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2018 DTA General Membership Dues

Today at 9:37 am I sent out the 2018 DTA Membership Form.

At 9:59 am I received Cavalier County Transit's completed form and payment. THANK YOU KARRIE!

Now you will have to deal with Pam Landsem, Walsh County Public Transit, who holds the record of four consecutive years being #1.

Jacque Senger,
DTA Executive
Director

2018 DTA Fall Conference

Jacque Senger, DTA Executive Director

Our 2018 Conference will be held in the beautiful city of Brookings, SD. The dates are September 14th through the 19th.

Our host hotel is the Hampton Inn and Suites located across the highway from the Swiftel Center. The room rates at the Hampton Inn and Suites are \$96.00 plus tax.



We have also secured rooms at the Fairfield Inn and Suites. The Fairfield Inn and Suites will offer State rates with a State ID card or direct billing by your State Transit Office. The number of the Hampton Inn and Suites is 605-697-5232 and the Fairfield Inn and Suite is 605-692-3500.

The Hampton Inn and Suites has comped DTA the Conference Room which holds approximately 40 people. Having this Conference Room made available to us for the entire conference will allow a place to connect no matter which hotel people are staying at.

Compassion, Fatigue and Mental Health Awareness

Tracy Diefenbach

Terry Hoffman, Director

Watertown Area Transit, Inc. - Watertown, SD

Tracy Diefenbach watched her husband Joshua, a United States Marine Corp staff sergeant, fall apart after his ninth combat tour. A recipient of a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart for wounds he suffered in Afghanistan, his career came to a halt after a traumatic brain injury and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) left him disabled.

Diefenbach shared her experiences surrounding the tragic event and the trials and tribulations she still faces today with the members of the Dakota Transit Association at the annual Fall Conference in Grand Forks in September.

“I was at work when I received the call that he had taken his own life, and police were on their way to pick me up,” she recanted to those gathered.

Being blamed in part for the death by a note left behind by her husband continues to haunt Diefenbach. He claimed she wasn't there for him when he needed her the most.

“Because he was disabled I had to work to help support us and I was carrying a tremendous amount of guilt,” Diefenbach said. “He felt there was no way out and that he would never recover.”

Emotions still weigh heavy as she continues to learn more about her husband's condition. Although the feelings of guilt remain, she no longer feels like a failure. Diefenbach is convinced she will eventually overcome the burdens brought on by those feelings.

Working from home and essentially cutting herself off from the world she knew, Diefenbach eventually turned to education as part of the grieving process.

Therapy sessions had proven to be a waste of time and money because she felt nobody could understand what she was going through.

“A doctoral journey would protect me from the outside world and allow me time to heal without the pressures of a social life. I knew I would be engulfed in my studies for at least five to eight years.”

What started out as a path to avoid social interaction has turned into what Tracy calls “healthy isolation.” Every mentor in each of her courses has encouraged her to seek the outside advice and resources that she needs to succeed, based on her own comfort level. She now hopes to transform her own experiences into brand new research that will save the lives of others.

Educating those in our military who have PTSD and who are suffering from the same things as her husband will continue to be her focus in the future.

“I want more resources out there for veterans,” she says. “I don't want another family to go through what I went through. Managing the aggressive behavior of those with PTSD is very difficult and I want to educate those who need it.”

Her doctoral journey has proven more than an academic assignment. Through it all, Diefenbach has been able to process her grief while learning she has the strength and perseverance to overcome any obstacle she may encounter. She has also discovered an inner strength she didn't know existed.

“This journey has not only changed my life, it has saved my life,” said Diefenbach. “It has given me hope to help someone else and hope is what I need to keep going.”

Farewell and Thanks

Candy Hartman, Paratransit Coordinator
Mountain Line - Missoula, MT

Don and I moved to Wildrose, ND, back in 2010 and in 2011 I took over as manager of Wildrose Public Transportation along with having several other jobs. We worked to increase coverage of Williams County in the next years and finally in 2016, when my husband Don was able to commit more time to driving, were we able to expand into Divide County.

Don has 2 daughters and 4 grandkids in Western Montana and his mom is in Boise, plus we still had our home in Missoula, so we knew at some point we would be going back to western Montana.

