



SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS: EVERYDAY HEROES

By Brooke Neal, School Training Solutions

When many of us hear the word “hero”, our mind immediately turns to fictional characters such as Batman, Superman, Spiderman, etc. Most of us do not automatically think of school bus drivers. A hero is defined as “a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.” Similarly, an old proverb states, “A hero is a man who is afraid to run away.” Here are just few examples of Florida school bus drivers who didn’t “run away.”

- Students in Boca Raton credit their school bus driver with saving their lives, as she was able to safely stop her bus on a busy street following a brake failure. According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, she did all of this while still maintaining order on the bus, reassuring the students, “Calm down, we’re going to be fine. Don’t worry.” No one was injured.
- In Hillsborough County, students describe their school bus driver as a hero because she went back twice to clear their bus, which had caught fire on the way to school. All 64 children were safely evacuated. A Hillsborough County Schools spokesperson describes her to WTSP News, “She was amazing. For her to go back on the bus, which she knew was a dangerous situation, is just an amazing situation for her to put herself into, especially since the flames were there.” The bus driver stated that it was just something she had to do.
- Dominique Charles, a bus driver in Palm Beach County, is another driver deemed “heroic” by many parents. He didn’t panic when his bus was struck by a van and veered off the road and came to rest suspended over a canal. He calmly and safely evacuated the 36 students. Charles told the Orlando Sentinel, “I did the best I could.” He remembered something he learned during his training: “Don’t ever let the bus control you. You have to control the bus.”

- St. Johns County driver Billy Buckley received the Superintendent's Award for his quick thinking, which saved the life of a six-year-old at his bus stop. As Buckley approached the child's bus stop, he noticed a car speeding up to pass, instead of slowing to stop at the bus's flashing lights. He quickly laid on the horn and alerted the child to stop. The child's mother reported to The Florida Times-Union, "Without a doubt, he saved my son's life."

These are just a few examples of heroic bus drivers who used their training and quick-thinking to save children's lives. But when you stop and think about it—aren't all school bus drivers heroes? Every day, they drive a 10-ton vehicle full of 50 to 80 of what we consider our most precious treasures. They do this through rain, snow, sleet, or shine into all kinds of traffic, all while maintaining control and order through a tiny rearview mirror. Regardless, each day our children are safely delivered to and from school. How many of us can actually say that we hold the lives of 50+ people in the palm of our hands each and every day?

Most people don't realize a school bus driver's importance. School bus drivers develop a relationship with each and every child, and can make or break a student's day, as they are often the first and last authority figure outside of the home children see each day. Bus drivers are sometimes the first line of defense for dangerous situations at school. Through these formed relationships, they can tell when something is out of



the norm and alert schools to potentially threatening situations, such as fights, bullying, weapons, etc.

I once heard school bus drivers being compared to pilots. Can you imagine if pilots were required to fly a plane while also ensuring that passengers behaved appropriately, wore their seatbelts, and stayed in their seats? However, this is exactly what school bus drivers do each and every day.

All of these drivers credit one thing in helping to keep our children safe: their training. School Training Solutions (STS) offers quality online training that is both affordable and convenient and designed to meet state mandated in-service requirements. Over 16 counties in Florida already take advantage of STS courses. Visit their website and see how STS can help you meet your driver training needs: www.schooltrainingsolutions.com.

School bus drivers are more than just drivers. They are everyday heroes who also play an important role in the education equation. *

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