

ON THE BI-LEVEL

Metra®

Metra's Monthly Commuter Newsletter

July 2015



Winners of Metra's Safety Poster and Essay contest pose with members of the Metra Board of Directors and Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno.

Children win by 'unplugging' for safety

Contest aims to boost children's safety around trains and tracks

Winners of the 2015 edition of Metra's Safety Poster and Essay Contest were honored at the June meeting of the Metra Board of Directors.

Sixteen first-place winners from across the Metra service area were introduced to the Board and presented with plaques and iPads in recognition of their efforts to promote train safety.

The contest is designed to promote and reinforce railroad safety messages and keep our region's children safe around

trains. More than 4,800 students from across the region participated in this year's contest, creating artwork or writing essays around the theme "Unplug for Safety, Look Listen Live."

Each year, Metra's Safety Contest invites students in grades K-12 throughout its six-county service area to submit poster designs and essays highlighting the importance of railroad safety. Tasked with selecting the winners was a panel of 28 judges, including government officials, representatives from safety and education advocacy groups, business and community leaders, media and railroad professionals.

"Electronic distractions are a

part of all our lives but not being aware of our surroundings can have serious consequences, especially near railroad tracks," said Metra Executive Director/CEO

with the railroad, either as a rider or a motorist."

First-, second-, and third-place winners were chosen from each grade level for the Metra Safety Poster Contest. One winner from each grade group – elementary school, middle school and high school – was chosen for the Safety Essay Contest. First-place poster and essay contest winners received an iPad, while second- and third-place poster contest winners received \$250 and \$100 gift cards, respectively.

The People's Choice Award winner was Grace Fox, a 10th-grader at Oak Park River Forest H.S. More than 500 people voted online and selected her art-

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Don Orseno. "These talented students' posters and essays are creatively helping us reinforce this safety message not just among their peers but to everyone in the region who interacts



On the Bi-Level

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We can't guarantee all letters will be printed or answered. Please keep letters to less than 200 words and include your first name, hometown and what line you ride. (Names are not required but strongly encouraged.) We reserve the right to edit letter for length and grammar.

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Contest

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work as the favorite. She received an additional \$250 prize.

Metra also recognized the school with the most entries submitted in the poster contest. This year's winner was Elgin's Hilltop Elementary with more than 450 entries. In honor of this achievement, the school will receive a computer.

The first-place poster designs will be featured in Metra's 2016 safety calendar, on weekend tickets and on the Metra website. Winning safety essays will also be featured in the safety calendar, the Metra website and Facebook page. The second- and third-place posters will also be featured on the contest's Facebook page.

Metra's Safety Contest, which is in its ninth year, would not be possible without the support of its sponsors, whose generous contri-

butions have helped Metra defray the costs of the contest prizes as well as the production of the safety posters. This year's contest sponsor is the Hubbard Radio Group, owners of Chicago radio stations 97.1 FM The Drive, 100.3 WSHE and 101.9 The Mix.

Information about the campaign, along with all of the Safety Contest winners, is available at www.metrocontest.com and www.facebook.com/MetraSafety-PosterContest.

Winners of the Safety Poster and Essay Contest

1st Place Poster

Kindergarten — Parker Lee, Glenview, Glenview School of Arts
1st — Elle Anderson, Geneva, Faith Christian Beginner School
2nd — Diana Angel, Chicago, Norman Bridge Elementary School
3rd — Aleksandra Baranovski, Naperville, May Watts Elementary School
4th — Yebin Park, Northbrook, Glenview School of Arts
5th — Madelyn Lee, Glenview, Glenview School of Arts
6th — Julia Petrea, Glenview, Glenview School of Arts
7th — Leon Kosciak, Glenview, Glenview School of Arts
8th — Janet Pak, Mount Prospect, South Middle School
9th — Elaine Tran, Lincolnwood, Niles West High School
10th — Grace Fox, Oak Park, Oak Park River Forest High School
11th — YeLim Kim, Lincolnshire, Adlai E. Stevenson High School
12th — Payton Oakes, Naperville, Naperville Central High School

