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Good Fellas Juan Hernandez and Johnson Tran keep things moving at East Valley Division 15.

Photos: Gayle Anderson

Div. 15 Good Fellas Club Creates Second Home for Operators

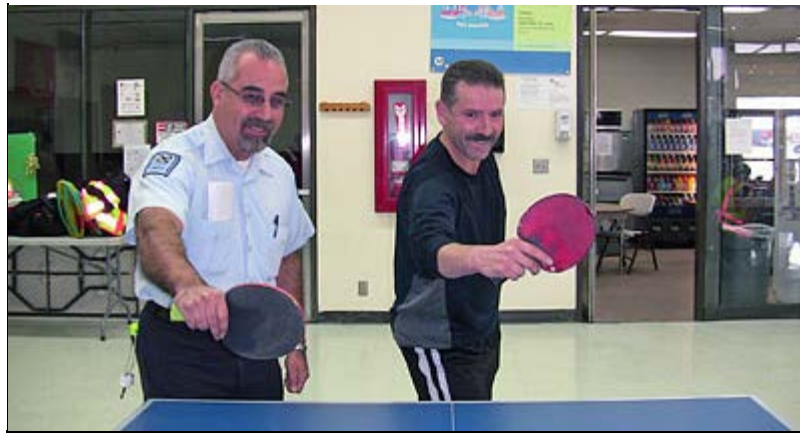
By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Nov. 24, 2009) "Funny what a dollar a paycheck could amount to," said Metro Bus Operator Johnson Tran as he recalled how the Good Fellas Club got started at East Valley Div. 15.

The Metro-sanctioned Good Fellas Club was formed a couple of years ago when Tran and a few other Div. 15 employees thought it would be a good idea to collect money to purchase some home-away-from-home essentials for operators who spend a great deal of time at Metro.

With some employees working split shifts, "most of us stay here and don't go home," said Bus Operator Juan Hernandez.

When the first collection came in, almost 500 new Good Fellas had contributed about \$2,000 and when Tran asked what should top the list of absolute "gotta haves" the decision was unanimous – Direct TV.



Operator Ramiro Flores, left, warms up with a challenger for a ping pong game. Below, the top 'gotta have' rules the lounge.



With additional funds, members collected enough funds to purchase a plasma TV, ping pong, pool and foosball tables. Soon, some members expressed an interest in pumping-up their inner Schwarzeneggers by fully equipping a workout room.

"Now we're working on the gym" Tran said, noting that the workout room was created in an unused patio that's now home to a treadmill, an elliptical climber, a Bowflex machine and other pectoral necessities.



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A balance between the fit and the perhaps less muscularly-inclined was achieved with additional revenues generated by twice-monthly hot dog cookouts or barbecues. The Good Fellas have also hosted their own pool tournament charging a \$20 entry fee with a trophy to the winner.

The club holds regular meetings, votes on all purchases and present an

accounting of funds on a monthly basis.

"We try to get a meeting together, and decide how to handle events. We work on it," Hernandez said.

With the support of Transportation Manager Gary Spivack, the division also created a quiet room where operators could nap in-between shifts to stay safe on the road during those very long working days. "If operators have enough sleep, it could save an accident out there," Tran said.

Spivack says he's been behind the club all the way. "It's been the biggest morale builder that we've ever come up with. I'm all for it. They come into the office all the time with ideas and things they want to check around, and I just enjoy working with them," Spivack said.

Coming up with a club name was very spontaneous and had nothing to do with the Martin Scorsese film of the same name, Tran jokes.

"We talked about what we would call ourselves, and someone asked: 'How about the Good Fellas?', and everyone liked the name, so it stuck," Tran said.



Operators shake off the road with a fast game of foosball. Active members of the Good Fella's Club include Miriam Pereira, Tarus McCall, Pablo Murillo, Nicole Jiho, Ramiro Flores, Margarita Morgan, La La Martinez, Jose Erazo, Mario Benitez, Efrain Serrano, Juan Hernandez, David Austria, Herlinda Rojas, Elio Sanchez, Helman Cruz, Aldo Aleman, Nelson Cartagena, Gloria Reyes, club founder Johnson Tran, Roberto Rodriguez, Rita Durkee, Daniel Magana, and Ada Hernandez.

"The next project we're going to do is try to build a library," he said.

The project will involve setting up shelves and asking employees to contribute magazines, books, whatever they can share.

"This is like our second home. We're like a big, big family. We try to make it comfortable for everybody," he said.

Other Metro-sanctioned clubs include: the African-American Employees Association; Lunch Walkers @ Metro; Metro Cycling Club; Metro Choir; Metro Crocheters & Knitters Club; Metro Yoga; Metrophonics; and Toastmasters.

