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52 Vanpools, Full-Time IT Duties, Association President, and Battling Cancer . . .

. . . He gets by with a little help from his friends.

When Kevin Grillo transferred from the VA Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi to their sprawling, 96 acre Houston, Texas hospital in the mid-1980s, he never imagined he would end up helping coordinate an employee transit benefits program serving over one-third of the facility's 3,500 person workforce. Yet today, Mr. Grillo is doing exactly that and much more. As Chief of Client Managers - Customer Service, Grillo is responsible for desktop support and customer services at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, Houston. As President of the VA Employees' Association he was asked by the Houston facility's Human Resources Department to help spearhead a pre-tax transit benefits program, then in its infancy.

With the added momentum of Commuter Choice, created by an Executive Order mandating a transportation fringe benefit program for qualified Federal employees, Grillo has his hands full. "We had two vanpools in service that included employees from the [nearby] Texas Medical Center," states Grillo, "and the employees all paid for the service themselves." The first official meeting to roll out the (then) new \$65.00 per month transportation benefit was scheduled



to be held on September 11, 2001. Grillo had invited VPSI's Houston Manager, Alice Lee-Cook, to participate in the meeting and explain how the benefit could be enjoyed by using commuter vanpools. Before the meeting started, the infamous 9/11 terrorist attacks activated a total shut down of the VA Medical Center property. Sequestered within the VA facility, Grillo and Ms. Lee-Cook "talked about the program a lot that day," he recalls. "We arranged to move the two existing vanpools over to the transit benefit program and set a goal of having ten vanpools in service by the end of June, 2003."

By that date, 22 vanpools were in service at the medical center; by December they were up to 36 groups. "Now we are running at 52 vans and still growing," Grillo states. He attributes the program's success to a number of factors: including the rising cost of gasoline; the Commuter Choice program which is now a virtually no-cost benefit to the employees (the maximum transit

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MichiVan Presents MDOT With Partnership Award

On May 13th, Larry Swart presented an award on behalf of VPSI, Inc. to Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Director Gloria Jeff. The award, recognizing 25 years of partnership and commitment to the vanpool program, was presented as part of MDOT's 100th Year Celebration.

MDOT partnered with VPSI in 1980 to provide Michigan residents with a means for conserving gasoline by sharing a ride in a van. 25 years later, VPSI continues to deliver MDOT's MichiVan



Program, reducing vehicle miles traveled on Michigan roadways, conserving gasoline and providing stress free, cost effective options for Michigan commuters.

The longstanding hard work and commitment of Passenger Transportation Division employees Jean Ruestman and Kim Johnson continues to bring positive national attention to the MichiVan program.

The MichiVan Commuter Vanpool Program is VPSI's longest running continuous contract with one agency. The



Larry Swart presents partnership award to MDOT's Gloria Jeff
(photo courtesy of the MDOT Photo Lab)

program currently provides 130 vanpools to approximately one thousand commuters each day.

Operation Hope Helps Displaced Migrant Workers Find Jobs

Everyday at 7:00 a.m., ten women leave their homes in Fellsmere, FL to hop aboard a VPSI van that takes them to what used to be the old Palm Bay City Hall. Here, the women work eight hours a day, gutting a structure that was damaged from last summer's hurricanes. This is one group of migrant workers who are transported daily on one of the ten vans supplied to Brevard Job Link by VPSI. The vans are part of the Space Coast Area Transit's "Brevard County Vanpool Program", administered by the VPSI Melbourne Florida Office. Other work groups are transported by vans to work sites where they have also cleaned up the beaches, causeways and many public parks.

This group of women, aged 18 to 55, are more than happy to do construction jobs or any type of work for that matter; they are migrant workers and the hurricanes destroyed many of the crops they



rely on for their livelihood.

Some of these migrant women worked in packing houses or landscaping companies. One worked for a resort until the hurricanes destroyed the businesses where they were employed. But Operation Hope helped these women by connecting them to Brevard Job Link and Spherion Employment Services. Here they found temporary employment through the National Emergency Grant and they are working to clean up the area after three ferocious hurricanes ripped through Brevard County, FL during the 2004 hurricane season.

100th Van Milestone!

VPSI's Miami Office has hit a milestone in its efforts to save commuters time and money. South Florida Vanpools reached 100 vans in the month of April. The 100th van's primary driver, Veronica Vidaurre of U.S. Southern Command, says she and her co-poolers are excited as can be about being the area's 100th van. "This is the best program around for transit, and I recommend it to everyone," said Veronica during her new van delivery. The Miami Office thanks South Florida Commuter Services for their help and fellow VPSI employees for their efforts on this momentous accomplishment.

We are looking forward to reaching the 200 vehicle milestone soon!



New Online Access Screens at www.vpsiinc.com

VPSI is pleased to announce new features and capabilities available to our customers through the new Customer On-Line Access screens located on the VPSI website at www.vpsiinc.com. The website allows our customers to obtain current account information, view and print invoices, make payments on-line, print various forms, and view vehicle maintenance data.