2nd Place Poster

Kindergarten — Yumeng Liang, Glenview, Glenview School of Arts
1st — Evan Boyle, St. Charles, Lincoln Elementary School
2nd — Gabriela Hernandez, Chicago, Norman Bridge Elementary
3rd — Gwyn Lockwood, Wheaton, Lowell Elementary School
4th — Nuria Kim, Naperville, White Eagle Elementary School
5th — Jonathan Kang, Northbrook, Henry Winkleman Elementary School
6th — Eva Greene, Naperville, Gregory Middle School
7th — Ode Wilondja Emema, Glendale Heights, Marquardt Middle School
8th — Kate Hoekstra, LaGrange, Gurrie Middle School
9th — Daniel Garcia, Des Plaines, Maine West High School
10th — Anna Lipkind, Northbrook, Glenview School of Arts
11th — Sung-Kyung Yoon, Northbrook, Glenbrook North High School
12th — Sebastien Johnson, Oak Park, Oak Park River Forest High School

3rd Place Poster

Kindergarten — Alex Bounds, Naperville, May Watts Elementary School
1st — Habin Park, Glenview, Glenview School of Arts

2nd — Alina Qian, Lake Zurich, Prairie Elementary School
3rd — Maricela Buckingham, Glenview, Glenview School of Arts
4th — Krystyn Shae Reyes, Naperville, White Eagle Elementary School
5th — Ellie Tran, Chicago, Stone Scholastic Academy
6th — Manav Davis, Naperville, Still Middle School
7th — David Walker, Oak Park, Percy Julian School
8th — Shirowid Sharma, Buffalo Grove, Woodlawn Middle School
9th — Michael Zima, Glen Ellyn, Glenbard South High School
10th — Sarah Warner, Glenview, Glenview School of Arts
11th — Johana Oldach, Oak Park, Oak Park River Forest High School
12th — Royal Hartwig, Lakewood, Crystal Lake Central High School

1st Place Essay

K-4 Division — Manya Davis, Naperville, 3rd Grade, John C. Dunham STEM Partnership School
5-8 Division — Manav Davis Naperville, 6th Grade, Still Middle School
9-12 Division — Huimin Xu, Aurora, 12th Grade, Metea Valley High School

Honorable Mention Essay

K-4 Division
Sathya Deverajan, Aurora, 2nd Grade, Reba Steck Elementary School
Kate Rogers, Mokena, 4th Grade, Mokena Intermediate School
Eduardo Zermeño, Franklin Park, 4th Grade, Dan. H. Pietrini Elementary School

5-8 Division
Kyle Kohn, Lemont, 7th Grade, St. Alphonsus-St. Patrick's School
Jack Giobba, Lemont, 6th Grade, St. Alphonsus-St. Patrick's School

9-12 Division
Taylor Miller, Naperville, 11th Grade, Naperville North High School
Katherine Maloney, Palos Heights, 10th Grade, Marist High School

Top Participating School

Hilltop Elementary School, Elgin

SOUND OFF

Pets on trains?

Do you plan to charge dogs that you will start allowing on trains full fare? After all, they will be taking up space like the rest of us. As someone who does not own a dog, I don't want to be subsidizing their ride.

No Dog Lover

We have heard from a few riders with concerns about our Pets on Trains proposal, mostly those with allergies. We are very mindful of your concerns – in fact, we shared them before we did some research. That is why we proceeded very cautiously when a petition was presented to us more than a year ago and why we continue to proceed very cautiously with a very limited experiment – weekends only, just the Rock Island line, for three months starting July 4.

Our research found that many other mass transit agencies around the country, including other large commuter railroads, already allow small pets in carriers on their trains. Some of them have been doing it for many years, including the CTA. None that we talked to reported any significant issues relating to their programs – in fact, most saw few if any complaints. Most said that very few people even take advantage of the program so it has no impact on their operations. And none of them saw any cost impacts.

We crafted our rules based on rules used by these other agencies, which work for them. We do not think our ridership differs in any relevant way from the ridership of other agencies that already have successful programs. The rules require these small pets to fit inside carriers and not take up any space that could be used by paying riders. If they are noisy or disturb other rid-



ers, they will be asked to leave. Owners will be responsible for the behavior and cleanup of their pets.

We will take it slow, see how the pilot project works, and at the end of the three months we will assess our next step. We want to hear about the experiences of Rock Island riders during the trial. Please go to www.metrarail.com/pets to give us your input.

Hygiene issues

The photo of the guy in the last issue with his sock-covered feet up on a second seat is really gross! It's gross when one does it with shoes on, too. On the 4:57 outbound UPNW I've seen a woman put her BARE feet on the seat in front of her – that's even MORE gross. But, I'm afraid to inform you that we've reached a new low on the UPNW line; a woman was actually FLOSSING HER TEETH! I couldn't get my phone out fast enough to catch her in the act. But that is the most disgusting thing I've seen

on the train so far. Flossing is a personal hygiene activity that should be done in the privacy of one's own bathroom AT HOME!

