

They say time flies when you're having fun! I just wasn't sure how much fun I would have when I started with RCPT in August 2009.

I have worked overnights, mornings, and evenings. I was a bus washer when COVID hit and have taken a crack at answering the phones. Our purpose here is to get passengers where they need to go, and that includes answering the phones, safe bus operations, and cleaning the bus. We are graded by all of this! That being said, working as a team is very important.

In a recent training, a question was asked about who your favorite passenger was. It got me thinking. I have had the opportunity to transport many passengers over the years. Some are still with us, some moved away, and unfortunately, some have sadly passed away. Until recently, it never really hit me how much we positively affect their lives and, in turn, they affect.

Mr. Gary Sletto is one of those passengers who profoundly affected me. A Veteran, Gary, worked as a Veteran Service Officer serving the needs of veterans in 3 counties. That was until Gary was diagnosed with cancer and although he fought it valiantly, I attended his wake a few weeks ago.

His family told me stories about how fond he was of all RCPT employees! He appreciated the transportation we did under the Highly Rural Grant that got him and hundreds of other veterans to their medical appointments. I transported Gary for about a year and a half from Draper to his chemo appointments in Pierre and back again. We would talk about a lot of different topics and really enjoyed each other's company. This job is very challenging at times but stories like Gary's make you realize how much we mean to our passengers and how much they mean to us. I will miss him.

As RCPT continues to grow, we will have the opportunity to make an impact on more passengers and feel their impact on us. It's an honor to serve the communities and passengers that we do. ~Eric Peterson, Lead Driver

Time is free, but it's priceless. You can't own it, but you can use it. You can't keep it, but you can spend it. Once you've lost it you can never get it back. Harvey Mackay

WELCOME



Monica Hernandez - Driver



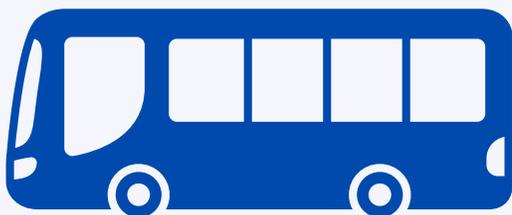
Marques Martin - Driver



John Whaley - Driver

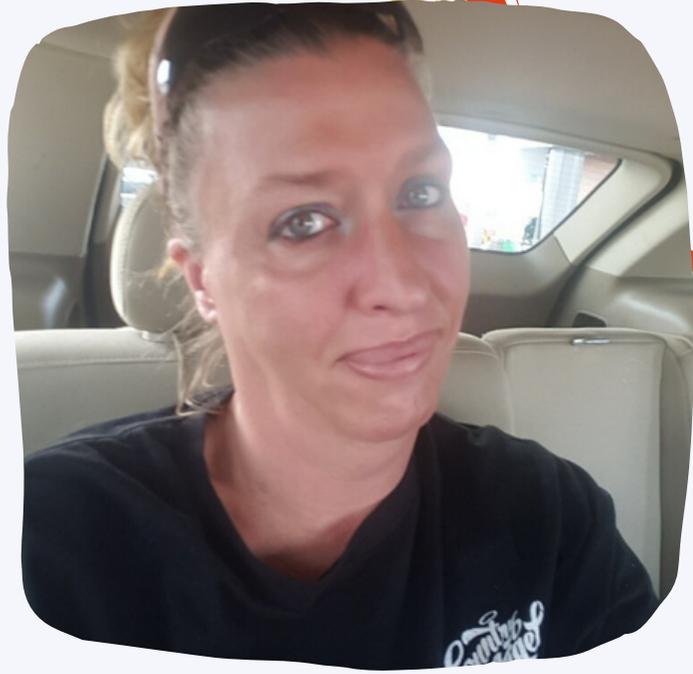


Josh Pullman - Driver





**Lauren Hagen -
Sioux Falls driver**



Missy Allen - Sioux Falls driver



Andrew Bange - Dispatcher



Tim Gunderson - Eagle Butte Driver

Leadership Pierre 2021-2022

By Adam Sharkey

I want to start by explaining a little about my Leadership Pierre Class. First, I should explain a little about what Leadership Pierre was. Leadership Pierre was a program hosted by the Pierre Chamber of Commerce to help emerging leaders analyze leadership characteristics, develop individual skills, and gather awareness of trends, challenges, and issues facing Both Hughes and Stanley County. It consists of 9 sessions, beginning with a Kickoff event and ending with a graduation ceremony.

