

Living Longer & Loving it

One Stop Shopping for Senior Transportation

By Cathy Tyson



"Lunch bunch" regulars, from left Patricia Boudoin, Audrey Eatmon, Bill Brochier, Norine Helms, Eddie Carvalho, Bill Dodge, in front Rosalee Biasatti

Photo by Mei Sun Li

One of the findings of the recent Senior Needs Assessment Survey was the need for senior transportation services in Lamorinda. While many elders retain their drivers' licenses into their sunset years, many don't feel comfortable driving or relying on family members and neighbors for transportation assistance. Fortunately, seniors have a number of options available to get around town, via Lamorinda Senior Transportation: An Alliance of Transportation Providers. This coalition was formed three years ago to as-

sist in helping seniors live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. With a little advance planning, homebound seniors can get help in running errands, going grocery shopping and to medical appointments.

Mary Bruns, Program Coordinator, wants to get the word out that there are several options available for seniors, some free, and some at greatly reduced cost. "It's part of our job to get you where you want to go." Although she works for the City of Lafayette, there is one centralized number to call for the Lamorinda

Spirit Van (925) 283-3534 which also serves Orinda and Moraga. The Spirit Van takes clients to doctor appointments, on shopping trips, to lunch at the nutrition program at the Walnut Creek senior center and to concerts at the Lafayette Senior Center – all for a modest \$6. For those attending the lunch program the ride is free, but the meal costs \$2.

"Lunch Bunch" regulars enjoy a nutritious meal in a social setting; and participants seem to relish the company of fellow riders along with Eddy, the popular driver who looks after them,"

said Bruns. She adds they are continually building the lunch and errand clientele.

Errand rides, provided by volunteer drivers, are equally positive. Clients get a lift to Safeway, where the driver will wait for you, then perhaps head to the drug store and the driver will, once again, wait for you, and then on to the bank, post office and so on. This personalized service is a great boon to seniors who want to continue to live on their own.

In addition to the Spirit Van, via the generosity of volunteer drivers, Orinda residents can avail themselves of Orinda Seniors Around Town – a service that provides one on one, door through door service. For seniors that need a bit of extra help with grocery bags, the driver can provide assistance; (925) 254-0800.

Contra Costa Yellow Cab and DeSoto Company offers a 20% discount for Lamorinda seniors. A dispatcher at Yellow Cab confirmed they help clients in and out of the house, up stairs and with packages (925) 284-1234. Finally Senior Helpline Services Rides for Seniors, covers Contra Costa County providing rides to medical appointments during the week and rides to grocery shopping on the weekend (925) 284-6161.

"The more you stay home, the scarier it gets to try something new" said Bruns. "That's why we encourage buddy rides for first timers; the senior's adult children or caregivers are welcome to accompany riders on the Spirit Van. The goal is not only to provide a service, but to make seniors feel welcome and part of a comfortable and connected neighborhood group.

Lamorinda Senior Transportation An Alliance of Transportation Providers

Call each program for information, opportunities to volunteer and to make tax-deductible donations. Volunteer drivers are always needed.

Lamorinda Spirit Van, 283-3534

The Lamorinda Spirit Van (283-3534) provides rides to lunch at the Walnut Creek Senior Center Monday through Friday; rides to errands on Tuesday (for Orinda seniors), Wednesday (for Lafayette Seniors), Thursday (for Moraga Seniors); and rides to medical appointments in Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Concord, and Martinez on Mondays and Fridays. Rides are \$6.00 round trip. Please make your reservation one business day ahead of time by 1:00 p.m. (two business days ahead of time by 1:00 p.m. for medical/dental appointments.) Rides to lunch are free; the lunch is \$2.00; reserve your lunch by calling 280-7310 by 11:00 a.m. one business day ahead of time.

Contra Costa Yellow Cab and DeSoto Company, 284-1234

20% discount for Lamorinda seniors. A taxi is often an economical alternative to owning, insuring, fueling, and maintaining a car.

Orinda Taxi, 253-TAXI 253-8294

Gives a 10% discount and doesn't add a surcharge for short rides, will help with packages and provides personal service.

Volunteer Driver Programs

(Door through door; one on one service. The volunteer driver uses their own car.)

Orinda Seniors Around Town, 254-0800

Orinda volunteer drivers serving Orinda seniors.

Senior Helpline Services Rides for Seniors, 284-6161

Serving Contra Costa County seniors. Monday – Friday medical appts.

Movers Gift Town with a Fifteen-Passenger Van



(L to R) Moraga Vice-mayor Chew, Mayor Trotter and Council Member Mendonca cut the ribbon with George Fisher

Photo Rob Lucacher

The Town of Moraga accepted the gift of a 15-passenger van from the Moraga Movers, organization of senior citizens. "We want to be perceived as positive contributors to this community," said Movers' President George Fisher. Mayor Dave Trotter and the Council thanked the group and came to celebrate with them at the ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 12. Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram will be a prime user

of the van, "The vehicle will be used by the Movers themselves for their field trips, and the town will be able to provide transportation for various recreation activities," stated Ingram. The van was purchased with funds the Movers raised amongst its members and the community. About half of the cost was donated by Joan Bruzzone. The town will be responsible for the maintenance of the van.

S. Braccini

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