



**The Voice and Vision for Pupil Transportation in Virginia**  
**March 2010 Newsletter**  
**Editor – Bill Carr**



**President of Thomas Built Buses Visits  
Northern Virginia School Districts**

On February 14 and 15, 2011, Ms. Kelley Platt, President and CEO of Thomas Built Buses Inc., visited several Northern Virginia school districts including Spotsylvania, Stafford, Prince William, and Loudoun. She was accompanied by Mr. Floyd Merryman, President and CEO of Sonny Merryman Inc.; Mr. Larry Tolley, Regional Sales Manager; and Mr. Brady Childress, Director of Customer Support.

Ms. Platt emphasizes quality assurance and customer service and the purpose of her visit was to meet her customers in Northern Virginia and informally discuss current customer service and pupil transportation issues. This visit is notable in that it may have been the first ever visit of any President and CEO of Thomas Built Buses Inc. to customers in Northern Virginia.

While in Prince William County, Ms. Platt enjoyed lunch with the staff of the Office of Transportation Services and subsequently honed her driving skills in the bus simulator.

A very informative and enjoyable visit and we hope she will come back to see us.



## **2011 Legislative Committee Update**

Committee Chair, Harold Grimes has provided a report on the status of this year's legislation. The complete report is available on our website at [www.VAPT.org](http://www.VAPT.org)

## **Status of VDOE Revision of VDEO Regulations on Pupil Transportation**

June Eanes, VDOE, announced that the Pupil Transportation Regulations (which we first reviewed more than 2 years ago) still have not been approved. Looks like approval may still be several weeks away as they work through the legislative approval steps.



## **Southeastern States Pupil Transportation Conference Opportunity**

The 2011 South Eastern States Pupil Transportation Conference (SESPTC) will be held in July in Oklahoma City. If you interested in attending as a delegate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, contact June Eanes or Alice Matthews.



## Special Needs Recognitions Continue

Sure-Lok and Qstraint have merged but they will once again offer a plaque and cash prizes for the winner(s) of the Sure-Lok Above and Beyond Award and the Q-Straint Believe and Achieve Award. Any outstanding special education driver(s) and attendant(s) can be nominated for this award. Each year there are only 4 or 5 applications submitted. A well written and documented nomination has a good chance of winning. Applications can be obtained on the VAPT web site, [www.vapt.org](http://www.vapt.org) as soon as information is available. Completed nominations will need to be sent to Michael Ashby in Hanover County by May 20, 2011.



## 2011 VAPT Conference Registration is NOW OPEN

The new link and registration process is now available for your use at [www.NAPT.org](http://www.NAPT.org) please follow the new instructions available on our VAPT website [www.VAPT.org](http://www.VAPT.org) to expedite the process and avoid problems along the way. The instructions are different from past years. So, please take a moment to read them carefully. One big change is that each person must be registered individually. You can start booking rooms in Norfolk for the 2011 VAPT now. Cost is \$90 per night plus tax.

Reminder: The 2011 VAPT conference will be a combined regular and special education conference since no separate state special education transportation conference will be held this year. The conference agenda and other information is available on our website at [www.VAPT.org](http://www.VAPT.org)



## **2011 Technician's Competition**

The Technicians Competition will be held on April 6 at the Spotsylvania County Fleet Services Facility. More information is available on our website at [www.VAPT.org](http://www.VAPT.org)

### **VAPT to Provide Additional Financial Support to Rodeo and Technician Winners**

The Executive Committee approved a proposal to provide up to \$500 for travel/registration fee assistance to first place winners of the State Regular Ed Drivers Road-e-o; the State Special Needs Driver/Attendant Road-e-o; and the Best Technician Competition. These funds are provided explicitly for those winners who enter the national competition in their event and cannot be used for any other purpose. If the first place winner decides not to enter the national competition, the funds will be returned to the VAPT treasurer.

## **Thomas Built Buses Invites Children to Nominate Their School Bus Driver for 'Driver of the Year'**

### ***Children Can Honor Unsung Heroes and Win Laptop Computer***

High Point, N.C. – Thomas Built Buses asks: Do you know school bus drivers who are making a difference? Do they stand up to bullies? Do they nurture a spirit of giving by helping organize food, toy and book drives? Do they know your name or start each day with a friendly greeting? Do they help celebrate special milestones? Do they work hard to keep you safe?

These are just some examples of heartwarming and impact actions by previous "Children's Choice School Bus Driver of the Year" winners in an annual contest sponsored by Thomas Built Buses, a leading manufacturer of school buses in North America.

