to keep her audience engaged as she delivers timely and useful information. Since 1981 she has presented in 42 states and Canada! (How many of us have even visited 42 states?)

Roger Hance is a 32 year veteran of school bus driving who taught CDL classes for twenty years. Mary Schwaar, who, like Hance, works for the Upper Freehold School District, has been a bus aide for seven years.



Dr. Bluth gets drivers involved in her presentation

They both found the seminar's subject matter timely because of the increasing number of students being mainstreamed. This year Hance has an autistic student on one of his routes.

Sandy Hanson commented, " 'Special education' drivers get training but 'regular drivers' think it's business as usual. The message that Dr. Bluth brings should be general information for all transportation personnel. Many of the drivers stated that they learned of responsibilities they weren't even aware were relevant to their job."

Some of the information Dr. Bluth covered:

- History of legal decisions requiring transportation for children with disabilities
- Characteristics of children with disabilities
- Maintaining a safe school bus environment
- Special considerations for transporting children with special needs

This year's seminars were hosted in the South by North Burlington County Regional Middle School and in the North by Parsippany Hills High School. Almost 250 drivers and aides attended. But as Kathleen Warrick said in her closing remarks at the Northern Seminar, there are thousands of drivers in the state, and every one of them should be attending these seminars. She asked her audience to "spread the word" about school bus driver training.



Dr. Bluth (on right) and Seminar Attendees

" 'Special education' drivers get training but 'regular drivers' think it's business as usual. The message that Dr. Bluth brings should be general information for all transportation personnel."

Sandy Hanson



Kathleen Warrick and Sandy Hanson, Seminar Co-Chairs

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

From the Northern Region



Supervisors listening intently to Tony Sciarillo of the Education Law Group

On January 25, thirty three members attended the North Region meeting at the Morris County Vocational School. Tony Sciarillo of the Education Law Group presented a workshop on progressive discipline and facilitating positive performance and conduct. He explained the use of “Seven Tests of Just Cause” as a standard for establishing that employees have been effectively disciplined by their supervisors. Mr. Sciarillo stressed the importance of consistency and documenting every employee’s performance and conduct.

Members were treated to a delicious lunch prepared by the students of the culinary arts program after which they shared information about themselves and their districts’ operations.

Submitted by Cathy Kelly, Northern Director

From the Central Region

The Central Region held its meeting on February 1 at the East Brunswick BOE. Twenty-six members attended. A representative from the N.J. State Police gave a report on identifying gangs and gang related activities. The overall response to the presentation was that the information given was very enlightening.

Submitted by Ray Keuhner, Central Director

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Legislative Committee

The following transportation bills have been introduced since November, 2007:

A 4479 would limit the transportation costs of school districts sending students to county vocational school districts located outside the county of residence.

S 2884 would establish a Task Force of School Transportation to examine the implementation of the recommendations of the 1997 SCI report on school transportation.

S 2865 would require that certain information on school bus contractors be filed with the Executive County Superintendents of Schools. It would permit Executive County Superintendents or Boards of Education to report suspected collusion to prosecuting authorities.

A 1509 would direct the Commissioner of Education to establish guidelines limiting the amount of time students could spend travelling on a school bus, with possible exceptions under certain circumstances, such as when a student attends a nonpublic school for the disabled or a county vocational school outside the student’s county of residence.

Submitted by Paul Henry

Membership Committee

More than thirty new members joined STS in 2007. Please look for new members at your local area meetings and at the Conference and welcome them to the organization.

Each year, in the spring, you receive your invoice for STS dues. It is very important to make sure that your dues get paid in a timely fashion so that we can provide members with the best service possible. I look forward to seeing all of you at the Conference.

Submitted by Don Todd, Membership Committee Chair

School Transportation Leaders Paying It Forward

First, Denise Current of Stocker Bus Company, Inc. was asked to donate a bus to an orphanage in Mexico. She did. The next year she was asked to donate two more buses. Again, she did. Meanwhile, the buses sat in her lot because there wasn't the means to transport them to Mexico. So the following year she, Marsha Parker (retired STS Treasurer) and Mandy Ferrington (Sussex County Co-Op) took a road trip to Mexico to deliver the buses to a home for wayward girls and a girls' orphanage. Along the way there were some adventures, and eventually they arrived in Mexico with only one bus, which they delivered to the girls' orphanage.

While Denise, Marsha, and Mandy visited the orphanage, it became apparent that their new friends were lacking more than a bus. They took the girls out for pizza and bought each of them a new pair of shoes. They were rewarded with the heartwarming gratitude the girls showed them, but they knew there was so much more that needed to be done to help.

These three school transportation professionals were so touched by their experiences that they started a new venture together. They called it "Invest in a Child" and as their literature says, their purpose is "to deliver T.L.C. (Time, Love, and Commitment) to children that will Enrich, Enhance and Expand their lives."

