

# *The Voice and Vision for Pupil Transportation in Virginia*



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## **VAPT Conference Less Than 3 MONTHS AWAY!**

The annual 2017 Virginia Pupil Transportation Conference is fast approaching. The reality is that we're all too busy to think at this point with spring field trips and our daily ritual in the transportation department. It's hard to believe it is less than three months away! However, Transportation Departments all over the state are preparing to attend the annual conference that has many amenities to make those networking connections. We have workshops and training schedules for various staff. Have you registered yet? There's a golf tournament and a fishing trip, too! Have you packed yet? Keynote speaker, Brett Leake, a motivational comedian will present, "Saying Yes—Finding Affirmation in the Little Moments of Daily Life". Courses such as "Managing Behaviors of Students", "School Bus Specifications", "DOE Changes in Virginia State New Physical Form, Crashes and Preparing Protocol for Service Animals" and "Human Resource Critical Issues" and the State Road-e-o to name a few. So, what are you waiting for? Make plans now to attend, schedule that time out of your district to gain valuable, informative information that will provide the knowledge your district needs to be efficient.



**Waterside Hotel  
Norfolk, Virginia  
June 19-22, 2017**

## 16 Year Old Driver Charged in Culpeper School Bus Crash

DONNIE JOHNSTON / THE FREE LANCE-STAR Feb 15, 2017

A 16-year-old Culpeper youth was charged with failing to keep his vehicle on the right side of the road after he lost control and collided with a Culpeper County school bus Wednesday morning, state police said.

According to Sgt. Les Tyler of the Virginia State Police, the teen was driving a 1999 Honda Accord east on Black Hill Road in the Jeffersonston area (State Route 626) when he ran off the road, over-corrected, came back onto the road and struck the bus, which was heading west.

The accident involving bus No. 71 occurred around 7 a.m. about one-tenth of a mile west of State Route 229, according to the school system.

The driver of the Honda was transported to Fauquier Hospital. The extent of his injuries was not available.

The bus driver and the 29 students on board were not injured, Tyler said.

No students needed medical attention at the scene, according to the school system. Students were loaded on another bus and taken to school, where they were checked by the nurses and parents were notified.

Trooper I.R. Ewing investigated the accident and was assisted by the Culpeper County Sheriff's Office and the Little Fork Fire and Rescue.



## VAPT Poster Contest 2017 REMINDER!

The slogan for this year is **"My Driver —My Safety Hero!"**

**Who May Enter** - Anyone enrolled in a public school. Five winning divisions that include: Division #1-Grades K-2; Division #2 -Grades 3-5; Division #3-Grades 6-8; Division #4-Special Education; and Division #5-Computer Aided Drawing (CAD). The first place winner from each division will entered in the national poster contest.

**Deadline Date** - Completed poster designs must be post marked by **April 30, 2017**. All entries become the property of the State School Bus Safety Committee, and will not be returned.

**Poster Specifications** - Completed poster size must be 12" by 18" only, with a one-inch (1") blank border completely across the bottom of the poster. This space must be available due to printing requirements. If not provided, poster will be disqualified. Poster may be illustrated on the vertical or horizontal axis.

**Prizes** - Prizes will be awarded for the first, second, and third places in each division as follows:

1st Place Winner for each division	\$100.00 Check and Blue Ribbon
2nd Place Winner of each division	\$ 75.00 Check and Red Ribbon
3rd Place Winner of each division	\$ 50.00 Check and White Ribbon

**For complete instructions and entry form go to the VAPT website at [www.vapt.org](http://www.vapt.org)**

## VAPT attends NAPT 2016



Photo courtesy of H. Handschin (Spotsylvania County)

Delegates attending the National Association of Pupil Transportation for the 42nd Summit held on November 4-8, 2016. It was held in Kansas City, Missouri.