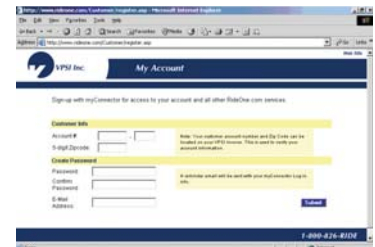
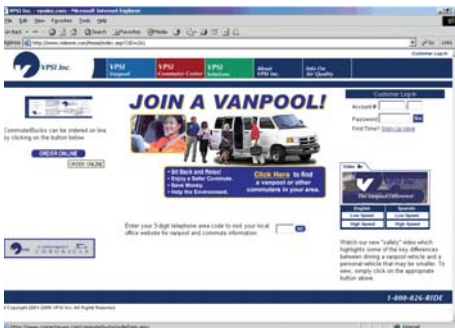
Customers now have access to important information regarding their accounts:

- **Current Statement** - This screen will provide vehicle number(s), monthly fee, last invoice number and date, prior balance, and all activity since the last invoice, including current month's payments, current month's credits and charges, and current balance.
- **Invoices** - VPSI customers will have access to any invoice generated during the last 18 months. They may view or print any invoice.
- **Make On-Line Payments** - Instead of sending checks every month, you may now go on-line to pay your invoice.
- **Available Forms** - Avoid waiting days for regularly requested forms to be sent to you via the mail. Customers can now go on-line to print the following forms:

Account Balance Transfer
 Maintenance Receipt Processing
 Metrocheck Report Worksheet
 ConnectCard Application/Change Request
 Fuel Reimbursement Request

To access this information on-line, follow these four easy steps:

1. Login to www.vpsiinc.com
2. *Customer Login*, select "First Time? Sign-Up Here"
3. *Customer Info* - enter your customer account number and 5-digit zip code.
4. *Create Password* - enter and confirm your password and click "submit".
5. Immediate screen confirmation of account set-up. You will also receive an e-mail containing your account details for your records.



Kevin Grillo (continued from Page 1)

benefit has grown to \$105/month); and "premier [reserved]" parking spaces for vanpools and carpools of three or more occupants.

The VA Medical Center allows Grillo to commit up to two hours per week to the growing vanpool program. "Every Tuesday from 2:30 - 4:30 PM is when I do all of my vanpool business," Grillo notes. His IM background, command of spreadsheets, organizational skills and boundless enthusiasm all contribute to the mission control-like atmosphere his office takes on during this time. Moving tirelessly from phone inquiries, such as "Call Andrew at extension 7177, he's definitely got room on his van," to updating employee badges, Grillo

sings the praises of the program. "The facility has been able to open up valet parking spaces for our patients since we got up to 46 vans. Patients can pull up to the front door and we park their cars for them. That's a customer service benefit for our veterans and patients that we couldn't offer if we did not have the vans."

Grillo gives much of the credit for the program's success to VPSI's Alice Lee-Cook and public sector partners, Houston Metro and the Houston-Galveston Area Council, with whom they also work. "If she wasn't here I'd go crazy," he claims. Ms. Lee-Cook routinely comes over to the VA Medical Center to "help us keep the books in order." She

also answers people's questions when Grillo is not available or tied up with another inquiry.

When asked for a photograph to accompany this story, Grillo takes pause from his busy schedule. "I'll need to wear a baseball cap. I have no hair right now because I'm going through chemotherapy." Deflecting further questioning about his battle with cancer, Grillo is right back to promoting the transit benefits program. "It's part of the new employee orientation and it's on our web pages [intranet] including the phone numbers of all the primary drivers." After all, there is no time to waste for a man who both figuratively, and more recently literally, wears many hats.



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Transportation News That Moves You

Traffic Jams are Getting Worse!

As if rising gasoline prices weren't bad enough, the recently released annual Urban Mobility Report says we are spending more time than ever before stuck in traffic during rush hours. The Texas Transportation Institute's study of 85 urban areas across the nation found rush hour drivers spent an average of 47 hours stuck in traffic jams in 2003, or three times as much time as commuters spent in 1982. The study reports 3.7 billion hours of travel delays and 2.3 billion gallons of fuel wasted overall in 2003. Not surprisingly, major urban markets like Los Angeles; San Francisco; Washington, DC; Atlanta and Houston topped the list in terms of the number of hours a typical

motorist was stuck in rush hour traffic in 2003.

Perhaps more surprising was time and fuel wasting traffic jams were no longer the exclusive domain of the biggest cities. There are now 51 cities where motorists are stuck in traffic for at least 20 hours of gridlock a year including relative newcomers Virginia Beach, VA; New Haven, CT; and Raleigh-Durham, NC. "That's where the growth is," observes Mr. Tim Lomax, co-author of the Urban Mobility Report. "The medium cities are about 10 to 15 years behind the big cities."

Windshield Care for Your Vehicle

If you notice chips your VPSI vehicle's windshield, it is important to have them repaired as soon as

possible. In most cases, this can prevent costly windshield replacements. Contact your Local VPSI Customer Service Representative to arrange an on-site repair.

Tire Inspection

VPSI replaces vehicle tires on an as needed basis. If, during your pre-ride inspection and inflation check, you notice anything questionable with the tires, please have them inspected at the nearest national account tire center (for example Firestone or Goodyear). Be sure to follow regular repair authorization procedures for tire replacement.