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Upcoming Events:

August 24-26, 2016
IPTA Fall Conference, Rock Island

On-Site Driver Training and
Classroom Driver Training
(Call RTAC: 800.526.9943)
Roland Mross is currently serving his third three-year term on the Board of Directors of the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). He served as a Regional Ambassador for the federal United We Ride (UWR) program from 2004 until 2012 assisting states and localities in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region 5 (Illinois, Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan) with their planning and coordination activities.

Roland’s transit experience began in the 1980s and has included stints as Director of Transportation for the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), Chief Executive and General Manager for the Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation, and Deputy Administrator for the FTA. He has seen the birth of rural public transportation, its expansion, and now the transition to the technological age.

Illinois was fortunate to have Roland as our UWR ambassador for eight years. I value his opinions and he remains a mentor to me. Recently I interviewed Roland to discuss the past, present, and future of rural public transportation.

EH: Roland, can you describe what rural transit looked like in its early days?

RM: When I became involved in the early 1980’s there was little “public” transit available in rural communities. The definition of public transit was associated with the transit that existed in our urban areas.

For the most part, the rural transit that existed at that time

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IPTA Notes

When participating in an IPTA executive committee meeting recently, it hit me that many of our long-time active members, board members particularly, have either retired recently or are nearing retirement. Honestly, I have known this was happening for a while now, but our discussion made me think about what it means for our organization and what it means for each of our member organizations that will be faced with this. It made me realize just how very important succession planning is.

Succession planning is the process within an organization to identify and develop internal employees to be prepared to fill key leadership positions. With the baby boomers transitioning out of the work place, succession planning is particularly critical now because the number of people retiring is greater than the number of people entering the workforce. Additionally, the younger generations seem to have less employer loyalty, and thus are more likely to be always on the lookout for new opportunities, especially if they don’t see and feel they are being challenged, developed and given the opportunity to advance. Two of the biggest challenges facing organizations are attracting the right people for their team and rewarding and retaining top quality employees. Studies seem to indicate that if clear succession plans are in place, and the proper training and development is taking place, organizations are more successful in employee retention.

So, what are some best practices for succession planning for your team? Brigham Young University’s Human Resources Development program says there are five key components. First you must conduct an assessment of key positions by identifying what your critical positions are that are in need of a succession plan and identifying what skills, education and experiences are needed to qualify for those key positions. Next you should identify your key talent. This means identifying who within your current staff has leadership potential and who is a potential retention risk. It also requires regular and thoughtful performance reviews to assist with this identification process. The next step is to assess your key talent. Help employees identify their career goals and aspirations and conduct a gap analysis to determine what the development needs are for key talent to be moved to next level. Next you must create development plans. Create a program that includes components such as continuing education and leadership development training, mentoring and cross training. Lastly, develop a monitoring and review process by creating an annual or semi-annual status check with your board and senior management team to ensure your succession plan still aligns with goals and visions and to check in with potential candidates to confirm their level of commitment.

I believe that being prepared for what’s next is an organization’s biggest assurance of long-term success. For IPTA I think that means top management at each of our member organizations should be getting their key talent involved in IPTA events. Bring them to meetings and conferences. Add key staff to our communication lists so that they stay apprised of what is going on with our organization. As our board members retire, it will be important to have other employees at our member organizations who are ready to take on leadership roles in our association. To that end, bring your key staff to our Fall Conference, which is August 24-26 at the Stoney Creek Inn located in Moline, Illinois. There will be ample opportunity to hear from experts in the industry and to interact with peers. Registration will be available online in mid-June.

Laura Calderon
Lacey Miller is the transportation director for Tri-County Rural Transit (TCRT), provider for the Jersey County Section 5311 grant which also serves Greene and Calhoun Counties. Illinois Valley Economic Development Corporation (IVEDC) is the grant administrator. Lacey first became involved in transportation when IVEDC asked her to participate in the RTAC ICCT primer process for the Tri-County area. Lacey has worked for IVEDC since 2006, starting as a QIDP with Developmental Disabilities Services.

