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PHOTO: RICH MORALLO



Metro Bus Operator Elvia Matthews makes passengers smile by decorating her driver's compartment with cartoon characters.

Older Sister's Career Inspired Elvia Matthews to Join Metro

- Matthews passes her experiences along to students

By RICH MORALLO

(June 28, 2005) Flushed with excitement, 12-year old Elvia Matthews sat down on the big city bus and watched with pride as her older sister, Jeannette, navigated the vehicle down the street.

"I thought it was incredible to see a woman in charge of the bus." Matthews remembers how impressed she was in 1975 that her sister helped passengers get where they needed to go.

"Even today, some students are still surprised to see that a woman can operate a public bus," says Matthews, recalling that bus ride with her sister.

Today, 30 years later, Matthews herself is a Carson Division 18 operator and a member of the Division Ambassador Council who often talks to young students about the Metro Bus system.

"Last week, I was at Cimarron Avenue Elementary School in Hawthorne and I talked to four different classes about how to ride Metro safely," she says.

'We can serve as role models'

"It's important for Metro staff to visit schools and students, since the agency is a part of the community, and as professionals we can serve as role models," says Matthews, who volunteered recently to participate in the school's career day.

A single mother of three, Matthews told the Hawthorne students about the importance of education and staying in school.

"I shared with them how my own children studied and worked hard to get good grades," she says. Her eldest is a graduate of UC Santa Barbara; the second child is at El Camino and the youngest has just graduated from high school.

Some students had questions about safety and Matthews explained to them how operators receive safety training, follow rules and procedures, and work closely with the Sheriff's deputies.

"I explained to them that Safety is First, but I also like to make my passengers smile," laughs Matthews as she describes how she decorates her driver's compartment with a Sponge Bob seat cover.

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