

# She drives 100 miles a day taking kids to school

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The daily mileage may seem like a lot, but it doesn't bother Ayres who says she's quite content with the job, her co-workers and the kids.

"Every day is different. Every day the kids are different. Every day I'm different. So I don't get bored," Ayres said. "It is not a boring job at all."

ALTHOUGH SHE was a driver before taking a job with the schools about nine years ago, she had never really been around children very much. Driving the kids every day has given her a chance to see what kids are all about.

"I have under-rated them for a long

time," said Ayres, adding that before her bus career she'd never really had an opportunity to be with children. "I've been so amazed at the things they do."

There's little doubt though the kids on Bus 62 are comfortable with Ayres.

"I would like to think especially on an elementary run that I know everybody's name. It's important," Ayres said.

If one of the kids has a bandage on their finger, or a scrape on their forehead, she'll notice and ask about it, always with a note of sympathy and kind warnings to be careful next time.

WITH EQUAL interest the kids ask

her how she is and in a quick breath tell her the highlights of the school day as they climb up the bus steps and quickly look for open seats.

"See yuh in the morning," Ayres says as her eyes follow the parade of children stepping off the bus at each stop. She can tell when something's up — usually a test or a big project. She sees the peer pressure the kids endure and the pressure of doing well in school.

"Every kid is definitely an individual. If I see a kid that's having a real summer day I try to do something," Ayres said. "Some kids get really up-tight. I guess teachers still give tests on Friday because they are really nervous on Fridays."

Ayres freely admits a lot of kids' natural rowdiness doesn't really bother her. "The middle school concept has made a difference in the behavior on the bus," she said. "The rowdy ones of the junior high are lost in the high school now."

WHAT AYRES tries to do is treat the kids as she would like to be treated. "I try to make them feel important," she said. "If you try and make them feel important then they act important."

Just in case a problem arises on the bus with any particular child several courses of action are available to Ayres.



Each day Murphy Ayres completes a safety inspection of at least 50 items that help mechanics keep the district's fleet of buses in tip-top shape.

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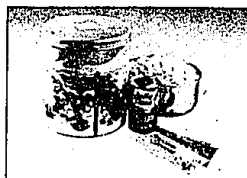
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"I can go as far as assigning seats," she said. "But that's the bottom line for me to do that."

One of the things guaranteed to prompt a rowdy response from the kids is pulling up directly next to another school bus.

"Every window goes down," Ayres said, smiling slightly to the rear of an adjacent bus as the kids begin to see their friends through the windows. "You can't move around until all the arms get back in the bus."

KEEPING ARMS inside the bus is an example of rules established by bus drivers who have their own safety committee.

"It was formed several years ago," said Darlene Thompson, also a bus driver. "We sat down and decided what was really important for riding a bus."

Besides establishing rules and regulations, the drivers also try to involve the kids in safety awareness. One method is a safety poster contest. The 1985-86 contest theme is "Don't Make a Fuss on the Bus."

The bus drivers' involvement with safety and poster contests is just one example of their community involvement.

At Christmas the bus drivers offer a raffle which allows them to collect money for needy families in the area. Food is generally purchased with the raffle proceeds. The drivers also sponsor car washes and after accumulating enough money donate to the Farmington Youth Assistance at the Shiawassee Center.

Ayres also serves on school district committees such as a marketing task force and another dealing with the sale of district property.

ALTHOUGH AYRES is committed to her involvement with the Farmington area, she's honest enough to admit some of the area's drivers are impossible.

"Everyone wants to get ahead of the bus," Ayres said. "Drivers in cars are the most discourteous. They think this thing can stop on a dime."

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