

Shift in bus routes leave some disabled riders waiting

By Deborah De Vos



The Utah Transit Authority's bus route redesign commenced on Aug. 25 with goals to streamline previous routes and increase operating efficiency for riders looking for faster bus services to suburban areas. But for many disabled residents in the Salt Lake Valley the redesigned routes are increasing travel times, causing delays and in some cases leaving them stranded.

Sandy City resident Ray Wright said that when he moved to Utah he was meticulous in finding the right home that would provide all of the services he and his wife needed. With both being legally blind the home he chooses would need to have access to paratransit services curbside.

"When I came out to tour the home I ultimately purchased, I took paratransit. At the time the paratransit line offered and gave me curbside service, but once the redesigned plan took effect the curbside service stopped," Wright said. "Of course

the redesign happened four months after I bought my home and I was about a month too late getting in my application to be considered to keep an existing service -- I no longer have paratransit service available curbside."

Now if Wright wants to catch a paratransit bus, he'll have to meet it at the newly designed route stop.

"It's the kind of service I rely upon and the main reason I choose to buy my home where I did...I spent months researching what areas would have those kinds of services available," Wright said. "I have to walk about 650 feet and down to the end of another street...that's not so easy to do when you're blind."

Even with the help of a guide dog, Wright said the trek is a challenge with "snow, ice, garbage cans and mail boxes often on the path and challenging to maneuver around," he said. "I was told by a UTA representative who was trying to be helpful that it was just three driveways and down to the end of the next street -- to anyone disabled it's at least a football field away in the best conditions."

UTA Special Service General Manager, Cherryl Beveridge said when fixed route changes were being determined UTA reached out to the communities, city officials and riders to get input on the issue.

"It took time for us to compile all of the data and many open houses around the valley were held to address concerns and take public input," Beveridge said. "There were areas where routes were put back into the community because of those meetings." (continue page 3.)

Digital transition could leave televisions without a signal

By Deborah De Vos

A new law passed in 2004 dictates that television stations nationwide will have to switch from old methods of transmitting TV signals (analog) to new digital television on Feb. 17, 2009.

Touting movie-quality pictures and sound, the new type of broadcasting technology is also supposed to yield more channels.

But when broadcasters shut off their analog signal some televisions could be reduced to oversized cathode-ray paperweights.

In July the Senate Commerce Committee held a hearing to examine the government-mandated transition and whether enough is being done to get the word out to Americans.

In a letter sent to the SCC, July 24, by the National Association of Broadcaster's President and CEO, David K. Rehr said that "while the consumer benefits of DTV are undeniable...millions of broadcast-only households risk losing reception because they must take action to complete the mandatory upgrade," he wrote. (continue pg 3.)

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Above: Guest enjoy pizza, pop and cookies.
Below: The white elephant game in full swing as residents unwrap presents.



Community pulls together for Christmas party

By Deborah De Vos

The Disability Outreach Committee celebrated the yuletide season with board members, contributors and disabled guest by hosting a Christmas party on Dec. 18.

DOC Chairman Mark Miller said the goal was to bring a gleam to the holidays. "We wanted to try and make Christmas a little more fun this year," he said, adding that it also served to thank and honor those who supported DOC in 2007. "It's a time of year that can be lonely for many so the board wanted to do something uplifting."

Participants enjoyed pizza donated by 5 Buck Pizza at 8537 W. 2700 S., cookies donated by DeVo Hot Tubs, LLC in Sandy City and an assortment of candy from the Family Dollar at 7260 W. 3500 S.

"Their generous donations were appreciated by all who attended," Miller said. "Sometimes it takes a village to remind others that they are part of a community who cares about them -- we can't thank them enough."

The real fun began when Miller initiated the White Elephant gift exchange. Managers from the Smith's Food

Store at 8055 W. 3500 S., provided the "ringer" gift, that had everyone playing hot potato with what they thought was just an enema kit.

"In the end they found out it also had a \$20 Hollywood gift certificate tucked inside," Miller said. "Although it was the lava lamp that turned out to be the prized gift."

Miller also said the Christmas event will be an annual staple of DOC. "It's meant to be a place where no matter what the disability of our guest, they will have a great time -- that sounds a lot like Christmas," he said.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Disability Outreach Committee will be hosting a Super Bowl Party on February 03, 2007.

