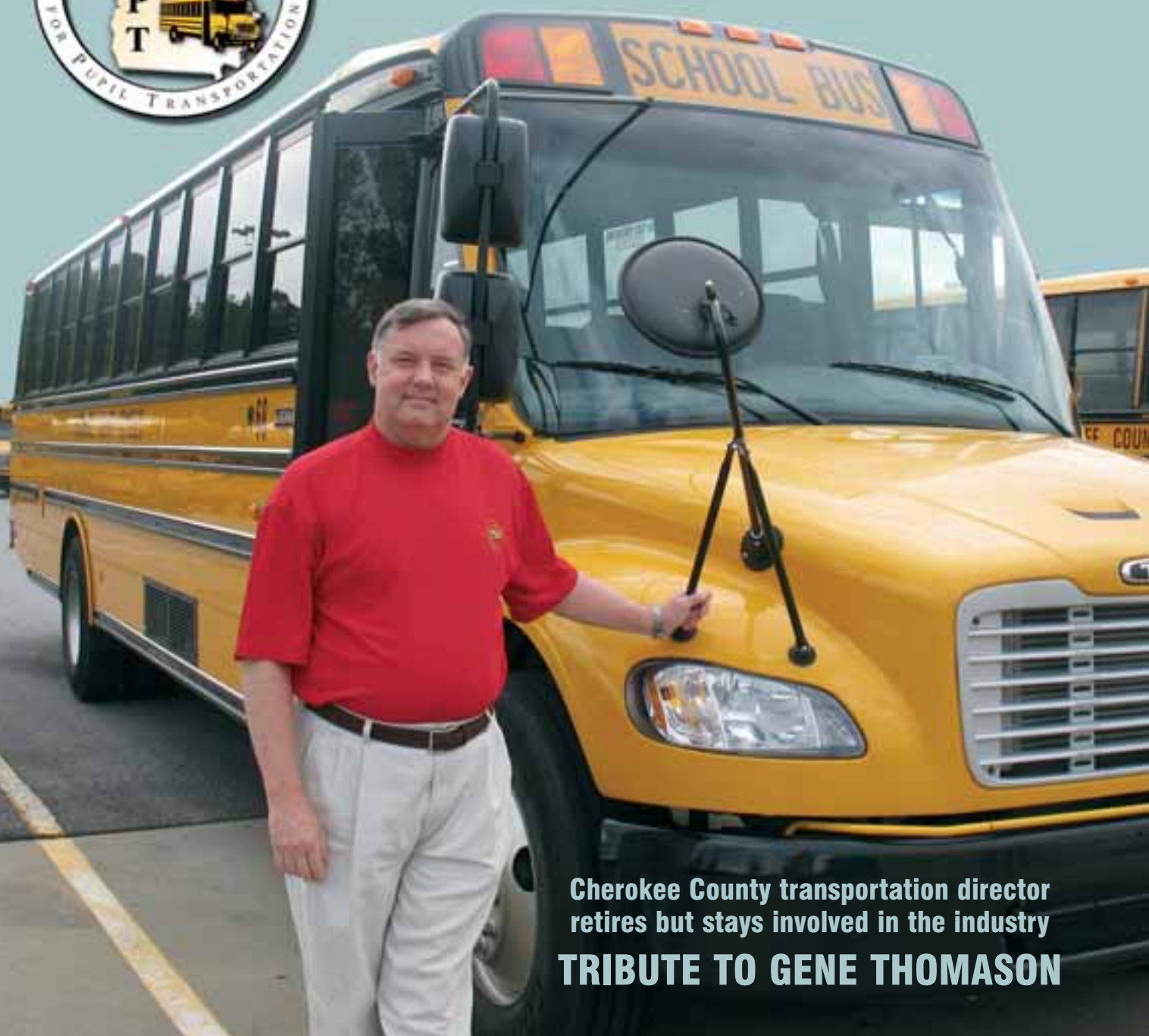


Georgia SCHOOL BUS

Official publication of the Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation

Conference 2009



**Cherokee County transportation director
retires but stays involved in the industry**

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GREETINGS GAPT MEMBERS *from* **DEWAYNE PORTER**

Welcome to the 45th annual GAPT conference! If you are reading this article and are not here with us at Callaway, I hope you had a good school year and are ready to tackle yet another. This has been a very busy year for me and the GAPT board, and I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a few people who have helped in making this conference successful.

First of all, each and every GAPT board member has been instrumental in presenting and debating ideas for this year's conference. We met in October, December, February, May, and June to discuss the details of each day's events. Everyone was helpful and excited about the opportunity to serve their district during this time of transition, and they spent time away from their jobs and their families to make this happen. Take the time to speak to your board member during the conference and let them know how you are enjoying your experience and how we can make it better in years to come.

Along with the board, I also appreciate the individual committee members listed in your registration packet. These are the people in the trenches who make these events possible. Everything from registration and activities to communications and workshops are possible because committee members are dedicated to the success of the program. Special thanks go to Helen Reppert and Tina Porter for going out and exploring the possibilities of Callaway's activities early last fall; they

gave us the ideas for many of the family activities that are planned for the week.

Each year, our conference is mostly funded by the participation of our vendors. Chaired by Jim Black from Paulding County, the Trade Show Committee has done an excellent job over the last several years. Some of our vendors have been with GAPT for a long time, and because of them we are able to have a quality conference. We are also very happy to welcome new vendors to our show. Without our industry support, this conference would not be possible! I encourage each of you to spend some quality time with our vendors on the afternoon of Wednesday the 24th and let them know your needs.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your participation in making this more than just an educational experience. For many years, the GAPT has been an important source of information in this industry. I have benefited from the programs and the many conversations I've had over the last 12 years. I have enjoyed my duties as president over the past year and I know the association will be in good hands once Brett Martin takes the gavel. I wish the best for Brett and the 2009 – 2010 GAPT Board of Directors, and I hope your experience this week is educational, enjoyable, and memorable!

