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Behind the Scenes

Executive Report

The invitations are in the mail and the Access staff is in production mode for the 19th Annual Membership Meeting on Wednesday, March 26, 2014. This year will be an extra special event due to it also Access Services 20th Anniversary. We hope that you will be able to join us as we honor the 2013 Spirit of Accessibility Award winner and the Jerry Walker Commitment to Quality Service Award recipient. I have even heard a rumor or two that some previous Access Executive Director's and Board Members may be making special appearances. Stay tuned and see you on March 26th.

Shelly Verrinder
Executive Director

Theresa DeVera Crowned Ms. Wheelchair California 2014



Bob Marley said, "You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have"

The Ms. Wheelchair California 2014 competition was held Saturday, February 1st, 2014 at the Hilton in Long Beach, California. The contest recognizes the accomplishments of women in wheelchairs. Contestants and participants inspired all attendees with the desire that it takes strength to want to improve our own quality of life. The three finalist Hilary Marides, Jessica McDaniel, and Theresa DeVera each presented the different political platforms they wanted to represent during their reign if selected. Theresa's platform involved supporting transportation opportunities for the disabled community.

Theresa spoke about the time when, as a junior at Loyola Marymount in 1996, she suffered a severe asthma attack, went into cardiac arrest, and was in a coma for 3 months. At the time her doctors believed she was brain dead and wanted to harvest her body parts.



Theresa was able to recover and since then has been confined to a wheelchair. Her strength has shown through with the activities and organizations she is involved in. Theresa received her Bachelor's degree in Political Science in 2004 and then a Master's Degree in Theology with an emphasis in Bioethics in 2008 from Loyola Marymount.



She was appointed by Mayor Antonio Villaragosa in 2005 to the Commission on Disabilities, and then she was appointed to the Access Board of Directors where she is currently Secretary .

NTI's Skills for Effectively Defusing Difficult Situations



Patrick Williams of Access Services

How do you deal with an irate customer who is emotionally charged? How do you disengage an emotional brain and reengage a thinking brain? These questions and more were answered during a Skills for Effectively Defusing Difficult Situations Training class. On February 20-21, 2014, Access hosted a two day train-the-trainer class on defusing difficult situations.

Ms. Tracey Robinson, Esq., developed and presented this

course to 25 participants representing 16 different agencies.

Based on the concepts of emotional intelligence and verbal judo, participants learned skills to calm an upset customer as well as practicing techniques to keep them from getting hooked emotionally. Real world transit scenarios were used during the role play segment of the training to reinforce optimal employee behaviors.

One driver/trainer who attended this course said, "This course needs to be taught to all frontline drivers in their initial training." No doubt if an employee can keep himself/herself from becoming hooked by a passenger; he/she will feel less stressed and be in control of any difficult situation.

Attendees were awarded their certificates by Tracey Robinson and Evie Palicz. Tracey Robinson, Esq.,



Robin Kumar of Foothill Transit

is a certified National Transit Institute (NTI) trainer and the owner of her own training consulting company, HR Solutions & Services. She lives in Colorado Springs.

Evie Palicz
Manager, Training and Development

Commission on Disabilities Award



During the Los Angeles County Commission on Disabilities' monthly meeting last Wednesday, February 19th, President Janet Neal and the Commissioners awarded our very own Executive Director Shelly

Verrinder with a Certificate of Appreciation.

The award was given to Access in appreciation of Access' donation for the Commission's 22nd Annual Access Awards Luncheon event held on October 21st 2013.

The Commissioners expressed their appreciation for the generous donation of Access bags, pens and pencils which they felt contributed to the success of the annual event. The Commissioners were in agreement that sponsorship support plays a key role in the success of the County and their

goals to continue with their programs and outreach efforts within the disability community.

After the presentation Executive Director Verrinder remained to hear the balance of the meeting and to my benefit assisted me in providing an update regarding the Access TAP ID card. It was apparent to me how much the Commissioners appreciated her attendance, participation and insights.