I was informed of the job opening at the end of August and, after much serious contemplation, we decided I would put an application in. I interviewed and was hired in mid-September as the paratransit coordinator at Mountain Line, the city bus service in Missoula, MT.

I am enjoying my new position and the people I work with even though some days can be quite hectic! We just added Route Match tablets to our fleet so all of us have been learning. Had it not been for the experience I had in North Dakota I never would have been able to get this position.

I would like to thank everyone who was a part of helping us out in our time there. My husband Don is working at the Subaru dealer and we are enjoying being back in our home, even though we miss everyone in North Dakota.



Management of Aggressive Behavior

Tracy Diefenbach

Terry Hoffman, Director

Watertown Area Transit, Inc. - Watertown, SD

Aggressive behavior on transit systems is an unfortunate reality operators potentially are forced to deal with. Educating personnel on the warning signs often displayed by perpetrators prior to acts of violent activity can prevent incidents and/or injury or worse.

Tracy Diefenbach, is a research associate at Minot State University with a lengthy background in law enforcement and security. Her gifts and talents were on display at the Dakota Transit Association annual fall conference in September in Grand Forks.

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BEHAVIOR

Continued from Page 3

“I have experienced a lot in my life and I am more than happy to share the knowledge I have gained,” said Diefenbach.” Tracy Diefenbach’s background in law enforcement and her life experiences dealing with aggressive behavior stemming from struggles with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among others. PTSD claimed the life of her husband in 2011, making her a widow at a young age.

No matter the form of aggression displayed, the act is usually preceded by a series of events or signs referred to as triggers. Recognizing and managing the triggers is a key to dealing with the aggressive acts according to Diefenbach. “Body language will tell a lot about an aggressor,” she said. “Watch and listen and be aware of what triggers the outbursts.”

Identifying the triggers, listing them and knowing how to avoid them are keys to controlling unwanted situations added Diefenbach. Once those triggers have been identified, discuss with your staff how to avoid the triggers. She encouraged transit providers to establish a protocol, if they haven’t already, on what employees should do if confronted with situations on the bus.

“Take it to a safe place if possible, discuss the situation if they will and calm them down,” said Diefenbach. “Talk about anything they wish to talk about. Approach them with caution.” Body language can usually tell the driver what potential dangers he or she may be facing from a rider. Using members of the audience as examples, Diefenbach walked through the stages and signs of aggression they could face and how to react. “Sometimes they simply need a sympathetic ear to vent their frustrations too,” said Diefenbach. “People just need to be wary and watch the body language for signs.”

Her final message to those gathered was to remember the three “F’s” – Freeze-Flee-Fight – when dealing with aggressive behavior in the job place.

Training Update - Linda Freeman, PASS Coordinator

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Please go to the Dakota Transit Association web site to watch for upcoming trainings.

The following class has been scheduled and is on the web site for you to register:

December 27 & 28 at Brookings Area Transit

PASS Class The class will begin at 9:00 am on the 27th and 8:00 am on the 28th.

PASS Recertification Class Held on the 28th beginning at 8:00 am.

Please contact me if you would be willing to sponsor a class in your area.

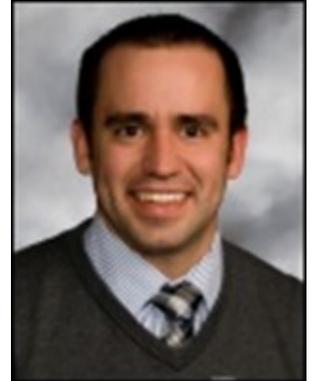
Wishing you all a great holiday season.

Looking Back, Moving Forward, Together

Cody Roggatz, Transportation Director

Aberdeen Ride Line - Aberdeen, SD

We had approximately 118 Attendees at the CTAA Roadeo and Conference in Grand Forks, ND from September 9th-13th. These 118 Attendees were able to meet, network and learn about possible improvements or new ways of doing things from 19 Vendors, Speakers, State and Federal Officials that made up the DTA Annual Conference. A few of my fellow DTA Board Members have already highlighted different messages presented to us throughout the Conference, but I wanted to turn the spotlight on them, The DTA Board and some of our DTA Members, in this latest edition.