Sincerely,
Dewayne Porter □

Funding crucial for safety, Skipper stresses

By Beryl Paintin

As the presiding past president of the Georgia Association of Pupil Transportation, Beverly Skipper has encountered many challenges during her transportation career. Of these, she ranks pupil transportation departments having sufficient funding to ensure their buses are safe for students as being one of the most important challenges facing the industry.

“At the onset in 1989, when we all became commercial drivers, each driver had to go through a thorough driver training class that incorporated the ‘Commercial Driver License Training,’” Skipper says.

“Most of the drivers during 1990 and 1991 were grandfathered in, although school systems had to teach and train their drivers in order to help them pass the commercial drivers

test. This not only created problems for the larger school systems, but also for the smaller school systems with limited funding, necessitating the hiring of a Third Party representative from another school system to test their respective drivers. Although this increased costs to the local school systems, no funding was allotted to compensate for it,” she remarks.

“In 1992, forward facing wheelchair positions were implemented in our school buses to ensure a safer ride for wheelchair students. Instead of the customary four-point hook up, it became necessary to purchase a seven-point hookup in order to meet stipulated standards. The costs of the specially-equipped school buses increased significantly, as no additional funding was allocated to the local school systems.

“In 2005, 2007, and again 2010, school bus engines had to be built according to the environmental laws imposed on our schools. This in itself added approximately \$10,000 to the already high cost of a school bus. Yet again, no compensation, state or federal, was received by our local school systems.”

Budget cuts and restraints were, and still are, a big issue. “We cannot continue to train and qualify good drivers without the necessary funding. School systems are still using buses that are beyond the 10-year replacement plan, and transportation departments are expected to run their 12-hour work day with limited personnel.”

“We are the least-funded department in the local school systems – yet the most controversial. School systems’ transportation departments are doing everything in their power to comply with state and federal standards to make sure that children are safe. But if these cuts and restraints continue, can we in all honesty continue to offer safe ridership for all students who ride our school buses? I sincerely hope so,” Skipper concludes. □

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Working together for a successful organization

By Deb Smith

Incoming president Brett Martin plans to approach his new position on the GAPT's Board the same way he approaches his work and his family life—with cooperation and hard work. "It's going to be a full slate, but I'm looking forward to it," he says.

In July 1999, Martin was transportation supervisor in Screven County; he became transportation director in Liberty County three years later. In 2006, he returned to Screven as transportation director and settled his family back into their former life.

The system in Screven County is much smaller with only three schools to look after, but as Martin says, "The size difference really doesn't matter. We basically all deal with the same types of issues." The smaller system carries less responsibility in numbers of buses and schools, but requires a more hands-on approach due to the smaller staff size.

Along with his duties at the schools, Martin has served on the GAPT Executive Board for five years (currently as vice president), heading the Education Committee and deciding on programs for the annual conference. "Often the GAPT conference is the only one transportation folks get an opportunity to attend, where they can get professional learning for the business. Networking is very valuable—to meet folks from other systems and compare notes with each other."

There will likely be several challenges to meet at this year's conference. After almost 40 years of meeting on Jekyll Island, this year GAPT is hosting its annual conference at Callaway Gardens. "It will be a learning curve for



everybody as far as the new venue is concerned," Martin says. "At Jekyll, everyone knew what to expect, where everything was. But that's what we do transportation-wise. There's always something coming up. We have to think on our feet all the time and make changes on the fly."

Once the conference is over, Martin and the Board will sit down and evaluate how it went, get feedback from members and make the decision on whether they will continue to hold the event in the same venue.

The next year will also bring many challenges. Funding is always an issue. "Compared to other states that run the same number of buses, our state funding is considerably lower," explains Martin. "We have to do more or as much with less, utilizing much more local funding."

However, GAPT has one big advantage: that's the spirit of cooperation and willingness to help one another that runs throughout the state. For example, with the Partners in Transportation computer database, if a bus gets into trouble anywhere across the state, nearby buses or mechanics will be there to help no matter which district it's in.

The Georgia association is very much like one big happy family, sharing information and expertise without hesitation. Martin is proud to say, "I haven't met anybody that's not willing to help." And as new head of the GAPT family, he is looking forward to doing his part to keep things running smoothly and looking after the needs of the members and most important of all—the students of Georgia. □

A major driving force in Cherokee County, Gene Thomason, retires but remains involved in the industry



Former GAPT president (2000) Gene Thomason retired from his position as transportation director for Cherokee County School District in September, 2008. Currently assisting on several GAPT committees including finance and tax preparation, Thomason returned to the Cherokee district as coordinator of routing and operations in October, 2008, in a 49 percent work status, in order to help ensure a smooth transition for the new director, Ken Johnson.

During Thomason's 35 years of service with the Cherokee school district, he served for 12 years as an industrial arts teacher at Cherokee High School, 23 years as director for the Cherokee's transportation department, and five years on the GAPT's Executive Board. During his period as transportation director, Thomason's commitment to his profession contributed greatly

toward the growth of the department, from 76 buses to 354 buses and 479 employees.

Also during this period, Thomason was instrumental in establishing a voluntary training program for the company's employees that not only increased their skills and abilities, but also afforded them a chance to earn step increases with a potential for a 25 percent salary increase. The program turned out to be extremely successful and has since helped to attract, and retain, the best drivers.

