

New Faces in Vital Reservationist And Volunteer-Coordinator Jobs

Two talented and experienced new staff members are taking over in a couple of ASTA's most important administrative roles.

As volunteer coordinator, **Tonra Hayes** is managing the recruitment, training and assignment of ASTA's essential corps of volunteers, who operate all of the railroad's trains and contribute their labor in many other projects.

As administrative and ticketing assistant, **Erin Hoff** is overseeing the smooth operation of the ticketing and reservation system, and helping as well with other duties in ASTA's front office.

Tonra comes to ASTA from a position as administrative assistant and database manager at Meridian World School, a K-12 charter school in Round Rock.

Her 21-year career in administrative management also includes stints at the Texas Association for School Nutrition, Texas Municipal League, Texas Institute of Continuing Legal Education, Texas Center for the Judiciary, Sulzer Carbomedics and Association of Texas Professional Educators.

A native of Lafayette, La., Tonra holds a degree in behavioral sciences from the Universi-

ty of Louisiana at Lafayette and has one son.

Erin comes to the association from an administrative-assistant position at Region One Behavioral Health Authority, a state agency providing behavioral-health services in the Panhandle of Nebraska.

Erin also has had administrative experience with a roofing company in Nebraska and a construction company in Colorado, and has experience as well in creative positions with a California decorating firm and a gallery in Manhattan Beach, Calif.

Scottsbluff, Neb., is her hometown, and she has attended Santa Monica College in California. Erin is married to ASTA Mechanical Foreman Chris Hoff, and they have one daughter.

Erin and Tonya, welcome aboard!



Tonra Hayes



Erin Hoff

2018 Amplify Austin Fundraiser Will Help Equip A&TC For Positive Train Control

For the fifth year, ASTA will take part in Amplify Austin, the campaign that puts a focus on non-profit giving with an annual one-day campaign raising money for hundreds of Central Texas non-profits.

This year's 24-hour event will be Thursday, March 1. It will be preceded with a well-publicized opportunity to make online pledges to ASTA, and will wrap up with a gala event for donors at Whitestone Brewery in Cedar Park.

In last year's Amplify Austin event, ASTA raised \$13,000 from 65 donors toward completion of the railroad's new concession car (as well as, of course, taking the opportunity to make new donors aware of the association and its activities).

The 2018 fundraiser will have a goal of \$15,000 to help equip one of the A&TC's locomotives with positive train control, the computerized

safety system which the federal government will require by the end of this year.

ASTA will have a donation page on the Amplify Austin website (ilivehereigivehere.org/amplify-austin/). ASTA staff and board, in addition to being asked for 100-percent participation, are being encouraged to create their own personal donation pages to attract contributions from their friends and associates.

ASTA's Amplify Austin Day event will be in the Barrel Room at the Whitestone Brewery, 601 Discovery Blvd. in Cedar Park, from 6 to 9 p.m., and prizes and recognition will be in store for the most generous donors.

Amplify Austin is put on by I Live Here, I Give Here, the group founded in 2007 to boost non-profit support in the seven-county Austin area. Last year the campaign raised more than \$9.8 million for nearly 700 local non-profits.



Plan Now for Wildflower Season!

Central Texas may be looking at a few more Ice Days before springtime makes its approach, but it's right around the corner, and with it, the annual blooming of Texas' famous and beautiful Hill Country wildflowers! Of course, the best way to view the bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, Mexican hat, Indian blanket, phlox, blackeyed Susan etc. is from one of our springtime trains into the heart of wildflower country. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is predicting a good wildflower year peaking from mid-March to the end of April, so make plans for a trip on the Hill Country Flyer, Bertram Flyer or one of our specialty trains when the flowers are in bloom. You can check schedules and make reservations on our website, www.austinsteamtrain.org, or by calling our office at 512-477-8468.

Thanks to our generous friends!

(Donations from July through December 2017. If we have left anyone off, please accept our apologies and contact us at director@austinsteamtrain.org so we can make sure we recognize you in our next edition.)

Our Faithful Member-Donors!