As some of you may know I have spent only a few short years in the Transit Industry (3.5 years to be exact). Yes, yes, my receding hairline shows otherwise, but I don't think I am the first person to experience that side effect when joining our industry. Did you know that the DTA Board and Executive Director have a combined **131.5 years** in the Transit Industry? I have been blessed to learn so much about the Transit Industry already from Jacque, my fellow Board Members and my fellow DTA Members. 3.5 years ago, I did not even know the names of our SD DOT Personnel and I barely knew what the FTA acronym stood for. Today, I consider many of you not just counterparts or colleagues, but friends, that I rely on regularly for assistance.

I can assure you that DTA Staff and Board Members are hard at work trying to make Brookings 2018 even better than last year. I challenge members to do a few things as we move towards the 2018 Roadeo and Conference.

- Before you arrive at the Roadeo and/or the Conference, talk to your staff/co-workers that haven't attended before or haven't attended in many years about committing time to go, even if it's only for one day. Start planning today, September 2018 will be here before we know it.
- When you get to the event, make a conscious effort to meet someone new, even if they're from the 'Other' Dakota! Trust me, I've lived in both Dakotas, they're both great places to live and work due to the FANTASTIC People!
- Learn something new about another attendee. We all have our own unique story and there's plenty of opportunities to socialize in the evenings as part of the conference, or by going off to enjoy something new in the City of Brookings.
- If you have any questions, concerns or ideas for improving the DTA, please contact any of your Board Members at any time.

I GUARANTEE you that as you are reading this publication at this time next year, if you follow through with my 'Tidbits' above, you will have a great experience, story, idea or strategy to look back on from our time together in Brookings 2018. Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to you all!

What's Wrong With Your Staff?

Terry Hoffman, Director

Watertown Area Transit, Inc. - Watertown, SD

Hopefully the title of this article grabbed the attention of every public transit employee from the project directors down to the newest members on your staff.

Project managers and/or directors in North and South Dakota are familiar with the Dakota Transit Association and what it represents. Promoting public transportation in your communities is just one piece the DTA and its elected officials work diligently on throughout the year. The culmination of their work is the annual Fall Conference held in selected cities in the two states.



The opening weekend of the conference is highlighted by the Bus Rodeo and banquet for the drivers on Saturday evening and the naming of the Driver of the Year, Innovative Agency of the Year, Support Staff of the Year, Above and Beyond and Friend of Transit winners at a Sunday morning banquet.

The award winners for the banquet are cut and dried – the best performers with the top scores win. The other awards are presented to the DTA board in the form of a nominating letter by the project directors (or designated staff). The South Dakota board members critique the North Dakota nominees and vice versa. Here begins the problem. Last year I heard grumblings from random people at the conference regarding the same people and same agencies winning awards every year.

The number one reason for the high volume of winners coming from certain agencies is the fact they actually make the time and effort to submit nominations every year – in almost every category. What a novel idea. Honor your staff for the duties they perform when serving the public.

How many of you directors actually submit nominations? I can tell you the number is extremely disappointing when I browse through the nominations during our DTA meetings. Do you really not have people worthy of winning one of the above-mentioned awards? Of course, you do, every agency has that special person who deserves recognition in at least one of the categories.

Ok, I'll buy the argument – we don't do this work for the recognition – and you are correct. However, your staff still deserves to be recognized for their work with the public. In my mind, there is no excuse for not submitting nominating forms. Who cares if you're not a writer? You don't need to be. Just jot down some crucial statistics or provide some general statements of what this person does for the people they serve. If you still feel you're in over your head, ask another person in your agency or another transit provider to write up a few paragraphs for you on the individuals you selected. Heck, send them to me and I'll throw it together.

Show your staff you really do recognize the gifts and talents they bring to the table each day they arrive at work. I guarantee their customers do and they appreciate it. You should too.

*Thought for the
Month of December...*

*The only difference between try and
triumph is a little umph.*



DTA
Dakota Transit
Association

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Tidbit Articles

Please contact me with articles for your Transit Tidbit.

Recycle

Please share your Transit Tidbit with your staff and any interested person(s).

Address

Directors, please check with your bookkeepers as well as the rest of your staff  to assure they have the correct DTA mailing address.

Thanks to all!

- Jacque

www.dakotatransit.org