School bus drivers are often the unsung heroes of the school community, so in 2006 as part of the company's 90th anniversary, Thomas Built Buses introduced the Children's Choice School Bus Driver of the Year essay contest to recognize the contributions individual drivers make to children's safety and overall well-being. Every year since, Thomas Built has received hundreds of heartfelt essays from children across the U.S. and Canada who share stories of bus drivers' overwhelming compassion and extraordinary actions that help make their day brighter.

Now in its sixth consecutive year, students in kindergarten through sixth grade are invited to submit essays of at least 90 words to nominate their favorite school bus drivers. In their own words and through illustrations, students can describe just what makes their school bus drivers

so special. The winning essays will be featured on the Thomas Built website when the judging is complete.

Entries must be postmarked by July 1, 2011. The grand prize nominating child winner will receive a laptop computer, and the nominated driver will receive a \$1,000 Visa® gift card. Grand prize winners and top finalists also will receive Thomas Built Buses jackets and Saf-T-Liner® C2 school bus lunch boxes. To enter the contest, visit [www.thomasbus.com/contest](http://www.thomasbus.com/contest) for complete rules and an entry form.

Completed forms and typed or legibly printed essays of at least 90 words should be mailed to: Children's Choice Essay Contest, HMH, 1435 W. Morehead Street, Suite 140, Charlotte, NC 28208.

There is no safer way to transport a child to school than on a school bus, according to the American School Bus Council (ASBC). In fact, the school bus is 50 times safer than automobiles for transporting children to and from school, and the ASBC reports that the nation's 480,000 yellow school buses carry 26 million children every school day.

To nominate your driver for School Bus Driver of the Year, visit [www.thomasbus.com/contest](http://www.thomasbus.com/contest) for complete rules and an entry form.



### **Bus Driver Training Simulator**

Prince William County Public Schools Office of Transportation Services acquired a Doron Precision Systems Bus Simulator Model 460 in December 2008. The driver compartment of this simulator is realistically configured as a school bus and the system software features over 100 pre-loaded training scenarios including: judging proper lane position; driving in adverse weather; utilizing defensive driving skills; urban driving; driver awareness; and has the ability to reconstruct a crash therefore, allowing the driver to see and correct errors. While some school systems use simulators to train student drivers this is the first simulator application in Virginia and one of the first in the United States designed for training school bus drivers.

Prince William County uses the simulator for orientation, refresher, and remedial training programs. The simulator allows drivers to sharpen driving skills in a controlled environment without risk of injury or property damage and provides a bridge between classroom instruction

and the actual operation of a commercial vehicle on a prepared course or public roadway. In the long term, the effective use of a bus simulator can reduce personnel costs and fuel consumption.

Ed Bishop, Director of Transportation Services, stated: "The key to effective and cost efficient operations today and in the future will be the ability to insert technological solutions into daily operations. This is one of our attempts to do just that."

For more information, contact Ms. Patricia Vance at 703.791.7590 or Mr. Scott Withee at 571.402.3922.

Submitted by Ed Bishop (Prince William County)



### **A Letter from Anne Pilson, Patrick County Public Schools' Director of Transportation**

Patrick County recently celebrated "**Love the Bus**" in conjunction with our In-service meeting. Students presented Patrick County Drivers with Hearts and the art students in Mrs. Grace Helms' art classes, made the banner to go across the bus.

I had a cake made for the drivers, and we also had an article put in the local newspaper honoring the school bus drivers for a job well done. I also had our In-service meeting that day, with the local volunteer fire department on the lot helping us with our fire extinguisher updates. Mr. John Westphalen, Special Needs Specialist for Patrick County Schools did an excellent power-point presentation on the different categories under IDEA for classifying special services for students. This meeting was on February 16, 2011 from 9:00 AM until 12:00 noon. A fun time was had by all, and also a great learning experience. Remember to "**Love the Bus**".

### **We Need Your Input for this Newsletter**

The VAPT is still soliciting articles for the VAPT Newsletter. Almost any tidbit of information will help. If you have anything to offer, send it to Michael Ashby or Bill Carr. In order to get the newsletter out on time, a deadline for submitting articles is by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month the newsletter is to be published. Example: If you have anything for the May, 2011 newsletter, please submit it on or before April 15. This will enable Bill to compile the materials into a format for the newsletter, type and proof it, then send it to Tim Parker for distribution.

**Note:** Thanks to everyone who provide articles for this newsletter. Unfortunately the March newsletter was already completed when several articles were received. Therefore, I saved them for the next edition. Bill