Now, with over 18,460 credit hours available, additional training includes classes on CPR, First Aid, and basic and advanced student management, the program has expanded to include technicians, trainers, supervisors, and office support staff. These creative classes are designed to be informative fun learning experiences and are geared to support

personnel. They include:

- Scenic train ride to discuss railroad safety.
- Classes held at the EMS Center.
- Classes for employees and their families on dangers of Methamphetamines, and Internet safety.
- Classes relative to bullying, gangs, hostage events and other critical issues.
- Classes geared to new drivers.

Thomason was instrumental in establishing a recognition program for employees with perfect attendance. This year, 53 drivers and nine attendants are to be recognized with a luncheon held in their honor, along with a draw to be held for a new bus that the winner will drive during the upcoming school year.

Besides establishing a recognition program for exemplary drivers/attendants with a monogrammed jacket if they meet specific criteria (86 drivers and 18 attendants will receive a jacket for '08-09' school year), Thomason reorganized the transportation department into zones and placed routing supervisors over each zone to handle routing, parent/school questions and complaints, personnel issues, and assist new drivers in their development.

"Twenty-three years in transportation has not only led to a most fulfilling career," says Thomason, "it has also resulted in the making of many wonderful life-long friends." □

45th Annual Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation Conference

Reaching New Horizons

June 22 - 26, 2009

 Callaway Gardens.

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Sunday June 21, 2009

GAPT Board Meeting (Room: 111) <i>Presiding: Dewayne Porter</i>	3:00 – 5:00
Registration: Conference Center Main Desk <i>Presiding: Jerry Williams</i>	5:00 – 7:00

Monday June 22, 2009

Registration: Conference Center Main Desk <i>Presiding: Jerry Williams</i>	7:00 – 5:00
General Session (Room: Dogwood) <i>Presiding: Dewayne Porter</i>	7:30 – 8:00
New Administrators PDS Course: Trans. 101 (Room: Sage/Thyme) <i>Presiding: Grant Reppert</i>	8:00 – 5:00
SPED Workshop: What You Need To Know (Room: 206 – 207) <i>Presiding: Don Moore</i>	8:00 – 12:00
SPED Workshop: How to Set-Up a Road-e-o	1:00 – 3:00
SPED Workshop: How to Set-Up a Road-e-o	3:00 – 5:00
SPED Workshop: Child Safety Restraint System Training 1 (Room: 207)	1:00 – 5:00
SPED Workshop: Child Safety Restraint System Training 2 (Room: 209)	1:00 – 5:00
SPED Workshop: Child Safety Restraint System Training 3 (Room: 210) <i>Presiding: Don Moore</i>	1:00 – 5:00
Round Table Discussion: Budget (Room: 105) <i>Presiding: William Bland</i>	8:00 – 9:30
Round Table Discussion: Record Keeping (Room: 106) <i>Presiding: Charles Chandler</i>	10:00 – 11:30

Lunch on Your Own 12:00 – 1:00

Round Table Discussion: Bus Specifications (Room: 105) <i>Presiding: George Davis</i>	1:00 – 2:30
Round Table Discussion: Driver/Staff Training (Room: 109) <i>Presiding: Beth McDonald</i>	1:00 – 2:30
Round Table Discussion: Scheduling – Routing (Room: 106) <i>Presiding: Jim Waggoner</i>	3:00 – 4:30
Round Table Discussion: Bus Garage Operations (Room: 112) <i>Presiding: Terry Simpson</i>	3:00 – 4:30
Breaks and Light Breakfast Available (GAPT MEMBERS ONLY)	7:00 – 10:00
Hot Hors d'oeuvres and Snacks (GAPT MEMBERS ONLY)	1:00 – 4:00

Dinner on your Own

Tuesday June 23, 2009

Registration: Conference Center Main Desk <i>Presiding: Jerry Williams</i>	7:00 – 5:00
New Administrators Workshop: Georgia Specific (Room: Sage) <i>Presiding: Farrell Lawrence</i>	8:00 – 12:00
CPR Certification Program (Room: 211) <i>Presiding: Peggy Spencer</i>	8:00 – 3:00

Lunch on Your Own 12:00 – 1:00

Drug and Alcohol Workshop: What You Need To Know (Room: 206) <i>Presiding: Brett Martin</i>	1:00 – 2:30
CPR Certification Program (Room: 211) <i>Presiding: Peggy Spencer</i>	Continuation
Vendor Workshop: VersaTrans (Room: 109)	1:00 – 1:45
Vendor Workshop: SEON Design (Room: 110)	1:00 – 1:45
Vendor Workshop: Synovia (Room: 112)	1:00 – 1:45
Vendor Workshop: Hydrotex (Room: 106)	1:00 – 1:45
Vendor Workshop: Snider Tire (Room: 109)	2:00 – 2:45
Vendor Workshop: Peach State Freightliner (Room: 110)	2:00 – 2:45
Vendor Workshop: 24/7 Security (Room: 112)	2:00 – 2:45
Vendor Workshop: Hydrotex (Room: 106)	2:00 – 2:45
Drug and Alcohol Reasonable Suspicion Certification (Room: 206) <i>Presiding: Brett Martin</i>	3:00 – 5:00
Vendor Workshop: Transfinder (Room: 109)	3:00 – 3:45
Vendor Workshop: EDULOG (Room: 110)	3:00 – 3:45
Vendor Workshop: National Bus Sales (Room: 112)	3:00 – 3:45
Vendor Workshop: Hydrotex (Room: 106)	3:00 – 3:45

Breaks and Light Breakfast Available
(GAPT MEMBERS ONLY) 7:00 – 10:00

Hot Hors d'oeuvres and Snacks
(GAPT MEMBERS ONLY) 1:00 – 4:00

Annual GAPT Cookout and Circus 6:00 – 9:00

GAPT Members are being treated to a private viewing to the Florida State University Circus. This circus has been a tradition at Callaway Gardens for many years and is a must see for everyone.