Louis Burns
Customer Support Administrator

Southern Region Community Meetings



On Saturday February 8, 2014 over 180 Access Customers, Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) and Guests attended the Southern Region Community Meeting at the Barbara J Riley Community Center in Downey. These meetings are held approximately once every 6 months in every region, and allow customers to interact with Access staff, ask questions, offer feedback, and comment on the customer service they receive when riding Access. The meeting began with a presentation covering topics such as mobility management, the upcoming fare change, and a step-by-step overview of how trips are performed, from reservations to reaching a final destinations.

Staff from Access and Global Paratransit, the service provider for the Southern Region, was able to address questions throughout the presentation. Some of the most common concerns that were brought up were call outs, estimated time of arrivals (ETAs), no-shows, late trips and routing issues. The majority of the customers walked away from the meeting with responses to their concerns. Spanish-speaking



customers voiced their appreciation of the Spanish-language meeting. This was the first time that Access held a community meeting in Spanish, which was a response to the growing population. Access collected valuable information on how to improve on providing quality and



safe ADA paratransit service in Los Angeles County.

Alfredo Torales
Project Administrator

Antelope Valley Community Meeting

The Antelope Valley region community meeting was held on February 5, 2014. Following a brief introduction of Access and contractor staff, information was shared with customers regarding how Access works, the upcoming fare increase for the LA Basin area, and ways Access customers can help to improve Access. An Emergency Preparedness topic was also discussed with customers. Many customers'

questions and concerns were addressed at the community meeting. Overall, the meeting was very productive and educational.

Steve Chang
Director of Customer Support Services

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Rider Comments

"I want to thank Tori. She was my reservation associate today and she was amazing. She spoke so clearly which made her easy to understand. Her listening to my request was right on. I deal with some mental health issues and when my head is less than stellar, following along and keeping up is a challenge for me, so to have someone be so clear and understandable, patient and calm is a gift. Thank you Tori.. You did more than book a ride...you helped my day!"

Sincerely, Libby

*Elizabeth, Tujung
 Rider since 2012*

L.A. Metro Hosts Federal Grant Workshop

On Tuesday, February 4th, and Wednesday, February 5th, L.A. Metro hosted training sessions to help applicants apply for Federal Grants. Mike Tobin, Planning Intern, and I attended the training sessions to understand the process for applying for new grant funds. Recently, Federal funding became available through the New Freedom and Job Access Reverse Commute (or JARC) programs.

The New Freedom program is designed to help agencies provide services above the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and in the past, Access has successfully applied for such funding to support its Wheelchair Marking and Tethering Program as well as the recently started Parents with Disabilities Pilot Program in the San Fernando Valley.

JARC funds are designed to help agencies develop programs or services that aid low income individuals in reaching places of employment or job training. Access also has successfully applied for these funds in the past to fund the

Access to Work Program, currently in operation throughout Los Angeles County, helping Access customers reach places of employment on time.

Metro will be accepting applications from agencies applying for New Freedom and JARC grant funding until Friday, April 25, 2014 and will then competitively score all of the applications that they receive to establish which agencies are most qualified to provide the services they propose.

At this time, Access is still considering what program concepts may be applicable for grant funding. If Access does pursue submitting a grant application, Access' efforts to secure grant funding will be presented in later editions of Behind the Scenes.

For questions or comments about Access' grant efforts with New Freedom or JARC, please feel free to contact me or Matthew Avancena.

*Eric J. Haack
 Strategic Planner*

Continued - Ms. Wheelchair California 2014

Theresa has never stopped doing her best in all aspects of her life. One of her new goals is competing for the title of Ms. Wheelchair America during the week of August 4 - 10 at the Long Beach Hilton.

Let us all congratulate and support the newly crowned Ms. Wheelchair California 2014, Theresa DeVera

*Yvette Richardson
 Audit Supervisor*

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