



**GEORGIA ASSOCIATION**  
for Pupil Transportation

# Newsletter

March // 2009

A great number of things are going on in student transportation here in Georgia ---

*So let's get to it!*

## **HB 201**

First topic is House Bill 201. This is the bill that would mandate seat belts on all school buses built after July 1, 2009. This provision was an add-on to a bill regarding insurance liability as it pertains to seat belts in cars. GAPT got word of a committee meeting on this **one** day (2/17) prior to the meeting (2/18). We were able to marshal enough support allowing the GAPT Board to speak at the meeting. As a result, the bill was defeated and not brought out of the committee. There are important things to note in this event. First, legislation that effects student transportation can appear in various shapes and sizes, and there is not compulsion for our legislators to seek our professional opinion. Second, we all need to be as linked to our elected officials as our districts will allow. I suspect by the end of the meeting on Wednesday, we had killed a mouse with an elephant gun. Members throughout the state had contacted their elected officials and state lobbyists to kill this bill. Third, as a State association, we have to find ways to get in front of these legislative actions instead of chasing from behind. This is something your Board is working on.

## **DOE Audit**

Next, let's look at the State audits we're all experiencing. As painful as they seem from our perspective, I personally can't imagine wading through the volume of paperwork to evaluate and render judgment. I don't know what our DOE folks are paid, but it isn't enough. But for all of the grief the process creates, every one of us is receiving tremendous value. The audit doesn't really judge whether you are good or bad. It is an assessment of the processes we have in place and our ability to prove that we did the measures that were done. No matter how you scored, every one of us found ways our system could improve. I think most of us found those improvements while preparing - before the DOE ever arrived.

## **Special Needs Seminar**

The annual *Special Needs Seminar* will be held in Forsyth (the city not the county), GA on March 24<sup>th</sup>. Registration and program information is available on the GAPT website at [gaptonline.org](http://gaptonline.org).

## **Summer Conference**

We have a tremendous conference planned for you this summer from June 22<sup>nd</sup> through June 26<sup>th</sup>. We know money is tight in our school budgets, so we have focused on giving each of you the biggest educational bang for your buck. We are hoping you and your district will not be short sighted in these tight financial times. Professional learning cannot come to a stop because professional challenges will not stop. Attached at the end of this newsletter are two documents. The first is a draft schedule of the training classes. The second is the social activities. We strongly encourage you to share the training information with your superintendent as part of the rationale for funding your attendance. Share the social activities with your spouse.

## Summer Conference Changes

There are a great many changes to this year's conference, not the least of which is its location. Do to the facility and planning challenges being faced by Jekyll Island, the Board voted to move this year's conference (and probably next year's) to Callaway Gardens. Callaway Gardens is located between Lagrange and Columbus, just off of I-185 in the town of Pine Mountain. The changes this brings about appear very positive to the Board. So far, we have not found any cockroaches or other varmints in our rooms when we have visited Callaway. That is a plus. With your hotel room key you are provided access to the facilities of Callaway Gardens. Most of these are free and include things like a lake beach that is all sand (no rocks), free miniature golf, free equipment usage for rock walls and bungee machines, free paddle boats (motored at an additional fee), and all of the garden sight-seeing (various gardens, butterfly house, etc).

In addition, we will be providing a truly unique opportunity. Callaway offers a program called "*Family Adventure*". It is essentially a day camp organized and grouped by ages, including adults. For folks that have patronized Callaway, this is the prized activity. Just a flavor of some of the activities include a trapeze for the little ones (about 1 foot off the ground) assisted by circus performers. The performers are students from Florida State University, and they also serve as camp counselors. Teens will have opportunities to do outdoor adventures, like a day long canoeing event accompanied by the counselors. You can access these activities on a daily basis, and will not automatically be signed up for the whole week. Your cost will be the cost of lunch for the attendee.

Our normal Tuesday evening cook-out will be held at the beach in the Gardens. After the cook-out we will get a free circus performance from the FSU Circus. Shuttle service will be provided from the various accommodations (there are villas, cottages and spa rooms at a higher cost) to the conference center at the primary hotel, the Mountain Creek Inn. We will also be providing shuttle service from the conference center into the gardens proper. Once inside the gardens, they have their own transportation system available at no charge.

Another major change for this year is the inclusion of the "*pre-conference*" workshops into the conference itself, along with the elimination of additional fees for any of these programs. This will allow you to attend more workshops without additional registration fees. We have also added an additional registration option for those that cannot afford the whole conference. A one day (any choice of days) registration is available for \$50. That will enable an individual to target any particular classes offered and just pay for that day. Attendance of 2 or more days are better served to choose the complete registration package at the cost of \$100. When paying the full registration but not attending each conference day, please let the registration check-in table know which days you are planning on attending so we can adequately plan for meals and such.

Registration for the conference is again being handled online at [NAPT.org](http://NAPT.org). Scroll down to Notable Events. Please register through their website. There will not be an option for mail in registration. The website offers all payment options and keeps record of registration information. The website can also be linked through the GAPT website. Hotel reservations can be made through the GAPT website. We would prefer it since this allows the hotel to keep track of how many rooms are reserved for conference related personnel.

For additional savings, it is important that you understand how to take advantage of tax exempt opportunities. When checking in, the following information on exemption of sales tax and hotel/motel excise tax should be presented. These forms must be presented at check-in.

**For Georgia Sales Tax Exemption** you must do the following:

- ❖ Pay with a *Board of Education* credit card or a *Board of Education* check. Present your payment along with a signed State of Georgia, Sales and Used Tax Certificate of Exemption - Form ST-5 (REV. 05-00).

**For the Hotel/Motel Excise Tax Exemption** you must do the following:

- ❖ Present a completed Georgia Certificate of Exemption of Local Hotel/Motel Excise Tax form. Make sure that your Accounting/Finance contact information is complete.

*If you pay with cash or personal credit card, you may only take advantage of the hotel tax exemption.*

See you on June 21, 2009 at Callaway Gardens!