

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

April 30, 2021



Director of Bus Transportation **Christy Baily**, left, was recognized with a 40-year service award shortly before her retirement. The plaque was presented by **Brian Funk**, Deputy Chief of Operations-Bus.

“The love just grew and grew”: Director of Bus Transportation Christy Baily retires after 40 years

Christy Baily thought she'd make a career designing clothes. When her father, a 20-year bus operator, suggested finding a job with a pension and insurance, she applied to work in the Transit Information Center.

At the time, she thought of her job in the TIC as a “short stopover” on her path to something different. But over the next four decades, she assumed more and more responsibility, filling multiple management roles in Street Operations and serving 11 years as the Director of Bus Transportation. Baily will retire from that role next week.

“When I started, management was the last thing on mind. I thought I'd get in, get some pension, make my dad happy and get out,” she said. “But it got in my blood right away. Working with operators, customers and the community, making a difference...the love just grew and grew.”

After working in the TIC, Baily worked as an order filler/dispatcher for Project Mobility, a paratransit service. After that, she spent 11 years as a street supervisor, becoming a strong advocate for drivers and helping create the Peer Support program, which she considers a signature accomplishment. “I saw what the job did to my father, how it became so stressful at the end, so my main goal was to make the job better for drivers,” Baily said.

Throughout, Baily worked nights and didn't hesitate to respond to volatile situations, often arriving before police and taking control of the situation. “Maybe I was a little too brave but that was just my style,” she said. “I talked my way into things and out of things pretty well.”

Baily's enthusiasm led to roles as an assistant manager and manager in Street Operations, and as an assistant director of field operations. After six months as the acting director of Bus Transportation, she was asked to apply and earned the promotion. As director, she helped develop new training and safety programs, created a stronger support system for operators who were assaulted and became more involved in emergency management.

In retirement, she plans to spend more time advocating for the protection of wolves and the environment, traveling, reading, and visiting family.

It's time to make mental health a top priority

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Probably all of us have experiences with the challenges of mental illness and mental health in our relationships with our family, friends, colleagues, and communities.



Every day at Metro Transit, we see the outcomes of untreated mental illness displayed on our trains and buses and at our bus stops, platforms, and stations. Many people who use transit for shelter suffer from untreated severe mental illness, often with co-occurring substance addiction.

Untreated mental illness is a tragedy. It is the outcome of a failed safety net. It is an unmet social service need. It is an unmet healthcare need. Transit is not a therapeutic setting. Metro Transit cannot provide for even the basic needs of people who are unsheltered and suffering from mental illness, let alone provide the social service and health care they require and deserve.

Access to mental health treatment is a matter of dignity, respect, and obligation. Metro Transit continues its efforts to connect people to services, and we seek partnerships with the state and local governments who carry the responsibility of providing social and therapeutic services. I will be straightforward in saying that this has been an uphill climb.

But this is only one way we confront mental health needs in our work and lives. Mental illness and situational mental health needs are often more nuanced and hard to recognize. Much progress has been made in reducing the stigma of mental illness, but still, mental health struggles are often hidden and play out quietly in our lives and in the lives of our friends, loved ones, and colleagues.

In a year that has been like no other, it is important that we all think about our mental health. We have experienced isolation, adapted to sudden changes to our lifestyles and routines at home and

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work, witnessed repeated tragedies stemming from inequity and racism, and experienced the fear and loss resulting from the pandemic.

We can be proud of our ability to overcome so many challenges, and we can have hope that more will be done to address all the challenges that remain. But we also need to be aware of how these events and this time has impacted our personal mental health. We may continue to feel the enormous pressure and lingering anxieties of all that has been required from us. We may be grieving. We may just be tired.

Mental Health Awareness Month is an opportunity to be self-aware and to acknowledge all that we have been through and all that lies ahead. It is a time to reflect not only on how we can best support the needs of others, but also care for our own needs.

I so much appreciate all you've done for Metro Transit, but I also recognize the personal challenges that so many of you need to manage and work through. So, please take time to reflect on what you need to be physically and emotionally healthy and take care of yourself with the help of others.

"It's OK to not be OK": Mental health issues prevalent, treatable

Nearly one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness, and one in 20 live with a mental health condition like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or persistent anxiety. Unfortunately, many people who could benefit from treatment do not seek help because they are worried about stigma, prejudice, or discrimination. To raise awareness and encourage people to seek resources, people are invited to talk openly about mental health during Mental Health Awareness Month, which is recognized annually in May.

Among those who are sharing their stories is **Leah Palmer**, a policy analyst with the Metro Transit Police Department who was diagnosed with bipolar 2 in 2015.



How did you come to understand that you needed professional help and where did you begin?

I started feeling depressed during college. I went to my doctor who prescribed Paxil, but I stopped taking the anti-depressant when I became

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"High five to the cleaners!"

All light rail cleaners recently received a commendation for their commitment to creating a clean on-board environment.

I am currently in Green Line train car 254A, about 6 p.m., eastbound from Fairview Avenue Station. This car is the CLEANEST I've ever experienced! Way to go! High five to the cleaners!

Rita T.

pregnant. Over the next decade, despite several tries with various medications, my depression would come and go, but each time it got a little more severe. In 2012, I was also diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder. In 2015, I was diagnosed with bipolar 2, which is a less severe form of manic depression than we typically think of. Instead of periods of depression followed by periods of mania (feeling invincible and abnormally "high"), I experience two to three months of depression followed by a month or so of feeling "normal," the way I imagine other people must feel, especially having the ability to see positives.

What have you done to effectively manage your disorder?

I've explored a lot of treatment options over the last two decades, including medication and therapy. I am grateful for the medication – I know that this is the best way for me to manage my mental health. Coupled with therapy, I feel more in control over my feelings and moods. I also use essential oils, drink tea, practice yoga and use massage. To soothe and occupy my mind, I do things like journaling and reading. And I focus on getting good sleep by having a nighttime routine and minimizing screen time before bed.

What advice do you have for others who think they could benefit from mental health resources?

There is less stigma associated with mental health issues than we think there is, so people should know they are supported and get help if they think it is needed. If you need to see a doctor and they suggest medication, it can be scary but keep trying and hopefully you find what works for you. It's OK not to be OK, to have your down days or to be in a funk – just don't unpack and live in that funky land.

Help bring the COVID-19 pandemic to an end by getting vaccinated

COVID-19 vaccine appointments are becoming more widely available in Minnesota, and public health officials are reminding those who are eligible to make an appointment as soon as possible. Around 2.5 million residents 16 and older have received at least one dose, and nearly 2 million have been fully vaccinated. At the current pace, 80% of eligible adults will be fully vaccinated by the end of July.

Metro Transit employees who have been vaccinated or who are choosing not to do so at this time are encouraged to email their status or decision to vaccines@metrotransit.org. This information will only be used to determine what kind of vaccination support may be needed in future.



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