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**Class of #29:** Fourteen highly motivated service attendants earn the rank of Mechanic 'C' after completing 18 months of on-the-job training. Graduates are joined here by, from left, Director of Operations Training Doug Middleton, ATU Local 1277 President Neil Silver, Equipment Maintenance Instructor Brian Markey, Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers, and, at right, Senior Equipment Maintenance Instructor Steve Mullaly. *Photos by Gayle Anderson*

## Metro Mechanics Tool Up to Take New Positions

By Laura Kloth  
Staff Writer

(Sept. 1, 2009) Fourteen Metro service attendants proudly earned their torque wrenches and diplomas to become Class C Mechanics after undergoing an intense 18-month apprenticeship program.

CEO Art Leahy congratulated the graduates at the Aug. 26 ceremony, and afterward asked each one why they chose to become Metro mechanics.



Mechanic 'C' Arturo Roldan

**Rite of Passage:**  
Mechanics brandish their shiny new torque wrenches at MSSC graduation ceremony.



Mechanic 'C' Gail Williams

Among the graduates were Arturo Roldan and Gail Williams, both of whom said

that they were eager to participate in Metro's in-house training program and gladly switched from first to second shift to accommodate their training schedule.

"It was very interesting. I learned a lot. The hardest part was going to class and working at the same time," said Roldan, "My family was very supportive. They were happy for me."

Williams, who received her on-the-job training at Div. 5, is "grateful" for the program.

"The training was great," she said. "I had excellent training here [at the Metro Support services Center (MSSC)] and at Div. 5 ... excellent, excellent training. So I'm going to be one of the finest. So it's great."

Other Class C mechanics graduates were: Jose Garcia, Juan Becerra, Dave Buakong Green, Brian Lench, Cheryl Rakisits, Abraham Diaz, Jose Fernandez, Matthew Aragon, Anthony Jackson, Guillermo Diaz, Emmanuel Vasquez, and Poo Ung.



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Sr. Instructor Steve Mullaly shares cake and glory with Instructor Brian Markey, who picks up yet another honorary certificate presented to him by appreciative students.

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### **Matching mentors and students**

Sr. Equipment Maintenance Instructor Steve Mullaly, who hosted the ceremony, said most of those participating were required to change shifts to attend two, four hour classes a week. Later, students also qualified for a bus driver's license to be able to make road calls.

Mullaly lauded the cooperation of the division managers who helped by pairing up the trainees with experienced mechanics at Divisions 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10 and the MSSC.

"On behalf of the Operations Maintenance Instruction Department, we would like to say thank you very much for volunteering to become one of the OJT work locations. So you know, we picked you as you have good management skills and good mechanics for students to learn from," Mullaly said.

### **A 'strong collaborative effort'**

Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers said the program is evidence of "strong collaborative" efforts between labor and management.

The program, she said, "was an opportunity for us to show the class, the union and all other employees that there's opportunities for advancement, and the agency supports training, that the agency values the employees and feels we should give them an opportunity to develop within the organization."

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1277 President Neil Silver noted that this was the first graduation he knew of that was attended by a Metro CEO.

"The CEO actually cares about what goes on around here. He's a hands-on manager and I have a lot of faith in him," he said.

Among those also attending the ceremony were Deputy Executive Officer John Roberts, Director of Operations Training Doug Middleton and several division managers.

The ATU chief said Metro should implement apprenticeship programs in other areas to help Metro "grow their own" and keep jobs within the agency.

"This is an excellent program. It's probably the only one in the country that does this. Anyone that comes out of this school could go to any transit agency," he said. "The minute they here they come out of the mechanics training program, they'll hire them right away. Nobody's got a program like this."

"These buses are getting more and more complicated every day. There's more and more rules they have to adhere to for the environment which is important. The real crux of the matter is people have to be trained."



ATU Local 1277 President Neil Silver and Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers share a light-hearted moment at graduation party.

Metro San  
Fernando  
Valley  
General  
Manager  
Richard Hunt  
congratulates  
José García  
and others at  
luncheon for  
new  
mechanics.



### **Learn and grow**

Graduate Gail Williams, who spent nine years as a Service Attendant, said the program required a great deal of focus.

"You have to dedicated when you do it because when you have family, and you're trying to take care of your family and at the same time get up and go to school and then go to work," she said, noting that she has grown children, and it was still a challenge, "but well worth it, for anyone who wants to continue to learn and grow."

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