Wednesday June 24, 2009

Registration: Conference Center Main Desk <i>Presiding: Jerry Williams</i>	7:00 – 8:00
Light Breakfast in Ballroom Lobby (GAPT Members and Vendors Only)	7:00 – 8:00
Opening Ceremony: (Room: Dogwood) <i>Presiding: Dewayne Porter</i>	8:00 – 8:45
Keynote Speaker: Dr. Cal Lemon (Room: Dogwood) <i>Presiding: Dewayne Porter</i>	8:45 – 10:15

45th Annual Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation Conference

"Reaching New Horizons"

June 22 - 26, 2009 • Callaway Gardens

Break	10:15 – 10:45
Effective Evaluations: Pete Fletcher (Room: Dogwood) <i>Presiding: Brett Martin</i>	10:45 – 12:00
GAPT Sponsored Lunch (Hotel Ballroom Area)	12:00 – 1:00
45th Annual Trade Show (Room: Hotel Ballroom) <i>Presiding: Jim Black</i>	1:00 – 5:00
Vendor Drawings	Every ½ Hour until Closing

Dinner on your Own

— Karaoke around the Pool after Dinner! —

Thursday June 25, 2009

Situational Leadership / Human Behavior: Al Hedrick (Room: 206) <i>Presiding: Grant Reppert</i>	8:00 – 9:30
FLSA Workshop: Dan Murphy, Attorney (Room: 211) <i>Presiding: Jim Waggoner</i>	8:00 – 9:30
Safe Rider Program: Rick Grisham, Cobb County (Room: 110) <i>Presiding: Roger Christie</i>	8:00 – 9:30

Break **9:30 – 10:00**

Situational Leadership / Human Behavior: Al Hedrick (Room: 206) <i>Presiding: Vernon Hardy</i>	10:00 – 11:30
FLSA Workshop: Dan Murphy, Attorney (Room: 211) <i>Presiding: Joe Blankenship</i>	10:00 – 11:30
Safe Rider Program: Rick Grisham, Cobb County (Room: 110) <i>Presiding: Debbie Hendrix</i>	10:00 – 11:30

Lunch on Your Own **11:30 – 1:00**

Sponsored Afternoon Activities	1:00 – 5:00
Golf Tournament	
Warm Springs Experience	
Fishing Tournament	
Softball Game	
Bike Tour of Callaway Gardens	
Family Fun Adventure Passes (Available all week)	

45th Annual GAPT Banquet	6:00 – 9:00
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***COUNTRY WESTERN HOMECOMING
FEATURING AARON WILBURN***

— Karaoke after in the Ballroom after Banquet —

Friday June 26, 2009

Annual Business/Breakfast Meeting <i>Presiding: Brett Martin</i>	8:00 – 11:00
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2009 GAPT Member and Family Activities

**Monday – Friday:
Family Fun Adventure Passes**

Summer Family Adventure captivates all ages, interests and skills with expert-led programs the whole family will love. Whether you want to hone in on a particular passion, like fly fishing, tennis or golf, or try your hand at water skiing, watercolor painting, skeet or circus activities, Summer Family Adventure is a vacation like no other. GAPT is purchasing a number of slots for our members and their families. A complete schedule of activities can be found at www.callawaygardens.com. There will be a limited number of wrist-bands for the free events each day.

**Thursday Afternoon:
Golf Tournament – Don Moore presiding**

This annual tournament will be at the Lakeview Golf Course inside the park. A sign-up sheet will be at the GAPT information desk in the conference center at the Mountain Creek Inn. The tournament will begin with a "shotgun" start at 1:00 p.m. The winning team will be recognized at the Friday morning business meeting.

**Thursday Afternoon:
Fishing Tournament – Alan Durden presiding**

The tournament will be held at the Mountain Creek Lake. This 175-acre lake is full of bass and bream and the heaviest stringer wins! It is a good idea to bring your own tackle; however, a limited amount of tackle can be rented at the boat house.

Participants will fish from an electric powered 14' Jon boat (two people per boat). Live or artificial bait is permitted, with the exception of minnows, and no fishing from the bank is allowed. There is only enough space for 40 people so those interested in fishing must sign-up early at the GAPT information desk. Boats are courtesy of GAPT and you must provide your own tackle or pay for tackle rental. The tournament will begin at the Mountain Creek Boathouse at 1:00 p.m. The winner will be recognized at the Friday morning business meeting.

**Thursday Afternoon:
Warm Springs Experience – Helen Reppert presiding**

The Warm Springs Experience includes a tour of FDR's Little White House and antique shopping in historic Warm Springs. Participants will meet in the lobby at the Mountain Creek Inn and the bus will leave at 1:00 p.m. Participants need to sign – up at the GAPT information desk.

**Thursday Afternoon:
Softball Game – Donald Tuft presiding**

Attention all sports enthusiasts! Donald Tuft had this great idea at the February GAPT board meeting and is hosting this friendly/competitive game. Participants need to sign-up at the GAPT information desk. Further information will be available at the information desk as well.

**Thursday Afternoon:
Bicycle Tour of Callaway – Skip Veljkov presiding**

There is no better way to take-in the beautiful scenery of Callaway Gardens. Skip will take you through a planned route around the gardens. Callaway provides bicycles; however, please feel free to bring your own. Meet Skip in the lobby of the Mountain Creek Inn at 1:00 p.m.

Additional "own-your-own" activities are abundant.
Check with the GAPT information desk in the conference center for more information.



Al Hedrick



Al Hedrick has spent his entire working career in transportation. He started with the old Frisco Railway Company as an office boy right out of high school. Upon completing a two year term in the United States Army, he returned to Frisco where he was shortly thereafter promoted into the President's Office. During his 13 years with Frisco, he worked for three of the company's presidents.

