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SWITA Honors Top Drivers at Annual Awards and Spring Meeting

SWITA gathered May 16th for its biannual Drivers Meeting for training and awards.

ATLANTIC- Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) hosted their Spring Driver Meeting and Awards on Saturday, May 16th at the Cass County Community Center in Atlantic. Staff and drivers enjoyed a day of professional development and recognition.

Top honorees on the day were Leon Zaiger as Driver of the Year, Galen Gaer as the Kelly Davis Leadership Award recipient, and Steve Herrington with special recognition for his CTAA Frontline Hero Award. SWITA also recognized five Star Drivers from around the region: Pete Menke (Pottawattamie County), Michael Irvin (Mills County), Lavonda Eckley (Mills County), Mark Phippen (Cass County), and Rob Braunersrither (Shelby County). Recognition was also given for milestone service years: Mike Rhode, 5 years; Mike Irvin, 5 years; Roger Jensen, 5 years; Ron Meier, 5 years; James Watson, 5 years; Shantal Martinez, 5 years; Bob Lytle, 10 years; Lynn Baumbach, 10 years; and Dwayne Hemminger, 20 years. Retired driver Brian Elliot was also honored for his 10 years of service and Gary Smithson for his 20 years of service. SWITA takes pride in providing safe, reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation and these drivers gave exceptional commitment to that service this past year.

Driver of the Year Leon Zaiger has worked for SWITA since 2024, making a quick impact with his work. Leon has shown strong commitment to his work with skill behind the wheel, reliability, consistency, and a positive attitude. Leon is a leader by example, inspiring other drivers naturally. Leon keeps safety at the forefront and has been very trustworthy and professional.

The Kelly Davis Leadership Award was presented to Galen Gaer for his continued superior transit skills. Galen has been with SWITA for nearly 9 years and shows leadership through safe driving, willingness to learn new routes and assist when there is a scheduling bind. Galen does a great job helping other drivers and communicating effectively with staff. Riders enjoy his positive attitude and helpful nature.

SWITA also took time to recognize Driver Steve Herrington, who recently received the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Frontline Hero Award. This award is given each year to an unsung individual that goes the extra mile time and



time again and embodies the spirit and professionalism of the community transportation industry. Steve is a well-respected member of the team, and it was wonderful to see him get recognition on the national scale.

SWITA also received a CTAA Partnership Award for providing vehicles to use during the national driver rodeo that was held May 9-10th in Omaha, NE.

The meeting also featured safety discussions and education to ensure that proper procedures are being followed and that rides are delivered safely and efficiently each day.

SWITA is Southwest Iowa's public transportation system that is available in Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby counties. SWITA is Iowa's largest rural public transit agency, providing 546,207 rides in fiscal year 2025. Find out more at www.swita.com

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