\$2,500 to \$7,499:

David and Laura Gracy
McGinnis, Lochridge and Kilgore
David and Eileen Shannon

\$1,000 to \$2,499:

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Janis and Joe Pinnelli
Natalie Waggoner

\$500 to \$999:

Dennis and Jane Kearns
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*(in honor of Clint and Mavis
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(in honor of Brian Smith)
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Memorial Donation:

(In memory of Richard Daniel Preston:)
Texas Water Development Board

In-Kind Donations:

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Jeff and Sally Schweitzer

Yard security gate:

Paul Gooch, Gate Specialties

Contributors to Steam Engine 786:

\$1,000 to \$2,499:

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Craig and Sandra Smith
(in honor of Brian Smith)

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Robyn Christensen
Linda and Dick Juba
(in honor of David Gracy)
John F. Hudspeth

John K. Meadows
Karl Sonkin

\$20 to \$49:

Camden Hallmark
Paul Lewis

Donation for Our New Concession Car:

Vicki Baughman

A Generous Gift of an Up-to-Date Gate

Maybe it was because Joe Pinnelli, a member of ASTA's board of directors and the driving force behind the association's new concession car project, got tired of hauling a heavy manual gate back and forth every time he entered or left the Cedar Park Yard. But whatever it was, Joe persuaded Mr. Paul Gooch of Gate Specialties, an Austin gate and fence contractor, to provide a state-of-the-art motor-driven

gate for the yard's principal road entrance.

The new, chain-driven gate (a \$6,000 value) is accessed by punching an entrance code into a keypad on either side of the gate. The entrance, near the A&TC yard office, is frequently used by railroad staff, crews and contractors.

Thanks to Mr. Gooch, and to Joe, for their generosity to ASTA!



Busiest North Pole Flyer Season Yet Festively Wraps Up 2017's Trains

The Austin & Texas Central once again in 2017 celebrated a festive end to its operating year with a busy schedule of *North Pole Flyers* that entertained a record 10,500 passengers.

For the first time, the schedule featured four trains a day over the 23-mile route between Cedar Park and Bertram, every Saturday and Sunday between Thanksgiving weekend and Christmas (a total of 32 trains).

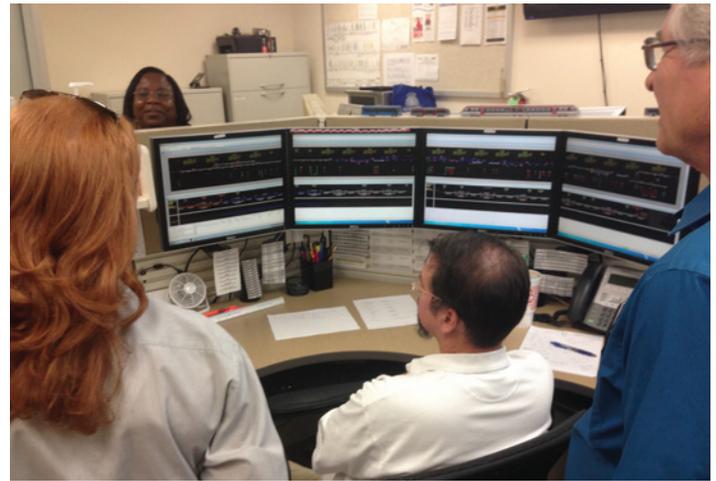
As usual, the brightly decorated, holiday-themed trains included seasonal refreshments such as hot chocolate and cookies, singers, visits from Santa Claus and Ms. Claus, gifts



(wooden train whistles) for the children and storytellers reading the "North Pole Flyer" story from ASTA's own storybook, freshly revised for this year's event.

And as usual, the busy holiday schedule was made possible by extraordinary efforts by ASTA's volunteers and staff, who crewed and decorated the trains—and provided administrative support to make sure that everything went off smoothly.

This year's *North Pole Flyer* schedule will have its first run on Nov. 17, and tickets (many of the trains sell out early!) will be on sale starting Feb. 5.



ASTA volunteers Linda McDonough and John Phalen look on as Capital Metro Dispatcher Bryan Hammond monitors the real-time display of train operations. Metro Program Manager Muriel Friday, behind the display, led the tour. (Randy Leo photo.)

ASTA Crews Visit the Nerve Center Of Capital Metro Railroad's Operations

As is the case with most railroads, the movement of freight and passenger trains over Capital Metro's railroad is under the vigilant eye of a train dispatcher, who day and night directs their comings and goings and makes sure that everything proceeds as safely and efficiently as possible.