After Frisco, Hedrick left the railroad industry and went to work for the Emerson Electric Company, where he worked as traffic manager, operations. After leaving Emerson Electric Company he entered the pupil transportation industry, where he worked as director of trans-

portation for Parkway School District, Chesterfield, MO for 23 years.

As a result of the GI Bill, he went to night school at Washington University, St. Louis, MO where he earned his Bachelors of Science in Business Administration. He received his Masters of Science in Commerce from St. Louis University, St. Louis, MO. He is also a Licensed Practitioner of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Hedrick is a past president of the Missouri Association for Pupil Transportation, and has received the MAPT's Transportation Man of the Year Award.

— KEYNOTE SPEAKERS —



Daniel Robert Murphy

Daniel Robert Murphy is a partner in the education law firm of McLocklin, Murphy & Dishman, LLP. For the past decade, Murphy's practice has consisted almost exclusively of the representation of public school districts in Georgia, and he currently serves as General Counsel to the Georgia Association of School Business Officials as well as the Georgia School Funding Association.

Murphy is also the recent co-author of *The Fair Labor Standards Act in American Schools: A Guide for School Officials* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), the *American Association of School Personnel Administrators' Family & Medical Leave Act Compliance Manual* (AASPA, 2007) as well as the forthcoming *Guide to Education Records* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009) and *Discipline & the Disabled Student* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

Leonard Fletcher

Leonard O. Fletcher, Jr. graduated from Mercer Law School and is the senior partner of Fletcher, Harley & Fletcher, L.L.P., located in Augusta, Georgia. Fletcher has represented the Columbia County School District and has represented the County Board of Education of Richmond County for over 35 years.



45th Annual Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation Conference

"Reaching New Horizons"

June 22 - 26, 2009 • Callaway Gardens

Dr. Cal LeMon



Labeled "one of the ten best speakers in America" by the international office of the Society for Human Resource Management, Dr. Cal LeMon is known as the independent voice for school bus safety in the United States and Canada.

In 1995, Dr. LeMon designed and implemented a public awareness program for the California Association of School Transportation Officials. As a result of his work with CASTO, he has become an international spokesperson in pupil transportation conferences, newspaper articles and media interviews about the smart choice of insisting our children are transported to and from school on a yellow school bus.

After an acclaimed career in parish ministry, which included five years as a chaplain at Harvard University, Dr. LeMon accepted a senior faculty position with National Seminars Group. In 1993, Dr. LeMon started his own corporate education and consulting firm, Executive Enrichment, Inc., of which he is president. His corporate clients

include Toyota, Harley Davidson, Texas Instruments, AT&T and John Deere.

Dr. LeMon is the author of *Assertiveness: Get What You Want Without Being Pushy* and His best-selling book, *Unreported Miracles*, has been designated the best resource for school bus drivers, parents and school administrators about the safety record of our industry. He has written for publications such as *HR Magazine* and *Employment Relations Today*, and also writes a monthly on-line journal, *LeMonAide*, with a present subscriber list of 9,000 readers. In addition, Dr. LeMon has been a frequent guest columnist on the Opinion Page of *USA TODAY*.

Dr. LeMon is known throughout the school bus industry as someone who can capture the attention of his audience with his knowledge of our work, his accurate use of our language and his ability to make audiences laugh with, and at, themselves.



Aaron Wilburn



Aaron Wilburn brings the house down with laughter... and he does it without four-letter words or making his audience uncomfortable.

A feature on the Gaither Homecoming tour and videos, he has endeared himself to thousands of laughter-loving fans. Enjoy his down-home brand of humor as he talks about his southern roots, his family, children and faith. It's common to see a grandfather laughing along with teenagers and children; as Wilburn says, there is no generation gap with laughter.

Little would one expect that the same guy who brings people to tears with laughter has also written songs that have touched the lives of so many

people. His gift of songwriting has brought with it Dove Awards as well as Grammy nominations. In 2005, Wilburn was honored by his home state; the Alabama Music Hall of Fame placed an exhibit of his life and music on display in its honored halls, and David Johnson of the Alabama Music Hall of Fame named Aaron Wilburn the official host/MC of the future Alabama Music Hall of Fame induction ceremonies.

Whether he's onstage in an arena surrounded by 15,000 people, or in a cozy banquet setting for a corporation or church, Wilburn is at home. If you tell him, "I loved your act", he'll tell you, "That's no act, that's just who I am!"

When safety is what you want, AngelTrax is the company you need

By Sierra Reynolds, AngelTrax Marketing Department

In the world in which we live, safety is a primary concern for almost everyone. In many circumstances, luxury is defined by the sense of security a product provides. Cars now come equipped with front, passenger, and side curtain airbags, standard car alarm systems, and collision give-way points to make them safe. Houses are not complete without home monitoring systems, privacy fences or double-locking storm windows, and insurance options cover everything from dental to life. Even the

safety options for children these days have them practically living in a bubble.

The question is, how safe do you feel about your students' transportation to school? No, I'm not talking about their driving because we all know there are no safety precautions for that. I'm talking about your child's ride on the school bus. Luckily, school buses are following the safety movement with the switch to seat belts for each student, and accident-resistant glass to prevent shattering in the event that an accident

actually happens. However, what about the accidents that occur daily on the inside of school buses? AngelTrax is here to put your mind at ease, with the ability to see and track your students every step of the way, for up to an hour after the bus has been shut off. Our mobile DVR systems provide the security options and technology you want for the price and convenience you demand.

