Greetings Family!

I can’t help but reflect on the camaraderie I felt during the recent call-in conversation with employees, the first “Sit down at the Table with the interim CEO.” It was good to hear your concerns and your encouragement. As I shared on that call, I will make every effort to hear you and respond. If I don’t know the answer to a question, I’ll say that too. But, I’m going to find out and provide an answer. I appreciate that the format allows discussion and an option to submit your questions/concerns if you’re not comfortable doing so in an open forum. You can simply send your question/concern to meetings@catchacat.org. I’d also like to take the time to thank the host/facilitator for the evening, Korbym Mingledorff. She made it a memorable and relaxed occasion. Congratulations to Waki Reid and Cameron Morrison who were the gift pack winners and to Veronica Smalls who I took to lunch yesterday.

We’re entering into the busiest period of vacation and the heat that we know that will come with it. We all know how it feels in Savannah when temperatures rise into the 90s and above. But, I’m speaking of the heat or climate of some passengers who may become more disruptive as the temperatures rise. As transit professionals, we need to be acutely aware that we are expected to manage all types of personalities and each person is different. Of course, it’s easy to deal with mild-mannered and compliant individuals...it’s a breeze. But, the reality is that we will have to deal with difficult individuals at times. Please don’t put yourself in a position to become confrontational. PLEASE do all that you can to deescalate the situation. Reduce the intensity of the conflict or situation. I do realize that it’s not always possible in today’s environment, but let’s do all that we can to keep ourselves out of harm’s way. Think of your families and loved ones and ask yourself, “is this worth it?” I trust your sound judgement and feel that you’ll make the right decision.

Please keep in mind that we are still in a pandemic and I encourage you to continue to practice those things that the Centers for Diseases and Control and Prevention have set forth... wearing a mask, washing your hands often and social distancing. As an organization, we mirror the rest of the world and are still reporting cases of Covid-19 among our ranks. Don’t become too relaxed or complacent because the pandemic is still very much alive. In spite of it, we will continue to serve this community in the most efficient and safest manner possible. Our human resources are certainly stretched thin and we appreciate all of you who may be making that extra effort to report to work realizing that passengers are depending on you. We are doing all that we can to hire fixed-route and paratransit drivers, have them trained and out on the streets. It is comforting to know that CAT is not the only agency dealing with this issue. It is affecting every transit agency in the country and in other parts of the world too. I have no doubt that we’ll work through this and see better days ahead.

Finally, I’d like to remind us all to “be the change that you want to see.” Of course, this requires self-examination and sometimes we don’t like what we see when we look at the “man/woman in the mirror.” It is powerful although often not seriously considered. We all have our own ideas that Chatham Area Transit can be better...the best! The American Public Transit Association (APTA) even recognized CAT as such years ago. We can get there again! I encourage you to share those ideas and thoughts. It may or may not be possible to bring to fruition. We are not limited to what has always been done or even the way it is being done now. Possibilities for improvement and success are endless! But, nothing happens overnight and nothing will happen if we talk about it but fail to contribute to the accomplishment. Be the change that you want to see!

- interim CEO Valerie Ragland
Paratransit Corner: What is customer service?

Customer Service is the support you give or offer your customers both before making a reservation for service and after they buy (return home from their trip) and using your products (CAT Mobility/Chatham Area Transit or services.) Customer Service typically means providing timely, attentive, upbeat service to a customer and making sure their needs are met in a manner that reflects positively on the company or business.

Customer Service means going above and beyond to keep the customer happy, whether that means answering any questions they have or resolving issues with a positive attitude. Customer satisfaction is the top priority, and hopefully creating loyal, returning customers. These are a few characteristics that will keep you on the right tract to great customer service: Patience, Effective Listening, Attentiveness, Time Management, Willingness to Improve, Knowledge, Ability to Admit You Don’t have the Answer, Thick Skin, Empathy, Self-Control, Taking Control and the Adaptability to use Positive Language with Clear Communication Skills.

- ADA Eligibility Assistant/Travel Trainer Barbara Shiggs

Reminder: Mask mandate still in place

CAT is continuing to require that passengers wear masks to help prevent the spread of Covid-19, as required by the Transportation Security Administration. Last month, the TSA extended the Federal face mask requirement for all transportation networks, including public transportation, through Sept. 13.

Safety Spotlight by Chief Safety Officer Charles Hall

It is getting hot!!! With temperatures beginning to crescendo towards 100 degrees, it is time to recognize a hazard that threatens everyone...Heat Stress. According to the National Transit Institute, exposure to extreme heat on the job can result in injury, illness or death. Transit employees such as bus operators and maintenance workers may be exposed to excessive heat when working outdoors in the summer without enough ventilation or shade, or in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation. Additionally, hot work such as welding or brazing can increase exposure to extreme heat. As with all hazards, once you identify it, in this case, excessive heat, try to remove yourself from that environment or set of circumstances immediately. Try to find a cooler place, take in fluids and if, needed seek medical attention.

It is important to understand that several factors combine to determine how heat affects workers on the job:

- Temperature
- Humidity (the amount of moisture in the air)
- Radiant heat (such as from the sun, from a hot engine, or from a welding torch)
- Air circulation
- Workload (level of activity)

Some of these factors can be mitigated. For example, fans can be used in the maintenance shop. Operators can adjust air conditioning temperatures. But it may be a little more difficult when working directly in the elements. Naturally, the human body tries to protect itself against high outside temperatures by making changes in blood circulation and the composition and amount of sweat. By increasing blood flow to the skin, the body uses sweat and conduction to cool the skin and remove excess heat. When workers are engaged in hard physical labor, muscles are using more blood, so less blood is available to flow to the skin to help remove body heat.

There are several types of heat-related illnesses. It is important to remember that workers can have more than one at the same time. A heat stroke occurs when the body reaches 106° or higher. Heat exhaustion occurs when otherwise healthy people are exposed to a hot environment to which they are unaccustomed. We all may have experienced or at least heard of heat cramps. When a person suffering from heat exhaustion tries to quickly replace lost body fluids, cramping may occur. And there is also fainting and heat rashes that may occur as a result of heat stress.

What you can do to avoid heat stress begins with you. Make sure that you stay adequately hydrated with water. Avoid sodas, energy drinks, or other sugary beverages. Try to stay in cool places. This may be limited to shaded areas when working outside. And there you can even try wearing 100% cotton clothing that may be loosely fitting and light-colored when applicable.

Remember, stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay safe! Heat is a hazard. Please treat it accordingly.