

### **Three Cheers for the Bus Driver... (*that would be me!*)**

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I am a big believer in the camp experience...both day camp and sleep away camp. But, we all know, camp is expensive. The summer before my twins were ready for camp, I heard that one of the pricier camps in town was hiring moms as bus drivers, in exchange for tuition. Since I wasn't working at the time, this seemed like an ideal solution. I would do a quick bus run in the morning and afternoon...and still have "me" time and time for housework. I decided to apply.

The first step was to obtain a commercial driver's license. I thought this would be fairly simple, but it wasn't. At DMV, I was given a thick book to study. Much of what I had to know did not even apply to the license class I was applying for. There were lots of questions about transporting hazardous materials, (as if they *knew* my kids!) Now, I am a college graduate...*but this stuff was hard!* I developed a newfound respect for the truck drivers of the world. Were they also harboring Ph.D.s? After weeks of studying, I passed the written exam...but just barely.

Next came the training for the road test. Depending on state, each CDL applicant is required to spend a specific amount of hours behind the wheel. In addition to the driving, we also learned how to complete a bus inspection and what safety measures to take should our bus break down. My first driving experience was very strange. *This was nothing like driving a minivan!* But I passed my road test with flying colors and was ready to hit the road.

Driving a bus route is not like driving a carpool. I had to pick up and drop off 18 children daily. During those eight weeks, there was no such thing as a day off. In exchange for my tuition, I was expected to be on the road daily by 7:45 and got home with my kids at around 5:30. Although, I had a break in the middle of the day, it was definitely a very long day for my three young children. Perhaps too long – especially on those hot summer days. *And air conditioning?* Forget about it! I passed around my water "spritzer" each afternoon and that was how we managed to beat the summer heat. As far as the other "mom" drivers at camp, two were attorneys and one was a CPA...so this former professional was in good company!

I am proud of my CDL and have maintained it. It has come in handy in the six years since I obtained it. I have driven for two different day camps and will be working at my first sleep away camp this summer. But, make no mistake I definitely worked for those tuitions. I found out that, even for a bus driver, there is no such thing as a free ride!

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