



NEWS

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NONPROFIT CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED HONORS MTA DISPATCHERS FOR QUICK ACTION IN LOCATING LOST PERSONS

A non-profit organization in Chatsworth that teaches the developmentally disabled independent life skills, including how to travel to jobs using the Metro Bus System, has recognized dozens of MTA radio operators instrumental in helping hundreds of disabled transit users.

At a ceremony recently held at the Marriott Hotel in Woodland Hills, the controllers of MTA's Bus Operations Control, who are housed at MTA headquarters in downtown Los Angeles, received Work Training Program, Inc.'s (WTP) highest honor, its Community Service Award, for more than 20 years of helping their members and other disabled persons.

The MTA's control center receives close to 1,200 calls a day, including a few each week about lost developmentally disabled passengers.

Over the years, nonprofits like WTP have come to expect this quick reaction from the 44 specially trained controllers. The command center is manned 24 hours a day and provides communications with buses via radio or telephone.

This special attention includes broadcasting radio bulletins once calls for help come in. This information includes the name and description of a missing individual, which bus the person may have taken and the location he or she was last seen. In addition, actual voice contact is made with bus operators who may have transported the passenger. Field supervisors also are immediately dispatched to help in the search.

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It may take a while to locate someone, in some cases several hours, but the ending is usually a happy one thanks to bus operators keeping a sharp eye out for those reported missing.

"The award is long overdue," says Vimala Rozner, Transition and Residential Services Coordinator for WTP. "The MTA controllers, bus operators and the supervisors who drive these people home or to our headquarters are very patient and professional in every way. When they hear that a person with a disability is missing they become extra diligent. They're incredibly helpful."

Those who work in the control center are proud to be of service.

"It's the first time a group like Work Training Program has taken the time to recognize our efforts and it means a lot to our people," said MTA Bus Operations Control Center manager Tom Jasmin. "These people depend on us and we always try to come through."

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