Lacey grew up in the small town of Greenfield, located in Greene County. She has resided in Jerseyville for the past 10 years. Lacey takes pride in owning a business in Jersey County with her husband, and in raising her two children. Lacey enjoys reading, watching her children participate in sporting events, and spending time with her family.

Through providing adequate and exceptional transportation to the people of Jersey, Greene, and Calhoun counties, Lacey hopes to help her community by promoting independence and self-sufficiency to the residents. She is especially excited to see people she has known her whole life be able to access transportation in order to continue to be independent.

Kate Downing recently accepted the position of Sangamon County director of transportation for Sangamon/Menard Area Regional Transit (SMART). Kate grew up in Springfield, but as an adult lived several years in rural Sangamon County. After raising her family in Menard County, Kate quit nursing and took a temporary position with Senior Services of Central Illinois, Inc. (SSCI) as director of senior transport. That “temporary” position lasted 10 years. One of Kate’s duties during this time was to work with Sangamon and Menard Counties to help set the foundation for SMART.

Kate currently lives in Springfield. She enjoys any time spent with family and friends but even more so if a little friendly competition is involved. Last year Kate become a first time grandmother to Rowan Annalyse.
**VAC Names New KAT Director**

Mike Neuenkirchen has been named the Voluntary Action Center’s new KAT director.

Neuenkirchen takes over for Paul LaLonde, the program’s first director, who recently accepted the position as VAC’s assistant executive director.

“We are truly excited to bring Mike in as the new KAT director. He not only has a strong track record as a director of rural community and public transportation programs, but his overall diverse professional background gives us the confidence he will keep KAT strong into the coming years,” LaLonde said.

Neuenkirchen called the appointment a “magnificent opportunity.” He continued, “I am very honored to serve an organization of VAC’s quality, especially because I get to continue in the community transportation world. I’ve seen firsthand how KAT helps the community. It offers transit dependent persons independence, medical care, and economic opportunities.”

Kendall Area Transit, or KAT for short, is a community and public transportation service that is dial-a-ride based. Kendall County has partnered with VAC to operate KAT since 2009. Service officially began in March 2010.

As KAT director, Neunkirchen’s major responsibilities will include expanding community outreach efforts, creating more transportation partnership opportunities, and securing more local match dollars required by federal and state transportation grants.

Neuenkirchen is no stranger to guiding a rapidly growing community and public transit system. Before coming to VAC, he worked at Gateway Services in Princeton as the Transportation director of the Bureau-Putnam Area Rural Transit (BPART) system. During his tenure as BPART director, the program saw tremendous growth, similar to KAT.

“I see at KAT some of the same challenges we faced at BPART—more demand than we can accommodate, rapidly aging fleets. But I am very excited to work with our staff to continue rising above those challenges,” he said.

Neuenkirchen also worked as the executive director of the Streator Area Chamber of Commerce and director of communications and public relations at the Greater Aurora Chamber of Commerce. He earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Indiana Wesleyan University.
Kim Zimmerman recently joined North Central Illinois Council of Governments as the human service transportation coordinator for regions 1 & 3. Growing up in LaSalle, Kim attended LaSalle-Peru High School and Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) in Oglesby. She continued on to the University of Iowa and graduated in 2005 with a degree in health and sport studies with a minor in exercise science. She was recently employed as a health promotions specialist at a behavioral health center, teaching alcohol and drug prevention education to 5th – 8th grade students within LaSalle County. Kim currently resides in LaSalle and keeps busy coaching club and high school volleyball, and spending time with her two rescue dogs, Lucy and Tucker.

Mick Johnson is the director of transportation for Bureau & Putnam Area Rural Transit (BPART) and North Central Area Transit (NCAT). He has worked for BPART for six years and has done everything from driving to maintenance to being the director of transportation. He received his associate degree from Illinois Valley Community College and attended Southern Illinois University, Carbondale in pursuit of a physical therapy degree. He realized that wasn’t for him, and instead received heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) training and electrical training. He has worked as a certified nursing assistant (CNA), factory laborer, cook, restaurant manager, maintenance worker and handyman. He is a lifelong resident of Princeton.