Here's the exciting part. The entire New Jersey School Transportation Community is invited to "give back" by "investing in a child." Your contribution can be in the form of child sponsorship, delivery of a bus, donation of a bus(es) or a monetary donation. You can get more information by contacting Denise Current at 973-383-4704.

Show the world that the New Jersey School Transportation Community cares!

Highlights from the December STS General Meeting

- ❖ Dot Shelmut gave a State Update:
 - A handout concerning First Student/Laidlaw was distributed. Call Dot's office with questions.
 - Contracts must be retained for seven years; keep original bid specs with renewal contracts.
 - Send fingerprint transmittal forms for new drivers with current records to Criminal History Unit.
 - Visit NJDOE's website (see Safety and Training) to access a list of videos that can be borrowed.
 - Indications are that school funding will be based on DRTRS figures.
- ❖ William Reed said unannounced inspections are required by law. Inspection criteria is on the MVC website.
- ❖ Ron Rasloswski described what to expect during a DOT audit. Maintain yearly abstracts and current medical reports for each driver. Drivers are required to report traffic violations, including those in private vehicles, to supervisor.
- ❖ Committee reports were presented.
- ❖ Conference schedule was distributed; this year's theme is Country Western.
- ❖ Kathy Furneaux will present a three day, hands-on classroom workshop on Special Needs this summer.
- ❖ Dr. Linda Bluth was scheduled to speak at both Bus Driver Seminars.
- ❖ School Bus Safety contest information was distributed. Please promote the contest in your schools.
- ❖ STS signed contracts with EarthSpec to revise and maintain the STS website and with Stephanie Tompeck to be the STS Education Coordinator.

Submitted by Pat Lerch

Hard At Work – The
Board of Directors



Express: How does working for the State differ from your experience as a school district employee or bus company owner?

JF: New Jersey State government is a huge entity and it operates very differently than school districts do. It consists of multiple departments, agencies, and commissions who interact in various configurations to accomplish the State's work. With so many different parties involved, it can take considerably longer for decisions to be finalized and acted upon. Another difference is that the ethics restrictions are substantially greater than they are in school districts. Many of the liberties I was used to as a district employee now require State clearance. The consequences for violating the code of ethics are also potentially much greater.

Express: How have your previous positions in the school busing industry prepared you for this job?

JF: I've had the benefit of experiencing school transportation from various vantage points as a contractor, a district employee and as a parent. In addition I've contributed considerable time working with committees involved in school transportation, including my time as President of STS of NJ. All these experiences have given me an in-depth knowledge of the industry and an ability to see the "big picture."

Express: What would you like to accomplish during your tenure as State Director?

JF: My goal is to provide leadership to the school transportation industry in New Jersey. There are many key players in New Jersey school busing. I would like to act as a conduit to bring all the players together to accomplish the types of broad based, far-reaching changes that each player acting alone cannot achieve.

Express: What do you currently see as the major issues in school busing?

JF: Well, there are so many. Driver recruitment, retention and training are recurring issues. There are not enough resources to give nonpublic students the services they are asking for. Special education services and costs are continuing to escalate. There are the questions of consolidation. Student health as related to school busing is receiving considerable attention. We're looking at promoting hybrid buses and bio diesel fuel, and working

with the Department of Environmental Protection to modify all school buses to make them cleaner for students and drivers. I could go on, but I think the major issues are the possible advent of lap/shoulder belts in small school buses being mandated by the Federal Government, and here in New Jersey the costs/efficiencies of our operations

NEWS YOU CAN USE

- ❖ Effective 12/24/07, educational facilities, authorized school bus contractors, employees and applicants may access approval and PCN information on the department website: <http://www.nj.gov/education/educators/crimhist/>
- ❖ Column L has been added to the renewal contracts form. Use it to record the Increase/Decrease Adjustment Provision (as originally bid.) This is the mileage adjustment cost for contracts bid on a per route basis or the mileage, student, or vehicle adjustment for contracts bid on a per route, per vehicle, per student, or per mile basis for out-of-district special education routes.

STS Treasurer Retires

Marsha Parker, Kittatinny Regional Transportation Supervisor, retired this past September. Marsha was a long term member of the STS Board of Directors, serving on numerous committees and as STS Treasurer. Marsha's first job in school transportation was driving a bus for Conover Brothers. She worked for Tewksbury School District as an Assistant to the Board Secretary and Transportation Coordinator before moving to Kittatinny Regional. Marsha is the mother of four sons and the grandmother of six boys and two girls. STS thanks Marsha for her years of service to the organization. We wish Marsha good luck in her retirement and hope she enjoys many healthy years with her family and friends.