Session one: Business/Financial/ Professional Development Session: Education

Each one of these sessions started at the Chamber of Commerce. Session one started with introductions and everyone's expectations of what we were expecting to take from the Class. Once we were all done, we traveled downtown to Bankwest. We were served food in their meeting room and placed into groups for a project. Once done, we toured downtown Pierre and got to see the many hidden gems the town had to offer. Seeing old Pierre undergrounds happened to be my favorite; I never knew it even existed. We ended our session at St. Charles in the back meeting room listening to local business owners talk about the pros and cons of starting a business downtown.

Session two was Education.

We started the morning off with the Principal of the GMMS. She shared many great stories about her journey to become the Principal and the many challenges facing today's children. Next, we met and heard some great stories from the Principal at TF Riggs. Once done, we toured Stanley County schools and GGMS before eating at the community college. While we ate, staff at the Pierre Indian Learning center, community college, and the superintendent, Kelly Glodt, gave us great presentations on the recent youth challenges and hopes for the future. After a few hours, we finished the day off traveling and touring Buchanan Elementary and TF Riggs High. I was not as impressed with the high school as I thought I'd be, but highly impressed with the GMMS.



Session Three: Local and State Government/ Session Four: Community service

Session three started with us talking to Pierre and Fort Pierre's Mayors. Gloria Hanson and Steve Harding had around an hour and a half of presentations, discussing what they were looking forward to in both communities. Once Mayors Gloria Hanson and Steve Harding were complete, we got on a transit bus to tour both Fort Pierre and Pierre, with our tour guides being both Gloria and Steve. They showed us many new projects in the process of being built in both communities, and some just completed. We toured until noon when we stopped at the Pierre City Hall for lunch and a panel discussion. On the panels were city and county commissioners and city mayors. The second half of the day involved us traveling to the Capital, getting a fantastic tour, and sitting down with Republican member Jason Glodt and District #24 representative Will Mortensen. Both had a lot to say, discussing what it takes to be a politician. We ended our sessions by visiting the chambers of Chief Justice Steven Jensen, talking about Alternative Courts and jury duty.

Session Four

I could not attend Session four as I was Covid positive the day Prior.

Sessions Five: Healthcare/ Session 6: Law Enforcement & Emergency Management

Session five started to like the last few years have gone, with a spike in the new COVID variant. The start of this session involved everyone meeting at the new Helmsley Center. We were given a tour of the new facility and directed to the new conference room. Once seated, we were given many presentations from multiple staff members presenting new and old technologies. Once the first half of the presenters were complete, we ate lunch at Helmsley Center Riverstone Bistro. While eating, we had a panel discussion with many COVID-19 response professionals Mikel Holland (President and Chief Medical Officer), Brad Saathoff (Pharmacy Director), Kayla Burns (Rehab Service Director), & Karen Gallagher (Vice President of Mission). Each shared the many challenges of COVID and Pierre's outstanding achievements during the pandemic. After our Panel discussion, we traveled to the Avera Flight care Hangar, where we received a tour from Sean Cihak, the Base Supervisor. Sean let us see their new facility, ambulance, and emergency plan. He was under the impression we were new young medical staff, so he had many training dummies. We ended our day at the hangar, and I was amazed. I got hands-on with one of the dummies and performed an emergency trachea.

Session Six took place in two locations

First, we met at the Mickelson building for a Panel discussion called Policing in Central South Dakota. The panel consisted of Steve Houghtaling (Chief Deputy U.S. Marshal for South Dakota), Kent Brown (FBI Special Agent), Hank Prim (DCI Special Agent), Patrick Callahan (Hughes County Sheriff), Dustin Drew (Hughes County Deputy Sheriff), Derald Gross (Patrol Caption, Pierre Police Department), and Cindy Gross (Communications Supervisor). We were served lunch and taken to their Task Force Simulator, where each class participant had the opportunity to go through the simulator. Each panelist shared many exciting stories, from sad to heroic. Once finished, we got to tour the new PD dispatch call center and crime labs in the Mickelson Building. We ended the day at Fire Station One, where we earned to sit down with Ian Paul (Fire Chief), Warden Berg (Women's Prison Warden), and Patrick Callahan (Hughes County Sheriff).