Metro first established its dispatching system in 2007 to prepare for the beginning of its busy commuter service, and since then the operating crews of ASTA's excursion trains have become familiar with dealing with the dispatcher as they do the work of getting their trains over the road.

Until one Sunday afternoon last September, the Capital Metro dispatchers had always been a familiar but unseen presence, communicating with the crews by radio from Metro's railroad operating headquarters in North Austin.

On Sept. 17 a dozen or so ASTA volunteers—not only conductors, engineers and brakemen but onboard-service crew as well—were treated to a tour of the dispatching office, to see up close the operation known up to now only as a disembodied voice on the radio.

The office is not large, but is

packed with three desks from which dispatchers can work, each with its own array of computer displays that show every siding, switch, signal and operating train or work gang over the whole 106-mile operating stretch of the railroad. And across one wall are spread television monitors broadcasting from security cameras up and down the Central Subdivision, where Metro's commuter trains run.

The ASTA tour was organized and led by Metro Transportation Program Manager Muriel Friday, and on duty at the time and very helpful in explaining the equipment and operation was Bryan Hammond, one of five Metro dispatchers who man the desk every day, 'round the clock.

In the course of an operating day for ASTA's excursion crews, contact with the dispatcher is constant: receiving initial paperwork at the start of a shift, getting verbal authority to enter the signal-governed Central Sub, and obtaining (and often changing) verbally issued paper track warrants which govern movement on the West Sub.

For tour participants, it was a welcome opportunity to put a place and a face with the familiar radio voices.

Come Railroading With Us!

ASTA is proud of its long tradition of operating its railroad with a dedicated force of hard-working volunteers!

Join us for the fun and for the satisfaction of a worthwhile job well-done!

If you love railroading, love history, or just love helping people have a good time, give us a call. We have a place for you!

It's simple....call our volunteer coordinator, Tonra Hayes, at 512-477-8468 ext. 1, e-mail volunteers@austinsteamtrain.org or come by the ASTA office, 401 E. Whitestone, Suite C-100, Cedar Park.

History Corner

“What Happens if I Don’t Have a Ticket?” Early State Law Was Alarming Specific.

Every A&TC conductor, trainman and crew chief who engages in the traditional punching of our passengers’ tickets has heard many times the (natural, we suppose) question, “What happens if I don’t have a ticket?”

A lost or missing ticket on one of our excursion trains would be an excusable situation with consequences mild at best, but in the early years of the last century, with thousands of passengers coursing through the trains that were that era’s primary form of daily transportation, state law dealt with the situation firmly and specifically.

A Texas statute enacted in 1907 gives the railroad the right to eject from the train anyone “who refuses upon demand to produce a proper ticket or other transportation or satisfactory evidence of his right to ride.” In addition, the conductor was empowered to throw off “any drunk or disorderly person



whose conduct is such as is calculated to operate as a serious annoyance to other passengers, or a passenger who is guilty of gross misconduct, either by insulting or assaulting other passengers or train employees, who use vile or profane language in the car or who threatens to assault any passenger of train employees, whether he has paid his

fare or not.” (All in the conductor’s judgment, of course.)

Further, the statute empowers the conductor to put the offender off the train “at any point along the line, whether at a depot or elsewhere,” unless he or she “by reason of age, sex, infirmity or other condition” is unable to reach “a dwelling house or town.” (Unclear on whether the train had to stop first.)

If distance, weather or darkness rendered it “unsafe, frightful or dangerous” to find a nearby house or town, the conductor had to hold on to the offender until a station could be reached.

Texas’ law seems to have been common for state statutes of the

time, though some (Illinois and South Dakota, among others) invested the conductors with “the powers of the sheriff” in arresting wrongdoers on his train and delivering them to the authorities.

Other state statutes (Michigan and Wisconsin, for example) cautioned the conductor to be “careful to use no more violence than is necessary” in making the prescribed ejections from the train.

And others (including New Mexico and Minnesota), in addition to proscribing passenger drunkenness, unpleasantness and violence, allowed the conductor to eject gamblers, as well.

A Special Thanks to Our Friends and Supporters,
the City of Cedar Park and Cedar Park Tourism Services!



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