



Transportation department prepares for new year

By David Roddy, CCSD Communications

With 1,600 school buses and more than 1,200 support vehicles, it takes a lot of people working together to keep the big wheels turning in the Clark County School District's (CCSD) Transportation Department.

As the 2013-14 fiscal year comes to a close on June 30, the district's bus fleet has already traveled nearly 22 million miles and used more than four million gallons of fuel transporting students to and from school.

A graduate of the Southeast Career and Technical Academy and CCSD employee since 1988, Operations Manager Andrea Simms is right in the middle of the massive operation that supports the district's 316,000 students and the more than 180,000 who are eligible for bus service.

While Simms is just one of 2,017 employees in the Transportation Department, he has gained many unique perspectives from his 26 years with CCSD. He has worked his way up the ladder, starting as a bus driver before becoming a safety officer, a transportation investigator, and a lead investigator before his current position as transportation operations manager.

The experience he gained from working in each of those positions has provided him with the insight to understand the challenges employees in those roles face and to help him prepare for the issues of a growing school district.

When Simms began working for CCSD, the district had 105,000 students and the Transportation Department had three bus yards compared to five now. While the number of students has grown and technology has changed dramatically, the goal of the department remains the same.

"We are the biggest people movers in the state of Nevada and our goal is to transport each child to and from their destination in a safe and timely manner," said Simms. "To do this, we need to provide training and effectively communicate to accomplish our goal."

The goal is simple, but the landscape the department works with changes constantly. Every new subdivision creates a ripple effect of planning by the department. New routes must be added; existing routes may be modified; more drivers need to be hired and trained; and the list goes on. That is where his role comes into play. As the operations manager, he interacts with bus drivers, aides and bus monitors, mechanics, dispatchers, office specialists and the call center while overseeing the transportation investigators and driver instructors.

"There are so many elements involved with the operation when you can have 1,600 moving parts at any given time during the school day," said Simms. "From routing and scheduling, to dispatching, to drivers and traffic investigators, each of our employees must have a passion for getting children to school and back in a safe and timely manner."

That passion does not stop when the school year ends. Most CCSD schools wrapped up their year on June 4. The following Monday, bus driver in-service training sessions began as part of the preparations for the new school year that starts in August.



###