Everyone is welcomed to join in the fun!

Some snacks and drinks will be provided and guest are encouraged to bring something small to share with the group.

The event will take place at the Pleasant Green Villa clubhouse from 3:30 p.m. until the game ends.

Come be apart of the action and root for your favorite team!

The event is free!

Please RSVP at:
mark@doonthemove.org



"This is a way for us to acknowledge that these people were here, that they matter," said Eileen Dwyer, director of the Salt Lake City Homeless Coordinating Council .

Pictured left: Gov. Jon Huntsman, Jr. and Mary-Kay Huntsman brave winter weather to honor the homeless who died in 2007.

Vigil honors homeless who died

By Deborah De Vos

Before the longest night of the year fell on Salt Lake City, a Homeless Person's Memorial and Candlelight Vigil was held to mark the first day of winter and memorialize 49 homeless people who died in 2007.

Advocates for the homeless along with residents from around the valley, homeless individuals, religious leaders and politicians including Gov.

Jon Huntsman Jr. and Salt Lake County Mayor, Peter Corroon, joined together in a candlelight service.

Held outside the Bishop Weigand Center, 235 South Rio Grande St., the event drew about 60 people into the frigid cold and snow to pay tribute to people who many never knew.

"This is a way for us to acknowledge that these people were here, that they matter," said Eileen Dwyer, di-

rector of the Salt Lake City homeless coordinating council, adding that the Fourth Street Clinic (a clinic provides health care and support services to homeless Utahans) reported the count of those who died in 2007.

The vigil was held as part of the nationwide observance of the National Homeless Memorial Day -- an annual event held by homeless advocates on Dec. 21.

DTV continued page 1

“Consumer awareness about the transition lags; with more than 40 percent of Americans surveyed completely unaware the transition is taking place.”

Rehr estimated about 19.6 million households currently rely exclusively on free, over-the-air broadcasting and another 14.6 million households, “which are connected to paid television services like cable or satellite, have additional unconnected sets in a bedroom or

kitchen that could also lose reception,” he wrote.

“Demographics most disproportionately affected by the DTV transition are older Americans, minority populations, the economically disadvantaged and those living in rural areas.”

To help in the transition, Congress has set aside about \$990 million to be used in a collaborative effort with the National Telecommunication &

Information Administration, which the United States government will give out per household two coupons worth \$40 that can be used to purchase two converter boxes.

The DTV converter boxes will be available in 2008 and the application process to obtain coupons began on Jan. 1. More information is available at www.ntia.doc.gov.



(UTA continued)

Beveridge also said that UTA does exceed the ADA requirement for paratransit lines.

Under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, UTA would have to provide curbside service to disabled riders who are unable to ride the fixed route buses.

But the law also limits UTA’s obligation to provide service only to those who begin and end their trips within three-fourths of a mile of a

fixed route and only during times that the fixed routes operate in.

Coupled with rising gas prices and operating costs, Beveridge said the average cost for a fixed rider is \$3.08 per person per trip but for paratransit riders it’s \$32 per person per trip.

“With so many different kinds of needs, UTA is doing what we can to fill them,” Beveridge said. “But to solve these kinds of issues it’s going to take a community,

which is why we are going to host meetings and work with officials from places like VOC-Rehab [vocational rehabilitation] to find a solution.”

Beveridge said the meetings would be held administrative and not held in a public forum.

“As soon as we have information or changes that result from those meetings, we will be getting it out to the public,” she said.



“These problems can only be solved as a community—working together,” said UTA Special Service General Manager, Cherryl Beveridge.

Home for Christmas gift in hand

By Deborah De Vos

Somewhere between the Christmas tree, lights and wrapping paper a wish was made by the Averett family to bring their patriarch, Gary, home for the holidays.

For the past six months Gary has been staying at the Wasatch Valley Rehabilitation center, 2200 East 3300 South His family



DOC CHAIRMAN MARK MILLER PRESENTS GARY AVERETT WITH A GIFT CARD FOR CHRISTMAS.

lives in West Valley so it seems like an easy wish to fill.

But with neuropathy in one leg and his other leg amputated at the knee due to complications with diabetes, the trek home is a little more challenging.

