

First Female WRTA Bus Driver Retires After 26 Years

WORCESTER, MA. Tuesday, November 1st, 2005 — Ms. Diane M. Russo retired today from The Worcester Regional Transit Authority with the distinct honor of having been the first female bus driver in the history of the WRTA.

At a gathering in the WRTA driver's lounge Ms. Russo was presented with a plaque dedicating the soon-to-be redesigned drivers lounge in her honor.

"When she was hired in 1978 Ms. Russo might have crashed through gender barriers, but I understand she was always an outstanding driver and RTA employee, said Ms. Mary MacInnes, Administrator for the WRTA.

The humble and soft spoken Russo said she wasn't out to be trailblazer "I needed the money a man was paid so that I could raise my three children. In those days I made \$3.35 as a stitcher for an awning company. I needed the pay and the health insurance for my family," said Russo.

Her family, now grown and with family of their own, were in attendance along with Ms. Russo's mother, Ms. Janet Collette at the gathering.

Ms. Russo is actually looking forward to taking some road trips in her retirement. "You know, when you drive everyday you don't really feel like driving when your off duty. I really would like to see what some other parts of the country are like, and it will be nice to say 'hey let's go somewhere'."

During her twenty-six years with the WRTA Ms. Russo was also very active in the ATU (Amalgamated Transit Union) and served as the Vice President of the union for nine years. She was also a member of the safety committee, used her knowledge to fill in as a spare dispatcher and sometimes even answered the telephone.

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority is located at 287 Grove Street Worcester with a customer service office located in Mechanics Hall at 317 Main Street Worcester, MA. They can be reached at 508-791-WRTA (9782).