



Breaking News

July 26, 2012

Bus driver's invention targets student crossing safety



The STEFFI Crossing Enhancer can be worn on a bare hand or over a glove. In New York state, bus drivers are required to use this thumb and forefinger technique when crossing students.

ANGOLA, N.Y. — A school bus driver here has invented a piece of equipment designed to assist students as they prepare to cross the street to board the bus, or after they have disembarked.

The STEFFI Crossing Enhancer, to be worn on the back of a driver's hand, was developed and created by Victoria DeCarlo, a 19-year bus driver who works for Lake Shore Central School District. It comprises a gray reflective arrow on a bright yellow background with an orange border. It also has an elastic finger loop at the top, and there is a wrist strap.

DeCarlo told *SBF* in an interview that the STEFFI can be worn on a driver's bare hand, and it will fit under a glove if the driver is wearing gloves before operating the bus. It can also be worn over a glove on either hand, and its colors and reflective arrow are highly visible through the windshield of a school bus, and from a distance. In addition, because the STEFFI is worn on the back of the hand, she said that it does not affect a driver's ability to operate the bus.

DeCarlo's idea for the STEFFI stemmed from concerns she had from a stop on her route at Steffi Dr., which intersects with another road.

"We pick up students on a main road," she explained. "The students all walk to a corner, and it was complete chaos because you have cars going in three different directions and the headlights were making

it difficult for all to see each other. Students were struggling to see my hand signal indicating that it was safe to cross, and my gut was telling me that something could happen in this area."

DeCarlo approached Lake Shore Transportation Supervisor Perry Oddi with her concerns, and he suggested working on a product using the reflective tape that is sewn on her safety vest. She took the idea and ran with it, ultimately creating the STEFFI.

DeCarlo has received positive feedback for her invention. She ran a three-day pilot program with the students she transports, who told her that it was more helpful than when she used her bare hand to signal them to cross the street.

Her co-workers have also benefitted from the STEFFI. "When I showed it to them after I made it, they said they wanted one because they face the same struggles in helping students cross," DeCarlo said.

She then approached the Lake Shore Central School District board to show the STEFFI to the members and discuss the success the drivers were having in testing them. Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Administration and Finance Dan Pacos approached DeCarlo after the board meeting and committed to purchasing STEFFIs for all of the district's bus drivers.

"They are now mandated at Lake Shore," DeCarlo said. "Every school bus will also be equipped with 'STEFFI On Hand Kits,' which consist of three back-up STEFFIs in a clear vinyl bag."

In addition, starting this school year, when students receive their bus safety instruction, they will be taught to look for the STEFFI before they cross a street prior to boarding or after disembarking their bus.

The STEFFI was also well received by transportation supervisors during a recent New York Association for Pupil Transportation event, and DeCarlo said officials at a First Student terminal in the area have expressed interest in getting STEFFIs for their drivers because of the drivers' positive experience in testing it.

For more information about the product, visit www.steffiproducts.com.



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