“I have to be transported with special van transportation service that can accommodate me in my condition,” Gary said, adding that the cost of the trip is costly. “I realize that my family has sacrificed a lot to make it possible for me to come home. This is going to be a treat.”

The cost of the van service was about \$150 dollars, which had the family working together to scrape

together the extra money that Gary said meant a few less presents under the tree for his three grandchildren.

Gary also said that everything in his life has come full circle. “I drove a van service that catered to the disabled and aging populations for 14 years,” he said. “Now here I need the same service.”

And when Gary was 18 years-old he said he joined the Navy shortly after his high school graduation, which took him away from home for about six months.

(continued page 4.)

(Christmas gift continued.)

"I remember when I got to go home and how special it was for me. It made me really appreciate family," he said. "This is another full-circle for me, because going home now for Christmas is much like it was then and I just appreciate everything my family has done to make it possible -- I love them."

Chairman of the Board for the Disability Outreach Committee, Mark Miller, heard about Gary's story and went to work.

"It was a little short notice but it was for a good cause," Miller said. "The Averett family could not imagine Christmas without Gary and we wanted to do whatever we could to make it a memorable one."

Miller pulled out his "calling tree and told anyone who'd listen Gary's story," he said. The result was a \$150 dollar gift card to a local department store. The card and warm wishes were presented to Gary on Dec. 23 at the rehabilitation center.

"I promise it will be put to good use," Gary said. "This is a nice gift. I won't have to go home empty handed, I'm able to contribute. So, I want to thank all of those who made it possible."

Staying warm in Salt Lake County

By Deborah De Vos

The combination of colder weather and increased natural gas prices has raised bills for most Salt Lake County residents. To help with some of those winter heating bills, programs have been established.

The Home Energy Assistance Target Program (HEAT) is a federally funded program that pays the utility bills of qualified income-eligible individuals and runs through March or until funds are exhausted. Applications are available from any Department of Human Services, designated energy office or phone 521-6107.

Another heating program funded by voluntary contributions from local residents, Questar employees and stockholders—REACH, pays the utility bills of qualified income-eligible individuals. Some basic qualifications are applicants must be at least 65 years old and or handicapped or disabled. The program is year round as funding permits and residents have to apply through Utah's HEAT program first. Applications are available at local Red Cross offices or call 323-7000.

The Weatherization Utah program makes homes of qualified income-eligible individuals more energy efficient. The federally funded program is administered by the Utah Department of Community & Economic Development. Assistance and qualification can be made by contacting the HEAT office.

Catholic Community Services also provides a heat assistance program to pay income-eligible individuals utility bills. Some of the basic requirements are the utilities must be on and the individual must have applied for the HEAT program first during their (HEAT) November to March season. The CCS heat program runs from January through September or until funds are exhausted. To schedule an appointment, call 363-7710.

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New interactive tools help ease confusion about SCHIP

Negotiations over the last few months have resulted in a lot of confusion over an already complex issue—the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

In an effort to provide more clarity, the Children's Defense Fund recently unveiled two new interactive tools on its website that explains the current status of SCHIP and to provide a context for recent legislative actions and their projected implications for children's coverage.

The interactive tools include an SCHIP reauthorization timeline and a map of states projected to experience SCHIP shortfalls unless Congress increases funding.

CDF plans to update the tools as the negotiations proceed and is encouraging everyone to use them in understanding the issue in the fight to ensure that all children receive the health coverage they need to survive and thrive.

To learn more go to
www.childrensdefense.org.



Call for Nominations

Every year, the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center honors those who make service-learning happen by recognizing the Service-Learning Class, Student and Community Partner of the Year.

To nominate a class, a student, a community partner and/or yourself, complete a nomination form and mail to Katie Olson, Service-Learning Manager, Bennion Center, and 200 Central Campus Dr Room 101, Salt Lake City, UT 84112-9100 or e-mail to kolson@sa.utah.edu.

Award recipients will be determined by members of the Service-Learning Advisory Board that consists of faculty, student and community partner representatives. Nominations must be received by March 3, 2008.

The Service-Learning Student of the Year will be announced at the Service-Learning Luncheon on Tuesday, March 25, 2008.

To obtain an application contact Katie Olsen 585-9100.

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