



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SWITA Staff Gathered in Atlantic for the Spring Drivers' Meeting

SWITA gathered April 29 for its biannual Drivers' Meeting where drivers were able to learn and refresh their skills and staff were celebrated through recognition awards.

Atlantic, Iowa – On April 29, the Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) team made up of administrators, office staff, and 51 drivers came together for a day for professional development, training, and recognition. The biannual Drivers' Meeting, held in spring and fall, was held at Atlantic Golf and Country Club and the SWITA facility in Atlantic.

Drivers refreshed their skills, engaged with office staff and their fellow drivers, and celebrated each other. The theme for the training was "Back to Basics" with a strong emphasis on safety. SWITA prides itself on being a safe, affordable transportation for all and this year's meeting made sure to focus on that. Drivers attended breakout sessions on topics such as wheelchair securement, vehicle inspections, incident reports, etc.

Another highlight of the spring drivers' meeting is awards. Recognition awards were presented to Driver of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Kelly Davis Servant Leadership Award, staff years of service recognition awards, and Outstanding Driver Awards.

All drivers have the opportunity to nominate their fellow drivers for the awards, which allows drivers to give their input on who they feel has shown commitment to service to riders and are dedicated SWITA team players.

Dean Driskell received Driver of the Year based on his ability to go above and beyond for his fellow drivers, his passengers, and dispatchers. He is a friend to everyone. He knows his passengers well and they enjoy having him as a driver. He is knowledgeable and great at sharing his knowledge with others, especially those who are new. He takes pride in his job, and you can see that in the way he cares for his bus and his passengers.

Wray Ludington received Rookie of the Year based on how quickly and efficiently he has taken on the SWITA driver role. He is eager to learn and often is cross training on other routes. He has been a "GO TO" driver when it comes to getting shifts covered, day or night. He has a very good understanding of many routes and is proficient in driving them safely. He is pleasant to work with and he goes above and beyond for his passengers and dispatch.

Kristen Templeton, Transit Coordinator, received the Kelly Davis Servant Leadership Award recognizing her commitment to the SWITA team and her ability to serve that team with distinction. The Kelly Davis Award honors the memory of former Transit Coordinator Kelly Davis, who passed away in 2022. This award is presented yearly to an employee who demonstrates a desire to serve their community and team in the way that Kelly did; with a sense of purpose and selflessness. Kristen currently oversees six transit staff and 75 drivers. She is responsible for the majority of the scheduling for the agency and has to match the right drivers with the right routes. Kristen has a positive attitude and works hard every day to get the people in southwest Iowa where they need to go.

This year's Outstanding Driver Awards went to Jon Parsons (Cass), Lynn Baumbach (Montgomery), Mike Ames (Page), Don Lantz (Harrison), and Terry Musich (Shelby).

Years of Service Recognition was presented to the following drivers: Mike Clark (5 years), Dennis Nelson (5 years), Dennis Giedd (5 years), Jerry Josephson (5 years), Larry Anderson (15 years), Jacqueline Williams (15 years), and Barbara Smithson (15 years). Also recognized were the following retired drivers: Roger Matson, Bernie Budwell, Dave Aylsworth, Richard Retz, and Carol Rehm.

SWITA is Southwest Iowa's public transportation system. SWITA has around 75 drivers and is available to all residents in Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie and Shelby counties. SWITA is Iowa's largest rural public transit agency and has continued to grow since the Covid Pandemic, while all other Iowa transit agencies have seen declining ridership. In fiscal year 2022, SWITA had 480,229 rides which is an increase from FY21 at 377,547 rides and FY20 at 305,932 rides. SWITA is projected to have a total of approximately 515,000 rides by the end of FY23. SWITA would not be able to operate as efficiently and as safely as it does now without the hard work and dedication of all of the SWITA transit staff and drivers.

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Captions for attached images:

Image #1 – SWITA Bus Drivers and Staff in attendance of the Spring Drivers' Meeting



Image #2 – Driver of the Year Award being presented: Kristen Templeton, SWIPCO Transit Coordinator (left); Dean Driskell; Mark Lander, SWIPCO Transit Director (right)



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Image #3 – Rookie of the Year Award being presented: Kristen Templeton, SWIPCO Transit Coordinator (left); Wray Ludington; Mark Lander, SWIPCO Transit Director (right)



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Image #4 – Kelly Davis Servant Leadership Award being presented: Kristen Templeton, SWIPCO Transit Coordinator (left); Mark Lander, SWIPCO Transit Director (right)



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Image #5 – Outstanding Driver Awards being presented: Kristen Templeton, SWIPCO Transit Coordinator (left); Jon Parsons; Lynn Baumbach; Mike Ames; Don Lantz; Terry Musich; Mark Lander, SWIPCO Transit Director (right)



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Image #6 – 5 Years of Service Recognition being presented: Kristen Templeton, SWIPCO Transit Coordinator (left); Jerry Josephson; Dennis Giedd; Dennis Nelson; Mike Clark; Mark Lander, SWIPCO Transit Director (right)



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Image #7 – 15 Years of Service Recognition being presented: Kristen Templeton, SWIPCO Transit Coordinator (left); Larry Anderson; Jacqueline Williams; Barbara Smithson; Mark Lander, SWIPCO Transit Director (right)



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