Shanna Parmley joined the Rides MTD team as the procurement coordinator in January 2016. She is a native of McLeansboro, Illinois and moved to Nashville, Tennessee in 2005 to attend Belmont University where she graduated in 2008 with a Bachelor in Business Administration degree. Following her college graduation, Shanna enlisted in the United States Navy where she served four years honorably as a cryptologic technician. After leaving the Navy, she worked as a project manager in San Diego, California, but as grand as California is, there is no place like home. Shanna returned to her hometown of McLeansboro in December 2015 and joined the Rides team.

Shanna is passionate about physical fitness, staying healthy and active. She enjoys outdoor activities and loves building, designing and repurposing furniture. Shanna also has one child named Baloo who is furry, four-legged, and also loves to participate in all things outdoors.
was usually provided through specialized services, such as transportation by and for senior centers, centers for independent living, and head start, among others. There was little in the way of coordination or even communication among those services.

EH: What drove the expansion of rural transit?

RM: A recognition of the growth in our aging population, especially in rural areas and the isolation from health and other social services because of limited mobility options. This recognition accompanied a need to expand social services outside urban areas and to find ways to better serve rural communities.

An understanding of these changes and needs resulted in the federal government providing more financial and technical support to expand public transit in rural areas and to help integrate transportation services among specialized providers. United We Ride was launched in 2004 to build a partnership between the feds, states, and communities in this effort. A federal coordinating council was created to facilitate coordination through such actions as overcoming barriers to expansion and integration of services that greatly hindered coordination. Increased funding for expanding public transit outside of urban areas was also important.

The partnership with the states helped bring additional resources in support of coordination and expansion of rural transit by creating state centers for assistance to lead the way.

EH: Today many rural transit systems have dispatching and scheduling software. How has that changed things?

RM: For the better, thankfully. The use of technology has allowed us to focus our search for mobility needs on the customer, where it always must be. One significant example is the use of one call and one click centers that helped advance coordination in so many areas. The expansion in non-emergency health care and managed health systems has allowed us to design transportation systems that better serve the home health care needs of individuals and not just using our vehicles more efficiently. As some rural transit networks have expanded to serve multiple counties, it hard to imagine how that could have readily happened without our investment in and application of scheduling and dispatching software to deal with larger transit systems.

EH: I found a 1980 dissertation by Arthur Salzatman, a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Irvine, on the topic of transportation coordination. He stated, “Coordination in the conventional transit industry has been recognized as a problem area since the early advent of street railways,” and went on to note, “The problem of coordination has confronted social welfare, health, and other human service agencies ever since the first social service units were established in the United States.” Roland, what is your take on why transportation coordination remains a problem today?

RM: Ed, I'm not sure just how large the problem is, frankly. I did conclude toward the end of United We Ride, and even with the FTA requirements for coordination on some of their programs, that the process may have peaked and that those areas where it works will move on and in those areas when
The Spotlight is on Laura Dick, director, SHOW BUS Public Transportation

How did you get started in rural transportation?

Years ago, I volunteered at a local food cooperative during college. The volunteering eventually led to a fulltime job brokering cross country semi loads to regional Midwest food cooperative warehouses—mostly from growers and many from organic growers in (obviously) rural areas. Breakdowns, weather challenges, fragile freight and the stress of maintaining a tight schedule were part of the reality of the work. After that job, I went on to work in more traditional social services positions until I accepted the assistant director position at SHOW BUS. Working at SHOW BUS has been the perfect blending of the two halves of my work life.

If you didn’t have a transit background, how did you learn the ropes?

I was fortunate to be able to work under the SHOW BUS director for six months before she retired. SHOW BUS was also transitioning during that time, becoming more techno-savvy, so I had the luxury of learning the old ropes and being in at the beginning of the “new” ropes.

Did you have a mentor in transit?

There are so many who come to mind; I cannot name just a few. We have had some truly outstanding, upstanding individuals who have chosen to work in public transit.