AngelTrax Bus Video was built on the premise of product research and development; the more we learned about the



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DLP25HR School Bus*Hybrid Component Mobile DVR*

needs of our customers, the more we adapted and the more we grew. Our newest DVRs have been designed to provide stability and reliability to a potentially unreliable piece of DVR technology, which is the hard drive. Harddrive failure is the number one cause for troubleshooting in mobile video surveillance, due to their sensitivity to outside factors. We put our components through rigorous testing before we designed them with anti-vibration technology to simulate a floating environment for your harddrive. This design protects your fragile unit from the bumps, vibrations, and jolts a school bus ride can provide, extending their longevity.

Our units also come encased in a compact, vandal-proof, lockable housing. The durable metal is used, not only on our DVR units, but also on all of our cameras. This design is meant to minimize dust inside your unit, further extending the life of the fragile components inside. Their overall durability also protects the outside of your unit in the event of an accident, meaning you still get the vital footage you need in the event of an emergency, which is exactly when you need it the most.

Another primary concern in the mobile surveillance industry inspired our next design platform. What if the technology available for your unit needs updates? Are you wondering if you will get stuck with the old technology? Not with an AngelTrax system. Our Hybrid DVR systems are designed with removable trays that house each individual component inside your unit. The main board, hard drive, power control board, and built-in Virtual Synchronized Mapping module can all be accessed, upgraded, and serviced without ever having to uninstall your DVR unit. As the technology improves, your unit will have the platform to accept the new technology and improve along with it.

AngelTrax Bus Video provides the eyes and ears for administration, faculty, and parents, easing your mind when safety is a must. Surveillance systems on school buses have proven themselves useful in a wide array of situations. DVR systems can provide video evidence for lawsuits, accident insurance claims, and driver misconduct claims, just to name a few. They have also been proven as a preventative means to student misconduct including behavior problems, bullying, illicit language, harassment, and vandal-



ism. Proper DVR systems allow for prompt confrontation of situations based on the recorded video and audio evidence.

The world today revolves around the premise of event, evaluation, and preparation. An event happens, gets evaluated, and then preparations are made to prevent the event from happening again. At AngelTrax, we believe in preparation first, so that when an event happens you are in the position to take the most proactive steps possible to ensure the safety of the individuals involved. The world is not getting any safer, and precautions must be taken ahead of time to ensure the safety of students across America. Our staff take satisfaction in ensuring your needs are met with every order placed. Our technical support team takes pride in providing prompt and accurate technical support, backed by an industry leading five-year complete system warranty. Our sales team also comes prepped and ready to answer any questions, and we guarantee your concerns for safety are our number one priority. We are AngelTrax, and we make the products that keep 'Trax' of your little angels.

For more information, you may visit www.angeltrax.com or contact us directly via our toll-free number 1-800-673-1788. □

Who's in the driver's seat when a student with a disability doesn't come to school?



By Peggy Burns, Esq.

Sometimes the best you can hope for is to agree to disagree with a parent who just doesn't think you're doing it "right." Sometimes you can't even get agreement on that. But you don't have to shoulder all the responsibility for a stalemate with a difficult parent. How do you reconcile duty and frustration when the issue is transportation for a special needs student? A recent well-balanced opinion by a Georgia administrative law judge (ALJ) allocates responsibility for a student's failure to come to school. *Richmond County School District*, Georgia State Educational Agency (March 10, 2009).

The Facts

A 13-year old student with multiple disabilities, including autism and severe intellectual disability, had limited communication skills, was very sensitive to noise, had difficulty making transitions, and preferred strict routines. In the fall of 2007, with a move to a new home compounded by a change in bus drivers, and substitute teachers in his classroom, he began to resist getting on the school bus in the morning. Problems persisted through the fall, and, although the special education liaison interviewed transportation personnel, visited the boy in his classroom and observed his bus behavior and interactions in the afternoon, the school district did not take direct steps to support his morning bus

resistance. His mother drove him to school until December, when she stopped, disappointed with inaction by the school district. "She felt that the school district should send someone to her home to help her son get on the bus in the morning, and she was no longer willing to transport him to school."

The Issue

Between December and January, the boy's mother made a number of contacts with school personnel. The district's autism consultant was to coordinate further efforts, but she was out on leave unexpectedly; winter break stood in the way of progress thereafter. Upon her return in January, she immediately tried to work with the boy's mother, but was unable to contact her by phone or letter ("evidently the school district had not properly updated its records when [the mother] provided notification of her new address.") The autism consultant finally made contact in January 2008, but, at that point, the mother refused assistance. She continued to keep her son home from school, even when, in February, the district outlined a comprehensive plan to transition him gradually to the bus. The plan included working with the boy in his home setting, initiating activities involved in anticipating the school bus, and helping him board the bus and riding with him to school. Nevertheless, the boy did

not return to school until the next school year, during the second week of September 2008.

In the interim, the boy's mother had filed a complaint with the Georgia Department of Education (DOE). DOE found that the district failed to provide FAPE and ordered 30 hours of compensatory services. The district elected to provide 45 hours instead. At the time of the ALJ's opinion, the boy was attending school and making progress.

The Decision

The ALJ found that a portion of the boy's absences were due to the district's failure to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The district had reason to know that his disability prevented him from boarding the bus, and, for a period of time, his inability to access his education was due directly to the fact that the district did not provide the necessary transportation and supportive services.

But once the district proposed an appropriate plan, the mother's refusal to send him to school was unreasonable. As a result, the district had no obligation to provide compensatory services after provision of its plan for the boy.