Barry Suddath speaking at the NAPT

**National Association for Pupil Transportation's 43rd Annual Summit in Columbus, Ohio on November 4–7, 2017. Watch [www.napt.org](http://www.napt.org) for more details for registration information.**

## Dallas/Frisco, TX “TSD Conference”—VA Staff Attends

March 17—22, 2017, the Transporting Special Needs Students Conference was held at the Embassy Suites in the Dallas/Frisco, TX area. Sponsored by *School Transportation News*, the conference held numerous, informative classes on various concepts needed and required in transporting students with special needs:

- ***Strengthen Relationships Between Departments:*** it is important to know your special education department and how it is an essential aspect in serving students with special needs. It is important to bridge the gap between both departments for the sake of all students we serve.
- ***Serving students with service animals:*** discussion was held regarding requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with respect to students who use animals to assist them because of their disabilities.
- ***Fostering Positive Interactions with Autistic Students:*** Students with autism should be celebrated for their uniqueness but at times, their behavior and methods of communication can be misunderstood. Without having the right supports in place, minor meltdowns might lead to major escalations—and even the involvement of law enforcement. This class was held by the nations’ top autism trainers about how to effectively collaborate with local police and school resources officers in order to achieve the most positive outcomes. Through this unique training, student transporters can meet the tenets of IDEA by providing important life lessons on independence for these children.
- ***Efficiency & Compliance in Pick-up, Drop-Off, Ride Time & Routing*** taught by Peggy Burns and our own Spotsylvania Transportation Coordinator, Heather Handschin.

Approximately a dozen individuals from the state of Virginia attended the conference. Classes were held from 7:30 to 5 most days with the trade show on Monday afternoon after the keynote speech from author, Craig Davidson, who wrote “Precious Cargo”. Julie Weatherly presented on the “Legal Highlights of Special Needs & Head Start Transportation”. Speaker Patrick Mulick always draw crowds due to his dynamic presentation style.

The conference utilized an app for the itinerary each day—which was helpful to the attendees. Room changes and class notes/hand-outs were available, as well. This conference is scheduled to be at this location for the next five years. Start working with your team to have someone represent your division and gain valuable information to share.



**TSD** Transporting Students with  
Disabilities & Preschoolers  
CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW

**Save the DATE:**

**March 9-14, 2018**

## 2017 Scholarship Opportunities

*The Virginia Association for Pupil Transportation* sponsors directly and supports several opportunities for our Transportation Community. Five opportunities exist through our website and benefits students in our state with monetary funds to assist them in the college endeavors.

Please go to our website to complete the application process. The four scholarship options are:

1. 2017 Clyde W. Morris Memorial Scholarship for \$2,500.00
2. Pupil Transportation Scholarship through Virginia Tech (deadline was March 1)
3. 2017 Buster Bynum Education Scholarship for \$2,500.00.
4. 2017 Sonny Merryman Memorial Scholarship for \$2,500.00
5. 2017 Adult Continuing Education Scholarship \$500 each.

For many years, students have been awarded these scholarships to attend college. Completing the application process is necessary to be considered for any of the awards listed above. Good luck to all the entrants in this selection process.

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## 2017 VAPT State Road-e-o Information

The Virginia Association for Pupil Transportation (VAPT) is pleased to announce that the annual VAPT School Bus Road-e-o will take place on Monday, June 19, 2017. The location site for the event will be Bird Neck Elementary School in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

VAPT will sponsor the Conventional and Special Needs Roadeo during the annual state conference in June. It has been decided to eliminate the Transit competition from this year's Roadeo. Trophies will be presented to the first, second, and third place winners (conventional & special needs) following the completion of the roadeo. The first and second place winners will be eligible to participate in the national event, which will be held on July 16 in Indianapolis, IN.

### Reminders:

Please inform your contestants that they will need to register at the road-e-o location site 30 minutes prior to the event starting. Road-e-o competition will start promptly at 8:00 a.m.

Localities with entries in the competition are asked to provide one or more judges.

Please complete the attached entry form with contestant and judge's information and return to Sharon Utley no later than Friday June 9, 2017. Good Luck to all of the participants!

## 11 Year Old VA Boy Saves Choking Friend on Bus

**FRANKLIN COUNTY, Va.** — An 11-year-old boy was honored Thursday for saving a friend who was choking on a school bus in January. Franklin County Sheriff's Office officials honored fifth grader Max Itson with the **"Lifesaver Award."**

"For your courageous and rapid response to a student in a life-threatening situation, the Office of the Sheriff recognized you and your heroic deed.

