

A Tribute to Veterans in Transportation

METRO honored 215 of its veterans in a packed event that was the largest of all the Diversity Initiative events this year.

After the METRO police honor guard performed a posting of the colors, Jim Archer, director of Service Planning & Evaluation, sang a stirring rendition of the national anthem. Board members Jim Robinson and Diann Lewter spoke briefly before the keynote speaker Lt. Col. Willie B. Williams, a member of the Texas National Guard and a NASA research manager, took the stage.

Williams said our bus operators and mechanics are like astronauts, as they are the ones running the buses. “You’re the ones meeting the public. You are the face of METRO. The people who operate the bus, the people who clean the bus are the people who make METRO what you are. Those guys deserve a medal,” said Williams.

He talked of the importance of working as a team. “We operate like fingers. Each of us has our own little thing we do. But then we become a part of something, we become a hand. And when we become a hand, we operate as one. When you come to METRO and when you come to NASA, you have to operate as one team,” said Williams.

He closed his remarks by praising veterans’ courage and support of their country.

“Without veterans and without your service, we don’t have a country. We don’t have



Lieutenant Colonel Willie B. Williams

METRO,” he said.

Each of the METRO veterans received a personalized, framed certificate of recognition for his or her service to the military branch they served.

Ronnie Johnson Sr., project manager in Security Systems, said he almost skipped the event because previous programs designed to honor vets triggered bad memories for the Vietnam vet. This one did not. Johnson called it positive and upbeat and thanked METRO for conducting the event.



[Click here for a slideshow.](#)

“The best part for me was the teamwork of putting this together,” said Marilyn Moore, director of Employee Relations and EEO and the mistress of ceremonies of the program. “This event had the largest number of honorees of all our

Diversity events and the challenge of having adequate space to accommodate all attendees. Despite a few technical concerns, everything went well because we worked as a team. For example, the committee for the veterans program included three subject matter expert veterans, who provided information on proper protocol.”

The event drew a standing-room-only crowd in the boardroom, and other attendees watched a live feed in rooms on the second and sixth floor.

Moore said it was important for METRO to recognize its veterans because of their brave service to this country. “We sometimes forget their contributions, so we wanted them to know that we recognize, appreciate and thank them for the sacrifices they made for us,” said Moore, adding that from a diversity perspective, the program was all-inclusive.



[Click here for a video of the event.](#)

Operations – thanks to Andy Skabowski, chief operating officer, and Val McCray, executive assistant to Skabowski - sponsored the luncheon served, which included lasagna, chicken fettucine alfredo, salad, roll, cake, lemonade and tea, catered by Melange Catering and Special Events.

“The program was a great success,” said Raena Brown, Employee Relations specialist who spearheaded the logistics. “It surpassed my expectations, and the most important thing was that the veterans walked away feeling like they had been honored.” 