Session Seven: Tourism & Culture/ Session Eight: Agriculture & Natural Resources

Session Seven allowed us to visit and tour the cultural heritage center, where we received a behind-the-scenes tour from Jeff Mammanega. We have seen many exceptional historical items, and I made my presence well known within the first ten minutes. While being shown the South Dakota hidden library, I HAD TO ASK why everything wasn't covered or water protected when a sprinkler system was installed, which could ruin everything if it went off. They said I should use those forbidden words while standing in the library. WHOOPS! The tour was fantastic, and seeing all of South Dakota's history was eye-opening. People don't know how big that facility was, and some rooms were the size of football fields. The second half of the day was at the Casey Tibbs Center. We toured the facility and sat with Game Fish & Parks Staff Emily Kiel & Nick Harrington.

Session Eight

Session eight was a windy day. Wind gusts between 30 and 40 made traveling in the RCPT bus extremely difficult, especially since we spent most of the day traveling. Our first location was the Oahe dam, where the management staff gave us a tour of the dam. We toured for an hour and a half before departing for Meiers' Meat 20 miles west of Fort Pierre. Meier's Meats is a new butchering factory and will be opening its store in downtown Fort Pierre this summer. After Meier Meats, we ate at Drifters. At the same time, the owner Uriah Steber gave us a presentation on the difficulties and challenges of owning a restaurant in Fort Pierre using local beef. Our day ended at Broken Arrow Farms, where we toured their new lodge and Pheasant Hatchery.

Session Nine: Arts & Media

Session Nine was the last session of our Leadership Journey. Jody Heemstra of the DRG Media Group was our group leader. First, Jen Kanz with Waterfront Gallery in Pierre stopped to show us some local art. Then, Jen, Had each of us create our piece of art and present it to the Class. She tasked us to paint based on emotion. I drew a bunch of circles, and I'm no artist. Once Jen was done, we traveled to Fort Pierre to Diamond D Saddle Shop, where National recognized Dave Dahl took us through the process of making saddles. Once Dave was done, we proceeded to the Grand Opera House in Pierre. We were given a full tour before sitting with our local, news media panel. The panel consisted of Austin Gross (Dakota News Now), Zach Nelson (KCCR), Jody Heemstra (DRG Media Group), Jorge Encinas (Capital-Journal), and Ryan Sheldon (Oahe TV). Each Panel member gave us the highs and lows of the local media here in Pierre. Our day ended with us touring the DRG Media Group building, where each leadership member had to give a 30-second radio interview on what Leadership Pierre meant to them.

In Conclusion

Overall, it was a fantastic experience. I learned many interesting facts about Pierre and met tons of hard-working individuals who care about Pierre. I enjoyed meeting those people because, like them, I want to be a leader in this community. I have high expectations for myself, and every little bit has helped me grow. Grow as an individual at my work, and hopefully one day even beyond that. I want to thank Ron, who sponsored me and thank RCPT for allowing me the time to take this Leadership course. I highly recommend this to anyone looking to make a difference in our community.



2021-2022 Leadership Pierre Class



The Journey Southeast

On July 18-20, the management staff traveled southeast for our safety week. EP, Shawna, and I went to Yankton on Monday to set up a course for the staff at Yankton transit. Despite being EXTREMELY HOT, I feel we designed a great course. Ron, Shellie, Adam, and Mallory joined us that evening.

