



COMMERCIAL-NEWS | ROBERT TOMLINSON

Fred Allen (right), a regular St. Joseph County Transportation Authority Circle Line rider, gives the gift of a free bus ticket and candy to fellow rider Lori Jonker (left) on the bus on Wednesday. After this picture was taken, Jonker showed her thanks by giving Allen a hug. The gift was an effort by Allen, with help from unnamed "helpers" and the CTA, to help out his fellow passengers, giving away 60 tickets and pieces of candy, as well as wishing them a Merry Christmas.

Paying it forward

Local man gives away bus tickets, candy to fellow Circle Line riders

By Robert Tomlinson
 Staff Writer

THREE RIVERS — The St. Joseph County Transportation Authority (CTA) estimates that about 50 riders ride on its Circle Line route in Three Rivers during each day of operation. Many people use it to get to doctor's appointments, to go grocery shopping, and for some, it's the only form of transportation they have around the city.

On Wednesday, one of their regular riders surprised his fellow Circle Line passengers with a special gift for the holiday season — free bus tickets and candy Santas.

Fred Allen, an 85-year old retiree from Three Rivers, coordinated the gifts along with the CTA and two "givers," who helped him out and wished to remain anonymous. Allen rode the Circle Line route all day Wednesday, giving each new passenger that stepped on the bus a ticket, candy, and a hearty "Merry Christmas."

"Since I've been retired, I've wanted to do something for the people that ride the bus, and this is the first year I've been able to put it together," Allen said.

Allen said he brought the idea initially to CTA Operations Manager Chris Yorks, who gave him the go-ahead to do the giveaway. Allen's goal was to get 100 \$1 Circle Line tickets, but ultimately reached 60 tickets to give away, along with the candy and Christmas greetings. At one point, the CTA even called to let him know people wanted to donate to his effort.

"They've called me twice with different people. One lady wanted to donate \$20, another wanted to donate \$10," Allen said. "I referred them back to Chris, and he took care of the money and they helped out with the tickets."

Allen said he has been riding the Circle Line regularly since he quit driving two years ago, after he was diagnosed with diabetes and put on fast-acting insulin. He said he sees many people ride the bus on a daily basis, with some at times struggling to pay to get on.

"Some people get on the bus with change, don't have enough money to pay the dollar, so me and my friends, we put a pot together, and we try to take care of those people that ride the bus that don't have it," Allen said. "There are quite a few people. The bus is a godsend. I mean, it's been here and I don't know what these people would do, how they'd get around if it wasn't for the bus."

See PAYING IT FORWARD, page 3

Women, Physical Fitness and Empowerment—A Global Perspective: Part I

This is the first of several Question and Answer interviews with a subject-matter expert as part of the Women on the Go series by local journalist and writer William Allen Baltz. Dr. Mariam Konaté, Associate Professor of Gender and Women Studies at Western Michigan University, discusses how physical fitness and athletics are helping empower women around the world.



DR. MARIAM KONATÉ

"When the status and power of women is greater so also is the nation's general quality of life; when they are lower, so is the quality of life for all." This observation by Riane Eisler, author of the ground-breaking book, *Chalice and the Blade*—a scholarly work examining the leadership role of women in ancient civilizations where the sexes lived in partnership communities before barbaric invasions brought a male dominance mentality—goes beyond any one country.

Women around the world are growing stronger in all areas of human endeavor at an astonishing rate. In the process, they are changing the political,

economic and cultural landscape.

Technology and shared information is helping unite women in their efforts to overcome obstacles to progress. With news articles "going viral" there is reason to believe and hope the Women on the Go of Three Rivers will motivate women everywhere. There may be no HealthTrac or CrossFit gyms in Uganda or Sudan—but courage, determination and inspiration are more powerful than all the fancy fitness centers put together. Anyone who has crossed the finish line after training long and hard knows that.

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TURKEY COLORING CONTEST WINNER!

The Commercial-News congratulates Joseline León-Magno of Three Rivers as the winner of its 2019 Thanksgiving turkey coloring contest! León-Magno won a \$25 gift card to Meijer as the winner.

Whitmer OKs bills to restore vetoed spending, fund prisons

From The Associated Press (AP)

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer on Friday signed spending bills to restore some funding she vetoed and to fund some of her priorities that were not included in the budget she signed months ago.

The \$574 million supplemental legislation is a "good deal for Michigan taxpayers that will provide essential funding for public health, public safety and public education," the Democrat

said in a statement.

The laws reinstate funding for charter schools, rural K-12 districts, need-based tuition assistance at private colleges, jails, hospitals, sheriff's deputies and local governments. Whitmer had vetoed \$947 million in spending proposed by the Republican-led Legislature after both sides failed to reach a budget agreement in September.

She said the new laws include \$45 million for the Department of Corrections, \$10.5 million for literacy coaches and nearly \$20

million to help clean up drinking water.

As part of the deal, Whitmer agreed to a provision that lets lawmakers undo department fund transfers initiated by her State Administrative Board related to the supplemental spending. Other bills signed Friday impose notification requirements on the board, require legislators to pass a budget by July 1 each year and clarify that the state auditor can access confidential or electronically stored information from the executive branch.

Whitmer signs bills to legalize sports, online gambling

From The Associated Press (AP)

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation Friday to legalize sports betting and internet gambling, calling it a bipartisan win for the state that will bolster funding for public schools and permanently dedicated funding to help first responders who get cancer from fighting fires.

The laws take effect immediately, but wagering will not start for a number of months because commercial and tribal casinos need to obtain state licenses.

Lawmakers have said they are hopeful that sports betting and online gambling could start in time for the NCAA men's basketball tournament in March.

Whitmer said her priority in negotiations was ensuring that the new gambling does not negatively impact the \$15.1 billion school aid fund, which is funded in part by the i-Lottery, and boosting the school aid fund.

All current forms of casino games will be offered online or on mobile devices once casinos are licensed. Those who are 21 or older will be able to participate.

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Merry Christmas

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HAVE A GREAT DAY, EVERYONE!



TODAY'S WEATHER
 HIGH: 41° LOW: 31°