The Lessons

When a student's disability – physical, cognitive, or mental – prevents him or her from getting to the bus, additional

school district support is part of FAPE. Here's what you need to know:

- Georgia judges and hearing officers, like others in some, but not all, states, reject the idea that the student's unique needs stemming from his disability must cause the need for transportation in determining if support to the bus is a school district responsibility. Instead, your decision-makers focus on access for a student with a disability to IEP services (without highlighting the student's disability-related needs). For you, a district's responsibilities can depend upon a parent's convincing a hearing officer that the student won't get to his services without district support, even where there is not a direct relationship between the disability and school transportation.
- If a student with disabilities eligible for school transportation cannot get to the bus stop, the IEP team needs to be involved in decision-making. What to do next should not be decided unilaterally by the transportation director.
- If the inability is related to the student's disability, the IEP team should examine options including:
 - Travel training with a true curriculum (including, as necessary, support in the home), assignment of appropriate personnel, and assessment of potential for success throughout the program.

— Assignment of an attendant if travel training, given individualized consideration of this child's ability and needs, is not appropriate.

— A different transportation route and/or vehicle.

— Provision of IEP services at home, and/or compensatory education, as necessary, so that the child can make progress towards IEP goals.

- Regardless of whether the inability is disability-related:

— Examine the home-to-bus issue in light of the district's and transportation department's policy statements, regulations, memos and other communications. Have these created expectations about provision of assistance?

— Be sure you've initiated effective communication with the child's parent about his non-attendance.

— Participate in evaluating transportation concerns: For example, does he or she also have trouble transitioning to the bus at the end of the school day? Are there problems with other students who ride? Is the problem related to driver-student interaction?

— Be able to show that the school-district - and you - have both behaved reasonably.

In all cases, here's the bottom line: Consider how the district will look to a

state agency or court where there is a dispute over the manner in which transportation service is provided, and the student is not getting to school in the interim? Can you demonstrate, as the Richmond County School District did, that, at least from a certain point, the school district did as much as it could?

Peggy Burns is an attorney and consultant, and owner of Education Compliance Group, Inc. (www.educationcompliancegroup.com.) She is the editor of Legal Routes, and developer of four video training programs, including the new "The Road to Compliance for Special Needs Drivers," and "Putting the Brakes on Harassment: Training for School Bus Drivers." Peggy can be reached toll free at (888) 604-6141, and by email to ecginc@qwestoffice.net. □

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Editor's Note:

In the Conference 2008 edition of the *Georgia School Bus*, photographic credit should have been given to Hillary Cram for the respective conference photos published in the magazine. We sincerely regret this inadvertent error of omission and will strive to list proper photographic credit in future.

U.S. Computing's software solves district's challenges

By Col. Wendell Shelton



Compass Bus Routing Software.

At the time that I took over as transportation director of Richland School District No. 2 in South Carolina, the district had an enrollment of over 21,000 students and a fleet of over 100 buses servicing a ridership of approximately 14,000 students per day. Back in 2003, at the time I joined the district, the transportation department staff were manually doing routing, scheduling, field trip request processing, driver payroll and certifications etc. Fortunately, my background of over 20 years of service in the U.S. Army had given me plenty of exposure to, and experience with, the use of software for improving management operations, enhancing staff productivity and optimizing resource usage.

Given the volume of paperwork and manual computations associated with field trip processing and billing, and the use

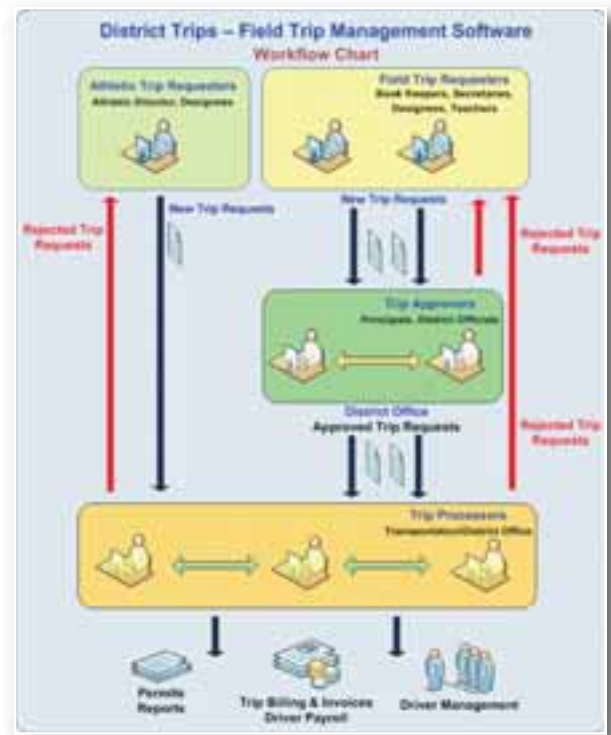
of wall maps, push pins, and stubby pencils for route planning, we picked these two areas to begin our move to software automation. We discovered U.S. Computing, Inc., a Southern Carolina-based company that provides a suite of applications tailored specifically for the needs of K-12 transportation.

What made U.S. Computing and its Compass and Field Trip Software product lines attractive for us was the fact that their systems are based on open and standard data formats, and that the company was willing to customize their products to meet needs specific to our district. An additional positive factor for us was the fact that the company is local to the southeastern United States, giving us the chance to deal with our software vendor face-to-face whenever necessary.

U.S. Computing's web-based Field Trip Software made our process for receiving field trip requests, processing, scheduling and billing virtually paperless. Schools submit trip requests online, which then immediately become available for review and processing in the transportation department. Each trip request goes through an electronic approval process and is forwarded to the appropriate bus hub for scheduling. The system uses a priority-based mechanism to determine and recommend the most eligible driver (based on pay rate, overtime considerations, number of trips already completed, etc.) for a new trip.