Sincerely,
Completely Disgusted

While we here at On the Bi-Level are big fans of good dental hygiene, we're not fans of it on the train. Plaque is a foe best fought privately.

Right vs. wrong

I do a reverse commute to the Lake Cook station in the morning, and I would like to point out to passengers coming into the city that you don't own both sides of the sidewalks and train platforms! I try to be considerate and walk only on the far right side of the sidewalks and platforms, but many people com-

ing into the city aren't satisfied with that and walk on both sides. I can't tell you how many times I've had to stand my ground and slam into people to avoid being knocked off the sidewalk or platform. You don't drive down the left side of the street (or do you?) so do the "right" thing and stay on the right side of the sidewalks and platforms!

Steve

We believe everyone's just trying to get where they're going and aren't intentionally being rude. So this letter is a good reminder to take a second for politeness and keep people going the other way in mind.

Blackhawks party

I have been riding Metra since 1985. I have been a commuter on the Rock Island Line since 2004. Today Metra outdid itself serving Blackhawks fans and the regular commuters! I boarded for my "un" usual commute at New Lenox. My train was packed to capacity by the time we got to Oak Forest. We were expressed to Blue Island. The Hawks fans were orderly and excited. The train crew was friendly and patient!

The \$5 special family fare and the extra trains for the ride home were also a great idea! Kudos to all the crews at Metra! Let's do it again next year, ok?

Zonda

Thanks for the nice letter. We'd like to thank all of our regular commuters for their patience and understanding as a whole lot of Blackhawk fans took the trains for the big Stanley Cup celebration. We know it was a very unusual, challenging day – we handled 50 percent more passengers than usual and it was one of the busiest days in our history!

Summer Travel Notes

Metra offers pass, drawing for Lollapalooza

For the second year in a row, Metra is partnering with Lollapalooza to hold a sweepstakes drawing to give away two tickets to the event on July 31-Aug. 2 in Chicago's Grant Park. Those wishing to enter the drawing should go to www.metrarail.com until midnight July 27 and fill out the entry form for their chance to win (one entry per person). Mail-in entries are also permitted; see details on our website. In addition, Metra again will be offering a special \$10 unlimited ride ticket good for travel on all three days of the event. The ticket is now on sale at Metra ticket windows and will also be sold onboard Metra trains on July 31 after 9:30 a.m.

Use Metra for Taste of Chicago

Heading to the Taste of Chicago this year? Don't forget to use Metra, your best value for getting to and enjoying all of Chicago's special events. The fest runs July 8-12. Metra's "Family Fares" program, usually available only on weekends, has been extended to weekdays through Sept. 4. "Family Fares" allow up to three children age 11 and under to ride free with a fare-paying adult. Families can realize even greater savings with Metra's \$8 unlimited ride Weekend Pass, which can be used in conjunction with "Family Fares." Metra also has teamed up with many city attractions and tours to create its Summer Fun Kit with lots of discount coupons. To order a Summer Fun Kit, simply send us an e-mail at funinthecity@metrarr.com.



Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno (center) and Board Member Romaine Brown (right) listen to state Sen. Napoleon Harris III aboard Metra's "Safety Train," which operated on the Rock Island last month to spread the rail safety message.

Metra completes work at three stations

Metra last month finished the major work on three significant station projects. First, we reopened the east ends of the Downers Grove Main Street platforms. The \$1.1 million project replaced the existing platforms with new concrete and added diversions to guide pedestrians to designated safe crossings. In addition, the new pedestrian tunnel opened at the Lombard Station. The tunnel is the main component of a \$9.7 million project that also includes rebuilt platforms and new platform canopies. The remaining work is ongoing and is expected to be completed later this summer. And Metra held a ceremony to celebrate the completion of a \$4 million project to rehabilitate the platform and other major components of the Flossmoor Station, including a new warming house, a renovated elevator, a new ramp and stairs and new LED platform lighting.



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FOR QUESTIONS VISIT THE INFORMATION KIOSK IN THE GREAT HALL

LEGACY CLUB



Members of Metra's running team and event volunteers pose with Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno before the annual J.P. Morgan Corporate Challenge event in late May. Metra used the event to spread the message about train safety to all participants.

Contact Metra

If you have a complaint, compliment, service issue or any other issue, we want to hear from you. You can call a Passenger Service Representative at (312) 322-6777 (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays) or send email to metrarail_feedback@metrarr.com.