



PRESS RELEASE

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The Secret Service at MTA Two Behind-The-Scenes Employees Make Bus Passengers Comfortable

Eight years ago, John Cochrane of Lucerne was sitting around the house fidgeting, wondering what in the world he was going to do with himself now that he was retired from a career in street maintenance. A day later, a copy of the Hometown Shopper with an ad for a Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) bus shelter cleaner landed in his mailbox, and he applied for the job.

Just a few months earlier, Gwyn “Cricket” Sturgis had celebrated her first decade on the job at MTA as a bus cleaner.

Today, the two MTA maintenance workers play an important—though mostly hidden—role in the public transit company’s service and safety ethic that reflects well on the inland valley communities of Mendocino County and the MTA buses that ferry people around.

“John, he likes keeping the shelters clean and having it so that bus passengers can sit comfortably without worrying about getting the dirt—or mustard— that’s on the bench on themselves,” said Bob Butler, maintenance manager at MTA. “Cricket takes pride in cleaning the buses and that’s a hard job, quite frankly. She takes pride in doing an exceptional job.”

Both employees work behind the scenes. Few of the _____ annual passengers who ride any of the 40 MTA buses operating throughout the county notice the spotless windows rather than the scenery outside, or how white was the bench where they awaited their ride.



John Cochrane keeps 33 MTA bus shelters clean, from Willits to Ukiah



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An active, friendly man who loves being outdoors, John and his shiny white MTA van ply the highway 101 corridor between Willits and Ukiah. The van is equipped with a pressure washer, and John cleans the 33 bus shelters and 42 benches, and he tidies up around them. Coast shelters have a different cleaning crew.

“People have to be comfortable sitting down and waiting for the bus,” he said. Butler, his boss, said those clean shelters reflect well on the communities they are located in.

Few at MTA call Sturges by anything other than her nickname, Cricket. Under the glassy stare of a stuffed black and white cat that was long ago abandoned on the bus and now sits on her cleaning supplies rack as a sort of mascot, Sturges cleans stainless steel to gleaming, windows to unblemished transparency, and seat cushions to practically brand new. She cleans every inch of each bus, including the ceiling. She pressure-washes the outside as needed.

Carla Meyer, general manager of MTA, said that the number one comment from customer surveys is the cleanliness of MTA buses. “We have Cricket to thank for that,” she said.



Gwyn "Cricket" Sturges keeps MTA buses clean inside and out.

Neither John nor Cricket have easy jobs. John knows the three or four bus shelters in Ukiah that are routinely requisitioned by the homeless for temporary housing, and they can be a mess to clean. Cricket points to the gleaming grab bar inside the door of a freshly cleaned bus. “It gets a lot of use and gets grimy,” she said. “And I’ve got a cleaner that works really well for removing gum.”

Mendocino Transit Authority provides clean, safe and convenient public bus service throughout Mendocino County. To learn more, visit mendocinotransit.org.

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