Once a trip has been completed, the system generates billing invoices based on miles driven, trip duration driver rates, and a variety of other factors. This software greatly reduced the number of phone calls from our district's schools checking on trip requests, since the schools could now go online and review the processing status themselves. Online electronic request submissions also eliminated the huge volume of paper request forms that we had been dealing with in the past.

U.S. Computing's Field Trip Management Software ensures that trip requests won't get lost in paperwork, and provides an accurate record of submission time and processing status. The savings in



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- School Bell-time Adherence
- Route Directions
- Stop Student Assignments
- Reports & Student Rosters

GPS VEHICLE LOCATOR

- GIS based Bus Tracking Software
- Real-time Vehicle Locations
- Vehicle Route History
- Real-time Speed & Direction
- Record & Replay Routes
- Geofencing
- Nearest Vehicle Search
- Reports

DISTRICT TRIPS

- Field Trip Management Software
- Secure Web Application
- Automated Workflow
- Bus Driver Assignments
- Mileage & Gas Audits
- Billing & Invoices
- Driver Payroll Computations
- State Bus Permits
- Reports

SOFTWARE

staff time and increased accuracy of information brought about the transportation system's ability to report status on the web, automatically process invoices and driver payments, automatically schedule drivers, and produce a variety of reports based on time, mileage, cost and activities; this has been absolutely invaluable to our department.

The Compass School Bus Routing Software that U.S. Computing delivered to our district gave us our very first view of our students' residences on a digital map. The ability to see the distribution of our student population relative to the location of our bus stops and schools on a digital road map is an extremely powerful planning tool. The Compass software gives us the capability of rapid-

ly and easily doing things like determining walk-to-school zones, walk-to-stop zones, assigning students to stops and routes, detecting proximity of sexual predators and other threats. Previously, these activities would take hours of drive time, stop site review, phone calls and questions to drivers.

The Compass software also made it possible to answer such questions while sitting at our computers, and in a fraction of the time it would have taken us earlier. I now have the ability to key in an address and immediately determine the school zone eligibility, nearest stop, and bus route for that address while sitting at my office.

One of the most interesting and effective features is the software's ability of taking a set of stops and a fleet of vehicles and automatically producing routes for each vehicle through the stops, while efficiently grouping the stops into routes. The system does this while taking into account school bell times, maximum desired ride times and any special equipment needs (such as wheelchairs). The routes produced by the software are optimized to reduce mileage and route time, which directly translate to cost savings. The system is GPS-enabled and lets us track our fleet in real time, and we can use the GPS history feature to compare planned versus actual routes. GPS has been an excellent tool helping us manage/track route times and monitors safety parameters such as speed, etc.

K-12 transportation departments are continually facing the challenges of having to do more with less. Well-thought-out application of software to automate and support some of the key transportation planning and processing activities is a must for any department that is trying to improve efficiency, enhance productivity and bring down costs.

The author Col. Wendell Shelton may be reached at wshelton@richland2.org or via telephone at: 803-518-5540. □



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NASDPTS benefits include leadership, assistance and motivation to members



By Dawn M. Barker

For more than four decades, the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) has provided guidance, support and encouragement to the U.S. school transportation industry.

NASDPTS membership comes from every one of the 50 states, with membership categories ranging from state director members to supplier council members (those involved in the manufacture of buses, manufacturing and sale of pupil transportation components, suppliers of professional services that support pupil transportation, public and private school transportation providers, and members of the media with an interest in school transportation), to State and National Associations Council (SNAC) members and associate members.

“The membership categories have expanded over the years,” says Charlie Hood. Hood is president of NASDPTS and school transportation director for the Florida Department of Education.

“Categories have been created for all sorts of people who have the same central goal: that of getting children to school safely. The boundaries that separate suppliers, vendors, administrators, school transportation directors and so on really aren’t valid, when all those people have the same aims toward the same goals,” he says.



Charlie Hood, NASDPTS President

While the general aim is unified, the benefits that association membership may provide vary greatly. A supplier of materials and components may employ the NASDPTS knowledge of grant eligibility through the EPA, while a state director can refine his or her knowledge of current policy issues and obtain guidance, and members whose involvement in the industry is “hands on” such as bus drivers or technicians are able to understand state, local and political issues that surround their chosen careers.

Hood says the association at present has approximately 150 supplier council members, and about 75 members of the SNAC, 15 associate members, and more than 45 state directors. He notes

that state staff members are also eligible for membership.

Each year, NASDPTS conducts a conference which provides a focus on all areas of the industry. The 2009 conference is slated for October 30 to November 2 in Louisville, Kentucky.

One of the areas in which NASDPTS has been very active in previous years is in the issue of seatbelt use in school buses.

“We have been very active in providing information and input to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and other groups on school bus safety regarding passenger crash protection,” Hood states.

“Most states don’t have seatbelts, either two-point lap belts or three-point shoulder harness belts in their buses. We have tried to provide education as to why this is. We’ve collected studies done by other organizations, such as the Transportation Research Board, to verify how safe buses already are, even without belts.”

He adds that the association also provides broad but targeted information and guidance on pupil transportation issues such as the interpretation of rules and laws, training and certification. “We provide position papers, publications and workshops on best practices,” he says.

“Our members have access to things like how to identify route hazards, or safe performance of school bus evacuation drills. If it’s a regulation, we’ll try to explain it to our membership, and if it’s not a regulation, we provide guidance on best practices and procedures.”

“In my own experience, the best ben-

efit of being in the association is that it gives its members the ability to operate effectively in one’s day-to-day job, to be able to speak knowledgeably about issues, and to inspire a level of confidence in your knowledge of your profession. That confidence makes you more effective when speaking to the superin-

tendent, a school board member, parents, principals, or other bosses or clients you may have.”

For more information on the conference or NASDPTS membership, please visit the NASDPTS website at www.nasdpts.org. □



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