
The Next Generation

Kids Consider MTA During Los Cerritos School Career Day

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA

(March 27, 2002) Stay in school, don't do drugs and keep our buses clean. That was the message 27 junior high school kids heard, March 22, when Deputy Executive Officer John Roberts and Division 2 Mechanic Jon Tena spoke during career day at Los Cerritos School in Paramount.

Committee (DAC) program that was responsible for the career day visit. DAC members will make approximately 30 other visits to schools throughout the year. He hopes the MTA's efforts to reach young children will curtail a problem on the rise — students dropping out of school.

"A lot of the inner city schools have drop-out rates as much as 50 percent," he said. "A lot of it is because they lose hope, or there's no inspiration, or there's no encouragement. I hope to help some of the young kids."



Los Cerritos School seventh grader Jesus Cuevas listens as MTA employees urge his classmates to help keep Metro Buses free of graffiti.

PHOTOS BY CHRISTINA ESPARZA

Technology-based workforce

Tena, who brought a laptop computer and the computers that operate the wheelchair lift and bus engine, said schools give youngsters knowledge of technology, and a technology-based workforce is where they kids will be finding jobs.



MTA Deputy Executive Officer John Roberts explains the importance of education and career opportunities to Los Cerritos School students.

"Staying in school will give them the tools they need to succeed in life," Tena said. "I could show them with this technology ... how computerized our coaches are becoming and how — with the skills they're learning now — that will apply to everyday life."

With pencils, erasers, rulers and pencil sharpeners adorned with the phrase "Take Pride Stop Tag," in hand, Roberts also highlighted the damage that is caused by graffiti and urged the youngsters not to pick up a bad habit that "has no purpose at all."

"In the early '90s, the graffiti on the MTA and RTD buses was out of control," Roberts

said. "The DAC committee was put together to help educate kids at the elementary and junior high school levels to have more respect for our buses so they wouldn't damage them as they were riding. We're here to serve them and they have to respect that."

Community outreach program

The DAC committee, Roberts said, has evolved into a community outreach program, which he said benefits people and will contribute to the longevity of the agency.

"For an organization like MTA ... to go out and share what opportunities we have, I think many of these kids we touch today will be our employees in the future," he said.

Before they left Los Cerritos to get back to work, the class thanked Roberts and Tena for visiting and awarded them Certificates of Appreciation.

"Take advantage of your school now. Learn. Listen to your teachers and you'll have a lot of career opportunities when you get older," Roberts said before leaving the classroom. "And if you're lucky, you could work for the MTA."

Christina Esparza is a Transit Operations correspondent intern assigned to write news articles about employee activities at the operating divisions.

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