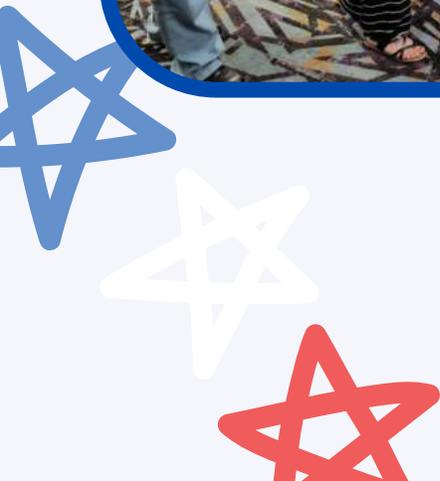
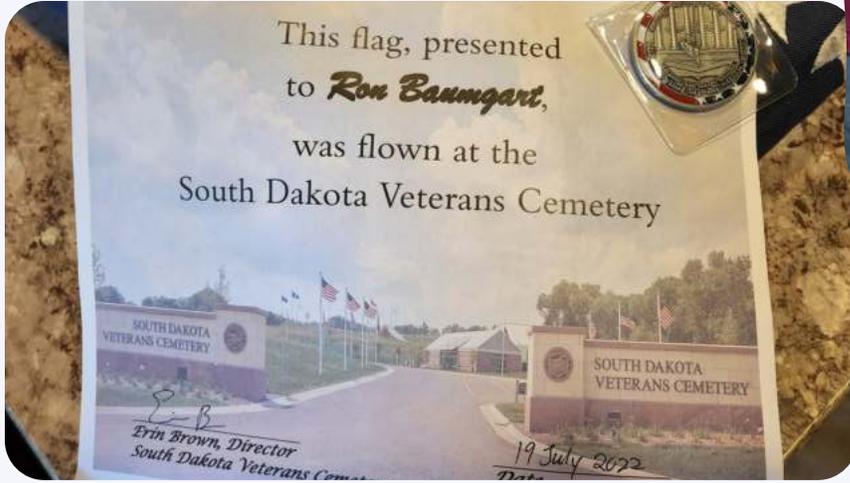
On Tuesday, 14 drivers from Yankton Transit participate in the driving course, test, pre-trip, and passenger assistance exercises. Five Sioux Falls drivers joined us in helping judge and drove the course. Everyone seemed to enjoy the course. Big thumbs up to EP as almost all the drivers commented on how they learned about wheelchair securement. Overall, I think everyone appreciated the training.

We repeated the passenger assistance, written test, and pre-trip inspection on Wednesday for the Sioux Falls staff. Again everyone did well and we learned some things we will be working on over the course of the next year. The staff in both locations all did very well and are knowledgeable in their work.

Tuesday night Josh and the Sioux Falls staff put on a fish fry. The management staff was able to join them and their families. It was a great time had by all. It is nice to do those things in the other locations as sometimes it doesn't work for them to come here when we put on the big gatherings. I feel the comradery in Sioux Falls is the best I've seen in the 6 years I've been here. Big Thanks to Josh and the Sioux Falls staff for making that happen.

We also were joined by 3 staff members from the Department of Veterans Affairs. They expressed their deep gratitude to the staff that helped transport people to the SD State Veterans Cemetery on Memorial Day. Even though the event was moved and transportation wasn't needed, our staff stayed and helped re-work the venue to accommodate the visitors. The staff present were all given a challenge coin, a certificate, and a retired American flag that has flown at the cemetery. This is a huge honor and these flags you will see around the building here in different offices. Audry Ricketts also presented flags to Rod Luckhurst and Jess Marlow yesterday here at RCPT. The biggest honor is not the flag, instead, it is the honor to assist our Veterans in whatever way possible. I do not cry very often but that makes me tear up thinking about how important the services we provide are to those who have served our country. Believe me when I say WE APPRECIATE ALL OF YOU.

~Andy Sharp, Operations Manager





Everyone Has a Story

By: Paulette Petersen



We can all agree that growing up in a smaller rural community is probably one of the best experiences a kid can have. For the family, however, take into consideration the pros and cons: the cost of living is generally lower, however, there may be fewer job opportunities. The housing may be cheaper, but there are fewer entertainment choices.

You most likely will have lower auto and home insurance rates, but unless you have an available in-town bus service you'll definitely need a vehicle to get from point A to point B...or, if you're a kid, maybe a bicycle.

Kobe Myers and Landon Martchinske definitely rely on those bikes to get them around in Highmore, SD. As students of the Highmore School system, Kobe and Landon (8 and 11 yrs old respectively) live for school summer vacation, bike riding, camping, fishing, hunting, and tons of other activities with their friends. So, when the Highmore City Pool couldn't open in the Summer of 2021, it created a huge problem for the kids of Highmore who relied heavily on the entertainment and activities a city pool can provide. The cost of the repairs for the pool were excessive, and sadly the goals were unobtainable for repairs for a short-term fix.

Needless to say, the Highmore kids were saddened with the news. Small towns do have limited entertainment opportunities to begin with, and now they had just lost a big one. The nearest swimming pool was located in Miller, SD, and that was just too far to ride a bike.

Jess Marlow of River Cities Public Transit heard of this dilemma and eventually obtained funding from the City of Highmore to establish the first ever "Highmore Splash Bus", which provided free transportation for kids from Highmore to the Miller City Pool. The bus runs every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Pickups are at the South Park on Commercial Avenue at 12:30 pm and 2:30 pm; return trips from Miller are at 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm.



