

Arthur Winston Division Metro Operator Rhonda Newsome helped reunite a 3-year-old girl and her mother who got separated at the Pacific and Florence bus stop.



PHOTO BY ALISHA GOMEZ

## **Metro Bus Operator Reunites Mother and Daughter**

By ALISHA GOMEZ

(Sept. 3, 2002) Tuesday afternoon, Aug. 20, was just like any other day for Arthur Winston Division 5 Metro Operator Rhonda Newsome.

Going east at Pacific and Florence, the bus was relatively full – typical around 4 p.m. Everyone kept to themselves and no one looked lost or out of place.

So when she noticed a little 3-year-old girl sitting all by herself on her bus that afternoon, she did what any mother would do – she followed her motherly instincts and started interrogating her passengers as to where the little girl's mother was.

"My passengers didn't know and they just looked at me like 'why are you asking us?'" says Newsome. "Then one of my passengers, told me he saw her board the bus alone from the rear door at Pacific and Florence. We thought the lady she was sitting next to was her mother until that lady got off the bus without her."

Newsome then called the BOCC who instructed her to pull over and wait at the Pacific and Eastern stop.

### **Her mother was left behind**

"I asked the little girl where her mother was and she pointed behind her, like her mother was left behind," says Newsome. "But she couldn't tell me how they got separated."

Newsome stopped an LAPD officer and told him what was going on. That officer informed another officer who began searching for the mother.

"About 20 to 30 minutes into my wait at Pacific and Eastern, this guy came onto my bus off another one behind me and said the little girl's mother was back there," says Newsome. "And I said to him, 'Well, you can't do anything and I'm not releasing her to you.' I think he thought I was just going to give him the little girl and there's no way I was going to do that."

Two officers then approached Newsome's bus and informed her they had found the mother. After everyone exchanged information, Newsome released the little girl to the police so the two could be reunited. She also informed the BOCC.

With no experience in handling such a potentially tragic situation before, Newsome did what came naturally to her.

"I'm a mother and I would do that for any child. This has never happened to me before and when she started crying, I felt a tear in my eye. I mean, to lose your child like that – wow."

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