Toughest day-to-day operational problem?

Up to a month ago, I would have mentioned our aging fleet and the heroic efforts of everyone on staff in responding to maintenance issues. Now, with the delivery of much needed vehicles, I suppose the slightly longer term worry about the budget and cash flow (not only ours but those of social service agencies we serve) has replaced the immediate worry of successfully completing all our daily routes.

What’s a typical day like?

Rural transit is never boring and rarely typical. I start with a 3:30 a.m. radio and cell check-in with the first reporting office staff and drivers (usually from home in pajamas), and I generally end with a radio and cell check-in with the last drivers around 6:45 p.m. In between, our absolutely incredible SHOW BUS staff members deal with the operation of keeping buses on time in seven counties, providing general public demand-response and fixed route service, and providing transportation for various not for profit social service agencies. I will be consulted if issues arise, but staff members have usually outlined solutions before I am involved. Much of my daily work involves meetings, grant writing, human resources, and futures planning.
What's your proudest achievement?

I can’t think of a thing that hasn’t been a group achievement. I was only a small player in one of the most transformational moments for many rural transit properties—and that was the huge day when Downstate Operating Assistance Program (DOAP) was opened up to more county grantees, including the two (McLean and Kankakee) for which SHOW BUS operates as a pass-through. On a smaller scale, it was a fantastic day when we managed to pull off opening a maintenance facility (it became a necessity during the recession when we lost so many of our rural dealerships with topflight diesel mechanics) with a miniscule budget. But it wouldn’t have been possible without Dave Spacek and his IDOT cohorts finding a bit of cash, without a local dealership selling us surplus tools at ridiculous prices and without SHOW BUS staff members who saw the vision and not the barriers. It was a huge day when, due to an emergency, we managed to begin service in DeWitt County with less than two weeks’ notice, and it was another huge day when we began service in Macon County after well over a decade of discussions. In both those instances, there were so many committed individuals who made those expansions possible. And there were huge days when we went live on our website (which strives to be compliant with W3C in order to be accessible to as many populations as possible), and when we went live with our in-house designed dispatching software. And I had nothing to do with those achievements other than to cheerlead! I also want to mention that our recent move into a new facility (funded through the DTIF program) has been a huge achievement, made possible by many players. We’re still ironing out the kinks in operations, but it is wonderful having our maintenance staff, administrative staff and Chenoa based drivers located under one roof!

What motivates you?

So many of our folks are not “choice” riders. They use the service because they have no other viable means of transportation, and they trust us to keep them connected to their community. That’s a great honor and responsibility.

What do you do to motivate your staff?

Our riders motivate all of us. There is no greater motivator than to be reminded of the critical role we play in the lives of our riders.

What innovations have occurred since you began in transit?

When I started, there was a moratorium on spending for dispatching software. That’s certainly changed. Actually, there have been so many computer based innovations since I started with SHOW BUS. I certainly remember dispatching with sticky notes on a board and scheduling maintenance with some pretty primitive programs. Now technology keeps changing and getting cheaper. Still, people remain our most important asset. Nothing replaces a real person answering the phone and a friendly driver who knows the riders’ names and gets them safely to their destinations.

How has your system grown, and why?

We have grown by expanding into areas that did not have public transportation, and we have expanded our services in all our counties. We have not begun to “max out” in responding to the rural needs in our counties, but operational and capital funding are real issues. I hope per capita spending on public transportation in rural areas will increase to allow all of us serving those areas to expand to meet more needs of the people we serve.
Fourteenth Annual Illinois Paratransit Roadeo

On Saturday, April 23, 2016, the Rural Transit Assistance Center hosted the Fourteenth Annual Illinois Paratransit Roadeo at the Sangamon Fairgrounds in New Berlin, Illinois.

Courage is being scared to death . . .
and saddling up anyway.
~John Wayne

We congratulate each courageous participant on their individual performance.