Everyone Has a Story continued.....

Speaking on behalf of our appx 35+ registered Highmore swimmers, Kobe and Landon were very happy to see the implementation of the Highmore Splash Bus, and even more excited to hear that it is continuing thru the summer of 2022. It allows them to socialize with their friends, be actively involved in a summer activity, and provides the continued experience to develop lifesaving swimming skills. Jamie Martchinske, Landon's mom, says she is very pleased that the Highmore Splash Bus has great caring drivers, and that the kids are monitored. She is very at ease that this a summer activity that she has no safety concerns and trusts RCPT completely as they always provide great service. A very special thank you to the RCPT Highmore drivers and escorts!

The City of Highmore is working at the possibility of rebuilding a new pool, or perhaps seeking funding for the major repairs needed for the current pool. But, in the meantime, we see the Highmore Splash Bus as a great success for the local kids and Jess has several new "best friends". Just ask Kobe and Landon! They are two kids who ride nearly EVERY Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Have a great summer, guys!!

AT THE
pool



WOW!



Haakon County Transit Building Damaged by Wind

We all know that South Dakota has had an incredibly windy spring and summer.

No matter where you live, there's probably been a storm. Philip is no different. A wind storm in mid-June took 1/3 of the roof off of the Transit building that was finished in October 2018. The community worked to stabilize the building but another storm tore more of the roof off later the following week along with damaging insulation. No vehicles were damaged and service continues as the building is being repaired. The building houses two buses and three vans that provide rides to Haakon, Jones, and eastern Pennington county.



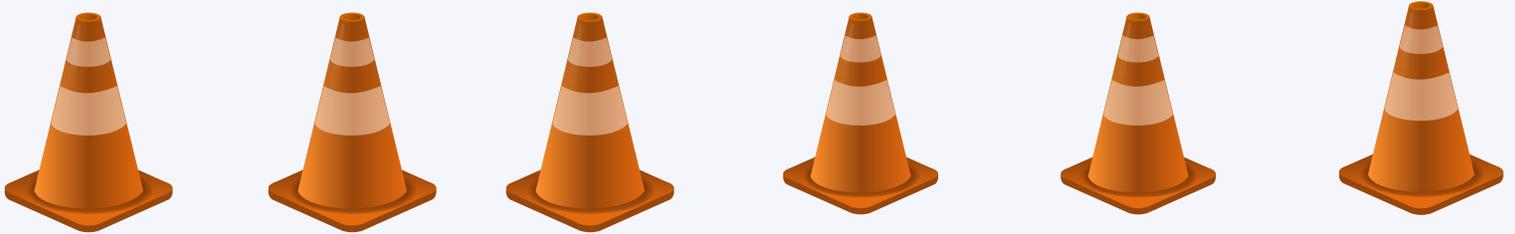


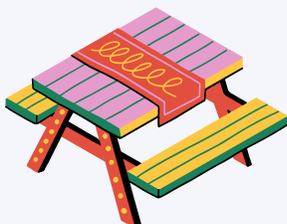
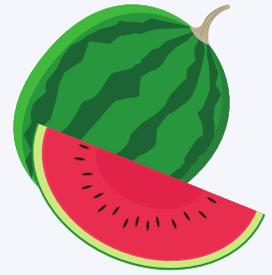
Safety Week

RCPT kicked off its safety week with a picnic on June 12 at Lily Park in Fort Pierre. The afternoon included a lot of games, including water games, and a BBQ contest for everyone to enjoy eating. It was a good time of relaxing and visiting with those to whom we usually have to say a quick word as we go about the day.

Monday began the annual roдео with employees starting with a dispatch or drivers' test to review their skills. They then had to drive the bus through the course that was set up in the north parking lot. The roдео is done not as a contest but to continue safety training and learn areas that need further development. A good time was had by all. Drivers from Eagle Butte, Philip, Kadoka, and Highmore attended as well. The week was concluded on Friday with safety meetings to announce the top scores in each area and review the tests.

Thank you to everyone that participated and to all of those that helped with the roдео! It continues to be a great tool to improve River Cities' safety and efficiency.