In January of 2017, you witnessed one of your fellow school bus riders choking and you took immediate action. Your willingness to help makes you a LIFESAVER," the award reads. Major Mike Bowman with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office said he was grateful for Max's quick thinking.

"He stood up to do things we desire to do on a daily basis as a deputy sheriff and... we're thankful that Max did that and we're very proud of him for doing that," Bowman said.

Max also took home some goodies and got to go for a ride in a patrol car, according to WTVR.

Additionally, officials said they believe Max is the youngest person to have saved a life in Franklin County.

**Source:** <http://wtkr.com/2017/03/06/11-year-old-virginia-boy-saves-choking-friend-on-school-bus/>

## TN Driver/Mechanic Cares about Wheelchair Student

Some may call it chance, but Verna DeSpain is convinced fate led school bus mechanic Thomas Mitchell to her doorstep last week.

The mechanic from Clarksville, Tennessee, fills in as a substitute bus driver for the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System (CMCSS) when he's needed. His route occasionally includes bringing a group of special needs children to school.

That's when he first met DeSpain and her 10-year-old daughter, Lydia, a third-grader who uses a wheelchair. One morning, Mitchell noticed DeSpain, a single mother of two, struggling to carry Lydia's wheelchair down the steps of their front porch.

For some reason, he just couldn't shake the image from his head.

"There was just hardly any room for her to maneuver this wheelchair," Mitchell **told** the school district, which posted the story on Facebook. "It just didn't seem right for somebody to have to struggle like that."

So, a few days later, he gave DeSpain a call and offered to build a customized wheelchair ramp for Lydia — free of charge.

"I was just so shocked," DeSpain told CBS News. "I got a call from him out of the blue."

It took several months to design and plan. Mitchell gathered tools, found a few friends to help and even got a local Lowe's home improvement store to donate all the necessary materials.

One Sunday in late January, Mitchell knocked on DeSpain's front door with four friends, including a construction worker, ready to follow through on his promise. Less than three hours later, the little girl got the ramp she needed.

**Source:** <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/tennessee-school-bus-driver-builds-girl-a-wheelchair-ramp-after-seeing-mom-struggle/?scrlybrkr=6d8aof85>

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## Wellness Corner

Author Andrea Tarrell's blog article on [www.hni.com](http://www.hni.com) states: "Although there are certainly challenges with creating a wellness program that drivers will actually adopt, the rewards of improving employee wellness are great. Decreased health care and worker's compensation costs, greater control of insurance premiums, and improvement of safety records are just a few of the reasons to invest the time in a wellness program for your drivers." Ms. Tarrell provides four tips for any company wanting to establish a wellness program.

- 1) Create a communication strategy to get information on wellness programs to drivers
- 2) Demonstrate a top-down commitment to wellness programs.
- 3) Ask drivers what kind of wellness information and programming they want
- 4) Provide a forum for drivers to communicate with one another.

She states that "Wellness is not easy. This is largely true because we are talking about behavior change, bad habits are built over time, and it will take time to reverse it."

Transportation Departments across Virginia have a difficult task ahead in keeping drivers and attendants healthy. Physicals demand drivers to have better health in order to transport the students in our state. What programs do you have in your division to help employees with their wellness? Email: [brownel@fcpsk12.net](mailto:brownel@fcpsk12.net) and let us know.



## Spotlight On...

**Appomattox County** is a relatively small county nestled in the center of Virginia. It is 355 square miles in area. We have a total of 585 miles in our county with only 38 miles unpaved. According to the 2010 census the population was 14,973 citizens. At that time there were 5,322 households with 32.20% having children under the age of 18. Currently, Appomattox has approximately 2,300 students. This county has a vast history significance for being the Surrender Grounds where Lee surrendered to Grant to end the Civil War.

Appomattox County Public Schools operates a transportation department under the direction of Matt Lair. This department consists of a maintenance garage, 51 school buses, several support vehicles, and grounds equipment. The ACPS Transportation employs approximately fifty employees, (including drivers, mechanics, trainers, and management) daily. The goal of this department is to transport students to and from school each day safely and efficiently. Approximately 600,000 miles are covered annually. In addition to home to school transportation, hundreds of sports trips, field trips, and staff travel are scheduled and driven. We have four main schools and an alternative educational complex school in addition to six schools that we transport students to in Lynchburg City.

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