



The Wheel

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION NEWS

JAN/FEB/MARCH 2022 - VOL. 51, NO. 1

The Wheel is published quarterly and mailed or emailed to riders, agencies, legislators and other interested parties.

Editor: Kaylie Hawkins
Phone: 573-443-4516 or 888-875-6287
Email: khawkins@oatstransit.org

OATS, Inc. (dba OATS Transit) is a private, not-for-profit transportation provider serving 87 Missouri counties. Transportation is available to the general public in rural areas. In urban areas (Columbia, St. Louis, St. Joseph, Springfield, and Kansas City) service is limited to contract service and not available to the general public. Contact your local OATS Transit office for service available to you or to enter into an agreement to pay for services.

OATS Transit operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. We are an equal opportunity employer M/F/H/V.

Relay Missouri is available to individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and/or speech impaired. Use the Relay Missouri service by calling 711 to talk with an OATS Transit representative or to schedule your trip.

OATS Transit Board of Directors

President: Krissy Sinor

Vice President: Scott Kosky

Secretary/Treasurer: Darleen Rapp

Past President: Mel Sundermeyer

Members: Angie Crowder, Edna Foster, John Griesheimer, Jeff Leeman, Patricia Mefford, Essence Montgomery, Tammy Nadler, Julie Rodgers, Rex Scott, Stacey Steffens and Andrew Warlen.

Board Meetings are held six times a year and are open to the public.

Bus schedules and fare information can be found at:

www.oatstransit.org/schedules

Phone: 888-875-6287

Follow us on social media:

@oatstransit



Cover photo: Riders Darren and Louise Shelton taken by Ken Coleson, East Region Service Director.

The Year in Review

A LOOK BACK AT 2021



"...the solutions to the problems of transportation for the elderly may be the sine qua non for ameliorating many of the other problems faced by older people."

- Report at the first White House Conference on Aging in 1971

It all began when a small group of Missourians returned from the White House Conference on Aging with an idea to rise to the challenge of ameliorating - or making better - the situation faced by many seniors, particularly those in rural areas: isolation, no access to resources and dependency on family and friends. As noted in the report quoted above, transportation is *sine qua non*, which means essential.

Transportation remains the essential key for everyone to remain mobile and independent. Each year, we take thousands of Missourians to work, medical facilities, dialysis clinics, sheltered workshops, pharmacies, senior centers, grocery stores and businesses.

Last year - 2021 - was no exception. Even though we were operating in a historic pandemic, we still were able to safely provide 824,591 one-way trips with a fleet of 770 vehicles that traveled 10,308,847 miles.

We enter our 51st year with confidence and pride that OATS Transit will continue to overcome any and all obstacles and to continue to fulfill our mission of *"enhancing quality of life by providing safe, caring and reliable transportation services."*

Krissy Sinor
Board President

Dorothy J. Yeager
Executive Director

Maria's Story

DRESSING UP FOR DIALYSIS



Kimberly Eastin is a Northeast driver who transports dialysis patients. Dialysis is a treatment for kidneys that aren't working normally. It is a life-long treatment that requires a lot of time and sacrifice. Maria rides OATS Transit to get to her life-saving dialysis appointments. Kimberly has driven Maria for the past five months.

On Halloween, Kimberly thought it would be fun to surprise Maria. It's a day to dress up after all! She brought two hats for Maria and her aide to wear. Kimberly said that Maria didn't like the witches hat, but she was happy to wear the yellow one.

Our drivers get to know their riders really well because they spend so much time with them. *"Maria has come a long way since I started picking her up. She has become very special to me,"* Kimberly said. In the beginning, it was hard to get Maria to her appointments. *"When we first started picking her up for dialysis, we weren't sure if we would be able to transport her,"* Kimberly said. Maria didn't like riding on the OATS Transit bus. *"I felt and hoped it could get better,"* Kimberly added.

Maria's first language is Spanish, so it was hard for her and Kimberly to communicate. *"I tried to learn a few, basic words in Spanish, hoping she would understand some of what was going on,"* Kimberly said. Kimberly learned that Maria does best with routines, so she worked with Maria's aide to find a good one to stick to. Things have improved drastically and Maria is now calm on her way to dialysis. *"She waves at me when I pull up. She wants to hold my hand and sings for me in Spanish, especially the song 'Feliz Navidad,'"* Kimberly said.

Kimberly and Maria have formed a special bond. *"Maria has my heart,"* said Kimberly. *"She doesn't have many people in her life, and I'm glad I'm one of them. It's a good feeling to know she trusts me. It makes my day to get a smile and a hug from her."*

Pictured above is Maria and her aide riding with Kimberly Eastin.

