



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

2021 Lapeer Avenue Port Huron, MI 48060
810.987.7373 fax 810.987.2431 www.bwbus.com

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CONTACT: Jim Wilson, General Manager: 810.966.4200 jwilson@bwbus.com

There from the Very Start!

Cynthia Ward Retires From Blue Water Area Transit After Serving During Most of the Agency's First 35 Years

PORT HURON, MI — Cindy Ferrier-Ward and Blue Water Area Transit started together in 1976. While the agency will celebrate its 35th Anniversary this year, Cindy has just retired from BWAT after nearly 35 years of service.

Co-workers held a retirement reception in her honor on March 24, bringing friends, family, and co-workers together to recognize her legacy of accomplishment.

“On behalf of the entire Blue Water area, we would like to thank Cindy for her service to the community,” says BWAT general manager Jim Wilson, who presented her with an engraved gold watch during the reception.

Cindy started working as a dispatcher in 1976 after she was laid off from a similar position with a local cab company. Her credentials included an associate degree in business from St. Clair County Community College and she was soon promoted to administrative manager with duties that included “many aspects of the operation,” according to human resources manager Carol Bellow.

“It’s been part of my life for as long as I can remember,” Cindy says about the organization that has given her a rewarding career and many friendships and memories. One of those friendships is with Rose Norton, who shares her passion for photography. Rose developed a successful studio, Norton’s Portraits of Distinction, after working for BWAT as a bus driver for 13 years.

In addition to nearly 35 years of service, Cindy is also proud of her many photographs that are still in use on BWAT’s website and in its publications. She is particularly proud of her photograph that hangs on a wall in the new YMCA.



Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager, thanks retiring Cynthia Ward for her nearly 35 years of service to the community and presents her with an engraved gold watch. BWAT will celebrate its 35th Anniversary this year.

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Cindy shows her photograph on the cover of BWAT bus schedules. Former BWAT bus driver Rose Norton, owner of Norton's Portraits of Distinction, has remained a close friend and mentor.

“Cindy helped build our system from a small experiment in transit into the stable well managed system we have today. I wish her well in her retirement. She has earned it,” says Dave Frasier, director of procurement and maintenance. With Cindy’s retirement, Dave becomes the only employee who was with the agency from the very beginning.

“We are like one big family,” is a comment you often hear from those who work at BWAT. That sense of family extends out into the community.

“It all fits together, like one big circle,” Cindy says in talking about her work with seniors and handicapped riders. “We were like their best friends and it was very rewarding.” Cindy worked with the Council on Aging and Community Mental Health to schedule transportation to appointments and process special passes.

Cindy served on the committee to bring bus service to Marysville — one of many special projects that complimented her ongoing duties. After getting petitions signed for a millage vote, the committee successfully added Marysville to the agency’s service area.

When Cindy continues walking at the mall, she plans to be a regular BWAT passenger. “I’m going to use the system to get to the mall — especially with gas prices getting so expensive,” she explains.

Future plans also include long lazy walks along Florida beaches, “hanging out” with her seven grandchildren, golfing, and taking at least one cruise. “I’d also really like to volunteer to help somewhere,” she adds. “You have to get moving... I don’t want to let time go by.”

She is looking forward to visiting Texas, where her son Jeff moved his family two years ago. Waiting to see her are grandsons Seth, 9; Austin, 8; Colton, 7; and one-year-old Marcus. Her daughter Julie lives in Ohio and has two daughters (Jacklyn, 18, and Jessica, 21). Her son Gary Jr. lives in Port Huron with Landon, 6, who is in kindergarten.

When Cindy started working for BWAT, it was a small organization of meager beginnings and less than desirable resources. Rose remembers buses that were drafty and “broke down constantly. We kept them stored in an empty warehouse without heat. Cindy worked in a little shed with a space heater.”

“I’ve really seen the place grow over the years,” Cindy observes.

The Blue Water Area Transportation Commission continues a proud tradition of innovation in public transit that has served Port Huron for more than a century. Port Huron

was one of the nation's first communities to operate an electrified transit system in the 1880s and one of the first to operate motor coaches when they became popular in the 1930s. Following an eight-year hiatus, the current bus service began in September 1976. Since then, BWATC has carried more than 22 million riders and continues the tradition of innovation by producing its own compressed natural gas alternative fuel since 1996.

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Smith Justice Group 3560 Pine Grove Ave. #350 Port Huron MI 48060