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Transportation
Operations Supervisor
Marcel Gipson
demonstrates ATMS
technology during the
students' visit to Bus
Operations Control.



Santa Fe Springs Students Get a Close-up Look at Metro

By DAVID HERSHENSON

(Feb. 9, 2005) About 20 eighth grade students from Lake Center Middle School in Santa Fe Springs were treated to a Metro tour, recently, that included Central City Division 1 transportation operations, the Bus Operations Center (BOC), the Gateway Cities sector office, a Sheriff's substation and non-revenue maintenance Division 4.

The students are enrolled in the school's AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, which was created to assist students who would not normally go to college in learning how to prepare and qualify for college enrollment and a four-year degree.

The AVID program solicits guest speakers from the community to talk to the students about possible career choices. They also visit various colleges and universities in the area.

The offer for the tour was made a few months ago when Division 1 Transportation Manager Sonja Owens accompanied Gateway Cities Executive Secretary Sheila Badji to the school to give a career presentation.

PHOTOS: DAVE HERSHENSON



Division 1 Transportation Manager Sonja Owens explains bus operations procedures to students from Lake Center Middle School in Santa Fe Springs.

Greeted by the staff

A Metro Bus picked up the students in front of their school at about 10 a.m. and delivered them to Division 1, where they were greeted by Owens, assistant transportation managers, operators, and other employees.

Before a brief tour of the division, Owens and others stressed the importance of getting a good education.

Operator Peter Freeman explained that people without a college degree who get jobs as bus operators at Metro have started out as high on the ladder as they are likely to get. However, operators who begin working at Metro with a college degree have lots of opportunities to climb higher.

After their division tour, the students were taken to the BOC. They were impressed by the controllers' work, the technology involved, and with the advanced communications system that is used to track all Metro buses.

Owens also gave a brief description of her background and stressed the importance of a good education to get where you want to go in life.

Given an overview

Before returning to school, the students made one more stop at the Gateway Cities Sector office where they met staff members and were given an overview of the Transit Services Bureau's responsibilities by Sheriff's Sgt. Allan Stanny.

They also took a brief tour of the non-revenue maintenance shop where Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Harold Torres is responsible for the maintenance of all Metro vehicles, other than buses and trains.

The students came away impressed with Metro's operations and the high level of technology involved in running buses efficiently.

Tim Panik, a math teacher involved in the AVID program, said the AVID students continue in a special program when they move on to Santa Fe High School. He noted that 100 percent of the students enrolled in the high school program were accepted to the college of their choice.

"Besides being interesting, this tour provided our students with a number of benefits," said Panik. "In addition to the exposure to a diverse working environment, students heard how important education is and got to see the many technological tools that go into a successful operation. I think it opened their eyes to a whole new world."

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