Of the 21 contestants and nine transportation agencies represented, eight (denoted by *) were first time participants:

**Access Springfield:** Frank Harris

**Central Illinois Public Transportation:** Nick Briggs, Angie Pride

**Futures Unlimited:** *Kristin Banks, Dan Faust, Delbert French, Nancy Lefler

**Kendall Area Transit, Voluntary Action Center:** *Craig Riemenschneider, Charles Sondgeroth

**McDonough County Public Transit:** Timothy (Pat) White

**Rides Mass Transit District:** Jill Lyons, *Mitchell Phinney

**Shawnee Mass Transit District:** Stephanie “Raven” Cooksey, John Dewitt, *Tony Jackson

**South Central Mass Transit District:** *Ken Karbach, *Jeanne Middleton, *Jennifer Reed, Beth Woltering

**Voluntary Action Center, Sycamore:** Lowell Lumpkin, *Joe Pasteris

Overall (scores from all categories combined) Winners:

**First Place:** Lowell Lumpkin

**Second Place:** Jill Lyons

**Third Place:** Joe Pasteris

**Novice Award:** Joe Pasteris

Category Winners:

**Driving:** Joe Pasteris

**Pre-Trip Inspection:** Jennifer Reed

**Wheelchair Securement:** Jill Lyons

**Written Test:** Beth Woltering

Volunteers are love in motion.
~Unknown

Many thanks to our lovely volunteers:

**Friday set-up:** Randy Barrow, Jeff Stark, Edward Heflin, and Jacqueline Waters

**Roadeo marshall:** Edward Heflin

**Event judges, participant placement, and scoresheet collector:** Kay Anderson, Randy Barrow, Bob Bugger, Nancy Bugger, Erin Fischer, Ian Fischer, Chris Garner, Brad Gibbs, JD Hodge, Bill Jung, Debra King, Adam Lach, Mark Liening, Maureen Mann, Jennifer Moore, Tiffany Morgan, Val Nickerson, Leroy Niederhofer, Sheila Niederhofer, Sara Nollman-Hodge, Nelson Pruitt, Eileen Sierra-Brown, Norm Smith, Jeff Stark, Renae White, Karen Wilson

**Score keepers extraordinaire:** Mable Kreps, and Bert Weber

**Award presenter:** Edward Heflin

**Event photographer:** Cora Trojniar

**Sponsors:** Tom Boldwin, Midwest Transit (prize money) and IDOT-OIPI (trip for first place overall winner to participate in the CTAA National Roadeo)

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Lowell Lumpkin, Jill Lyons, Joe Pasteris, Beth Woltering, and Jennifer Reed

The Fourteenth Annual Illinois Paratransit Roadeo Participants
implementation has been difficult, will continue to struggle.

In my experience, where coordination has been successful, it is the direct result of leadership, usually at the local level, where those engaged have recognized the benefits in serving more people and refusing to acknowledge the usual barriers. That leadership is crucial and it's a big plus having local elected officials involved in the beginning. Having the state involved is also critical, including programs to provide support and technical assistance.

Speaking of barriers, the evolution of coordination reminds me of the local school reorganization and consolidation that has gone on in this country for years. It demonstrates that old rivalries die hard.

EH: You’ve discussed the past and the present. What is your take on the future?

RM: As long as I’ve been involved with the Community Transportation Association of America, it has focused on finding solutions for our changing transportation needs. Innovation has been key and remains our focus. One of the most rewarding results of my role with CTAA and United We Ride was working with so many people who kept finding innovative and creative ways to solve mobility needs. So many times, those solutions were readily transferrable to other communities working on similar issues.

While I suspect financial support is and will likely remain tight, I’m confident we will continue with our innovative solutions, especially in designing new technologies that meet our changing mobility needs.

I would like to offer this recent quotation from Dale Marsico, our retiring CTAA Executive Director: “The mobility efforts of our future will come from those searching for new and innovative ways to meet changing demands in a changing local environment. As long as we continue to look for better ways to be responsive the future is and remains an opportunity.”

I hope that Illinois continues its transportation coordination efforts. The expansion of service to previously unserved counties improved the rural transit environment, but was not an end all. Leaders are needed in order to coordinate the services that have been created.