EMPLOYEE ANNIVERSARIES

October-December 2021

30 Years

Judy Mendenhall - Mideast Driver

20 Years

Lannis Bell - Home Office

Butch Aulgur - Midwest Driver

15 Years

John Cage - Mideast Driver

Patty Spry - MW Ops Coordinator

Marian Shoemaker - SW Driver

Tammy Godefroid - ME Driver

10 Years

Richard Egan - West Driver

Terry Harter - Northwest Driver

Sergio Lopez - Mid-MO Driver

Rachel Settle - Mideast Driver

James Pfeifer - Mideast Driver

EXECUTIVE TEAM UPDATE



Meet our new Finance Director, Steve Durben! Steve started at the Home Office on November 1st. For the last ten years, Steve was the Chief Financial Officer at Woodhaven, Inc. in Columbia, MO. Woodhaven is an agency serving hundreds of individuals with developmental disabilities through community living, community connections, and technology programs. Steve became interested in OATS Transit because of its mission statement. Everyone he talked to said OATS Transit was a great place to work with great people who care.

BUT THE ANCHOR STILL HOLDS

Darren Shelton, 59, has ridden the OATS Transit bus in Florissant, MO for the last five years. He was diagnosed with hemophilia as a young child. This is a disorder in which blood doesn't clot normally. When blood can't clot properly, excessive bleeding occurs with any injury or damage to the body. This diagnosis caused a lot of hardships for Darren growing up.

In 1962 when Darren was born, doctors had very limited knowledge about hemophilia. He endured several treatments and surgeries. Some of these have included having his spleen removed, a knee replacement, thousands of blood donations, and losing his left leg when he was only 16. Throughout it all, Darren has persevered.

He currently lives with his mom, Louise. Due to Darren's condition, Louise is his main caretaker. They ride the OATS Transit bus together to get to Darren's medical appointments. Specialized vehicles that could transport someone in a wheelchair are too expensive for the Sheltons. Without OATS Transit, they would be stuck at home.

In the St. Louis area, OATS Transit operates contracted service through written special agreements. The Sheltons pay privately to ride with OATS Transit because it's a service they can't give up.

One driver who transports them often is Cleaster Dean. Louise showered Cleaster with compliments. She described Cleaster as joyful and some-

*Pictured below:
Cleaster Dean
(left) and Darren
Shelton (right).*

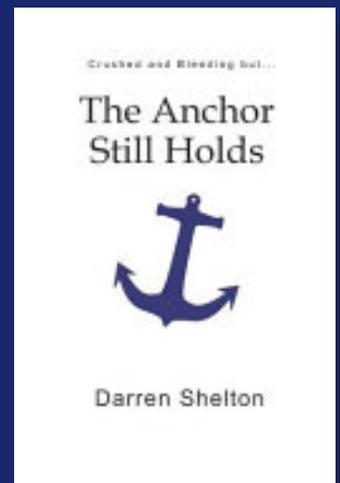


one who genuinely cares for others. *"He has the most beautiful smile,"* Louise said. Cleaster's attitude has made a big impact on Darren and Louise.

Going to medical appointments is a difficult task for the Sheltons. They have endured many hardships and doctors can be pessimistic when it comes to Darren's recovery. Louise said that a simple smile can make all the difference, especially when they're on their way to another appointment.

Cleaster described transporting the Sheltons as an amazing experience. He has been driving them since 2018. *"You couldn't ask for better people to be around and transport,"* Cleaster said. When he first met the Sheltons, they treated him with such respect and were patient, kind, and understanding. Cleaster started to get choked up as he talked about them. *"They're pleasant in every single way, and they have truly touched my heart,"* he said.

Darren wrote a book about his life experience and released it in 2019. He loves to sing, and one of his favorite songs is *"The Anchor Holds."* This song has become his life motto. His book is based off of this song. Despite the trials he has faced, he knows the anchor will hold. You can find Darren's book on Amazon titled, *"Crushed and Bleeding...But The Anchor Still Holds."* It includes a remarkable testimony of his life and his journey of living with hemophilia.



OATS Transit was created with people like Darren in mind.

Our mission statement is to enhance quality of life by providing safe, caring, and reliable transportation services. Cleaster is one of the drivers that lives out this mission statement. It's not just a ride; it's an opportunity to change someone else's life.

OATS Transit is proud to transport Darren and Louise Shelton. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your story and for contributing to *this* story!

"Enhancing quality of life by providing safe, caring, and reliable transportation services."