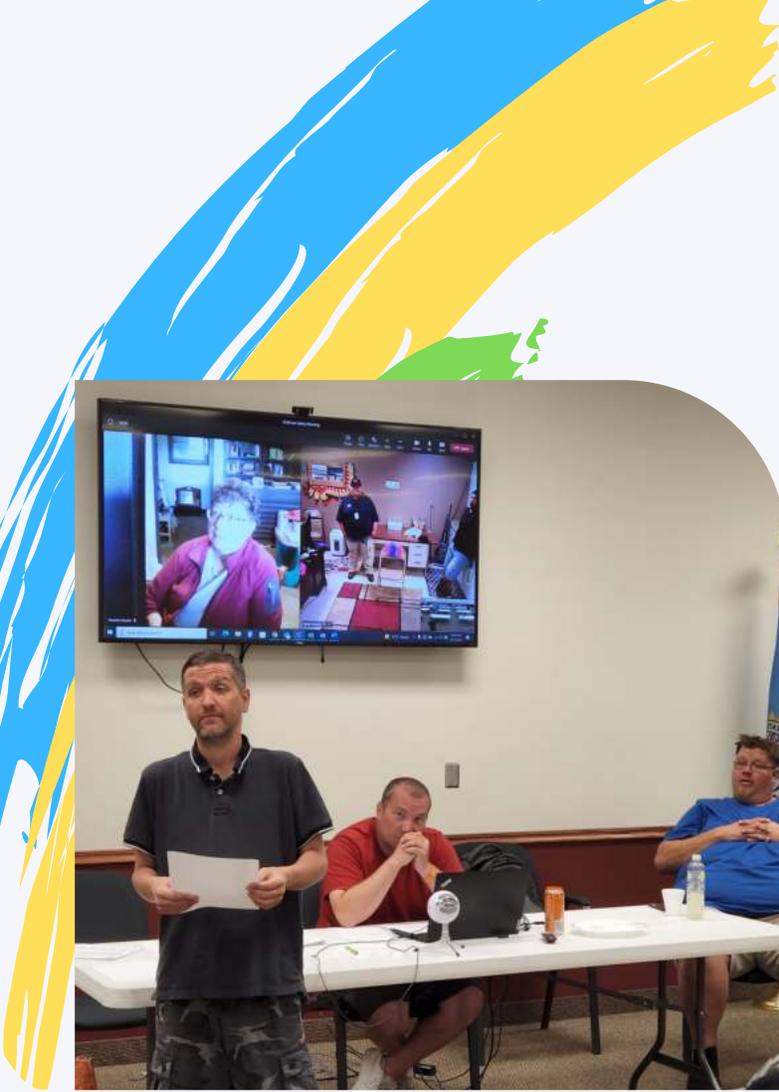


SUMMER



Judging the roдео course.





Safety Meetings to
end the week.



Yankton Transit has Safety Training



Yankton Transit spent some time reviewing the safety procedures through testing and hands on experiences. Though the day was hot, it was great time for everyone!



Supervisor Terry Kirchner pre-trips the bus.



Yankton staff does wheelchair securement training.



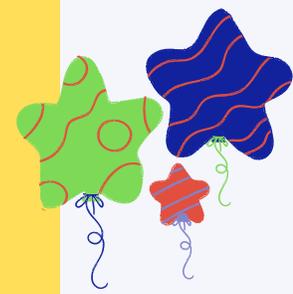


Sioux Falls drivers judge the Yankton drivers.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY



Tim Duff	August 9
Eric Peterson	August 9
Shawna Sengelmann	August 16
Adam Sharkey	August 17
Dean Stuart	August 21
Shaun Condon	August 24
Delano Cook	September 8
Andy Sharp	September 8
Cassandra Little Star	September 21
Richard Hines	September 25
Kriss Pauly	September 28
Lee Moseley	September 29





WELL DONE!

A passenger recently called our dispatch office to commend River Cities Transit for its services.

She commented that she is always treated with the utmost respect and doesn't know how she'd get from one place to the other without RCPT's help. She thanked everyone for being there for her. This customer even considered moving to another town but decided against it, in part because without River Cities Transit, she would not have a mode of transportation so readily available.



4TH OF July



Several RCPT employees gathered to celebrate America's birthday by taking a couple of River Cities' vehicles through the Fort Pierre parade and throwing candy to the kids. Thank you to all who helped with this event!

Merica



USA

Independence Day est. 1776





Dennis Cockerham, Sioux Falls driver, and his family are making memories this summer! They enjoyed some time at Big CreekState Park in Iowa over Memorial Weekend.

Dennis and his wife also enjoyed a free concert in Sioux Falls in early June.

