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Metro Bus Operators, from left, Joe Cota, Elsa Figueroa, Richard Lopez and Debbie Flores celebrate 79th birthday of longtime patron Rita Hastings, center.



PHOTOS: SHANTAY IOSIA

Metro Bus Operators Throw Birthday Bash for Favorite Patron

By SHANTAY IOSIA

Friends and family gathered today at San Gabriel Valley Division 9 to celebrate the 79th birthday of longtime patron Rita Hastings. Hastings, a Metro Bus patron since 1956, sat at the head of her decorated table and accepted gifts, kind words and affection.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said to the room full of guests who came to celebrate. "I don't know how to thank you for making my "39th birthday" so special."



From left, Transportation Manager Mike Greenwood, Hastings, and operators Cota and Lopez.

Metro Bus Operator Joe Cota said it was her endearing personality and light humor that drew him to her. "She is the type of person you just want to see all the time." Cota met Hastings on Line 188 about 20 years ago. "Sometimes she would let the buses ahead of me go by just to wait for me," he said.

Elsa Figueroa, a bus operator and longtime friend, baked a pineapple cake and decorated it with a Metro Bus Stop to recreate the scene of Hastings waiting for Cota's bus.



Cake re-creates patron's favorite bus stop.

Unable to keep from smiling, Hastings glanced over at the other familiar faces that surrounded her. Operators Debbie Flores and Richard Lopez put great effort into organizing the event in honor of their friend.

Flores says she wishes she could do more things like this for the public, especially the seniors who rely heavily on public transportation. "We know our regulars," she said. "They take a little longer but we wait for them. When we get there and we don't see them, we wait and we look down the block and here they come."

myMetro July 14 > [Operators to Honor Half-Century Patron on Her 79th Birthday](#)