SAFE DRIVER AWARDS

2021



East

Terri Clayton
Pictured with Pam Knox



Midwest

Jim Williams
*Pictured with Michael Burbank
and Megan Ellert*



Mid-MO

Darwin George
Pictured with Dion Knipp



Midwest

Freddie Fletcher
Pictured with Kenny Vaught



Northeast

Dennis Rupp
Pictured with John Fields



Northwest

Gloria Miller



Southwest

Paulette Waggle



West

Todd York

MISSOURI FOUNDATIONS AND BUSINESSES

Provide Support to OATS Transit

- **American Direct Marketing** - \$10,000 for East Region bus match
- **Carolyn Sherman** - \$300 for East Region bus match
- **Chillicothe State Bank** - \$500 for service in Livingston County
- **Cynthia and Greg Smith** - \$1,000 for service in Clinton County
- **First Christian Church of Troy** - \$715 for service in Troy, MO
- **First State Community Bank** - \$1,500 for service in Lebanon, MO
- **Integrated Transportation Resources** - \$200 for operating support
- **Jason Ash Memorial Foundation** - \$500 for service in Miller County
- **Jefferson Foundation** - \$100,000 for operating support for OATS Transit, JeffCo Express, and JC Transit in Jefferson County
- **Sisters of Charity** - \$12,000 for Johnson County bus match
- **Southern Bus & Mobility** - \$1,000 for operating support

THANK YOU!



Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2021

Facts & Highlights



824,591 trips provided



585 employees statewide



547,490 operating hours



690 In-Kind ads
\$121,983 value



8 region offices and 2 satellite offices



17% of employees are veterans



770 vehicles



10,308,847 miles traveled



258 safe driver awards

Funding & Expenses

Operating Budget: \$25.2 million

Revenue Sources:

- Federal funding **48%**
- Special billings **15%**
- Medicaid **13%**
- Rider fares and contributions **2%**
- Department of Mental Health **6%**
- Area Agencies on Aging **2%**
- State funding **0%**
- Other **14%**

Expenses:

- Driver/dispatcher wages and benefits **55%**
- Direct operating support **7%**
- Gasoline **10%**
- Indirect admin **11%**
- Repairs and maintenance **7%**
- Vehicle insurance **5%**
- Driver expenses **3%**
- Supplies and equipment **2%**

Board of Directors meetings are held six times a year at OATS Transit's home office in Columbia, MO. The Board of Directors provide policy direction, guidance, and fiduciary direction for the organization. The Board includes President Krissy Sinor, Vice-President Scott Kosky, Secretary/Treasurer Darleen Rapp, and 13 other board members.

OATS Transit
 2501 Maguire Blvd., Ste. 101
 Columbia, MO 65201-8252

Nonprofit Org.
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Columbia, MO
 Permit No. 86

OATS TRANSIT SERVICE AREA

Northwest Region Office
 St. Joseph, MO
 (816) 279-3131
 (800) 831-9219

Northeast Region Office
 Macon, MO
 (660) 415-0901
 (800) 654-6287

Home Office
 Columbia, MO
 (573) 443-4516
 (888) 875-6287

Mid-MO Region
 Columbia, MO
 (573) 449-3789
 (800) 269-6287

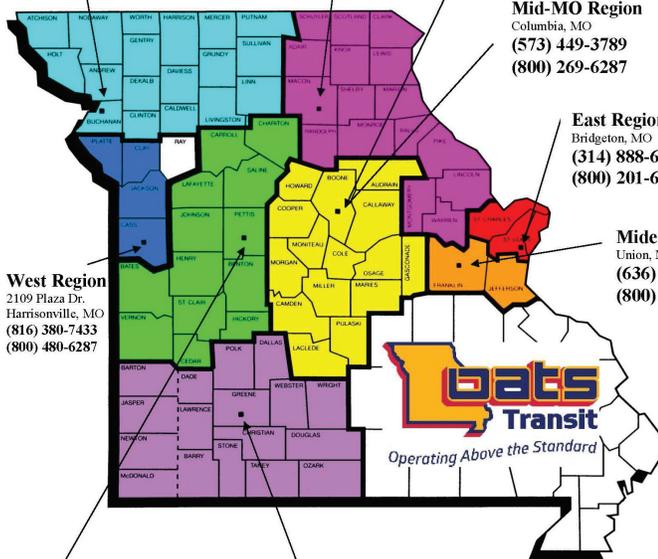
East Region Office
 Bridgeton, MO
 (314) 888-6720
 (800) 201-6287

Mideast Region
 Union, MO
 (636) 583-1125
 (800) 373-1631

West Region
 2109 Plaza Dr.
 Harrisonville, MO
 (816) 380-7433
 (800) 480-6287

Midwest Region Office
 Sedalia, MO
 (660) 827-2611 (800) 276-6287

Southwest Region Office
 Springfield, MO
 (417) 887-9272 (800)770-6287



UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

OATS Transit offices, as well as regular routes, will be closed and not running on these upcoming 2022 holidays:

January 1st, January 17th, and February 21st

Enjoy time with your friends and family!



DEBBIE PILKINGTON
(1959-2021)

This issue of The Wheel is in memory of Debbie Pilkington. Debbie was our Finance Director who passed away suddenly in August 2021. She began working for OATS Transit in 2018. Debbie was a friend to many and will forever be missed by all of us.