



Absentminded riders keep service hopping

Sahar Faqiri, left, and Tecla Kalinda, right, are all smiles after retrieving their lost transit passes at OC Transpo's lost and found yesterday. The passes are among the more mundane items left behind every year on city buses, says Heartwood House executive director Maureen Moloughney, centre, who recently had a toilet plunger turned in.

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— MAUREEN MOLOUGHNEY

What do false teeth, ballet slippers, a toilet plunger and a hard hat have in common?

They're all items that OC Transpo riders have left behind on the bus recently.

When Heartwood House executive director Maureen Moloughney looks at all the items people lose, she can only chuckle and shake her head.

"We have an endless supply of people who are dealing with the challenge of forgetfulness," said Moloughney, who runs OC Transpo's Lost and Found service.

The service receives up to 200 items a day and over 30,000 a year. This week alone, it recovered a purse, a paycheque, a labourer's work equipment, several single earrings, a chunky gold man's ring, cash, library books and a cosmetic bag.

A toilet plunger and a fork were two of the stranger items to come in recently, said volunteer Mike Bee. He's also had dentures turned in. Those, he refused to touch.

Some items are improbably left behind — "the other day we had crutches come in, and a cane," Moloughney said — while others are near impossible to miss. One man left behind a backpack that stood three feet tall and weighed about 40 pounds.

But an object's value, whether monetary or sentimental, doesn't seem to be a factor in forgetfulness. "Six months ago, someone lost \$700 in cash," she said.

Cellphones are the easiest items to return to their rightful owners.

"People will register their home as 'home' or have phone numbers for mom and dad," said Moloughney.

Laptops have a 100-per-cent return rate and musical instruments more often than not find their ways home. The least called-about items are winter wear and umbrellas. Surprisingly, jewelry also has a low claim rate. "I think there's an assumption that they'll never see it again," said Moloughney.

Reunited with her bus pass yesterday, Sahar Faqiri said she was relieved. One of 600 people who will lose their pass this month, Faqiri had been using bus tickets since Thursday, and didn't want to pay another \$60 for a replacement pass.

She's not alone, said Moloughney. "We had a sister and brother duo who consistently lost their bus passes. Every month, it was one, the other or both. It got to the point where we knew their first names."