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Big Thank You to Volunteer Spirit Van Drivers

By Cathy Tyson



Commissioners and friends toast volunteer Spirit Van drivers - from far right to left, Eddie Carvalho, Steve Rogness, Malcolm Hendry and Mauna Wagner. Photo Cathy Tyson

Senior Services, commissioners and friends toasted volunteer Spirit Van drivers and dispatchers for their dedication in providing a crucial link to independence for area senior citizens. Without this valuable service many seniors would be homebound.

Monday through Friday, the van takes riders to the C.C. Cafe at the Walnut Creek Senior Center for a healthy lunch and socialization. Errand rides on Wednesday afternoons along with medical appointments on specific days round out the Spirit Van services.

When asked why he helps out, driver Malcolm Hendry replied, "It's just a way of helping a fellow traveler who needs it." Adds colleague Mauna Wagner, "The Spirit Van offers seniors the best of both worlds - independence to take care of themselves, along with a connection to people who care about them. It's a great program!"

The Lamorinda community is fortunate to have a transportation program for seniors so older citizens can live independently in their own homes after they no longer drive. "We generally don't realize how important transportation is until we no longer have a car at our disposal. Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda have a wonderful group of volunteers who step up to the plate to drive our seniors to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and errands," said Mary Bruns, Senior Transportation Coordinator.

"I feel so blessed to have this opportunity to drive these people who really are so full of life," said Eddie Carvalho. "All it takes is a ride to lunch and back. Two hours a day makes such a difference in their lives. I overhear them talking and what comes up most of the time is how without this lunch run, we wouldn't have met each other or all the people at the lunch. It really gives them something to look forward to every day!"

For readers looking to give back to the community, there is a need for volunteer Spirit Van drivers and folks to assist seniors in giving the service a try by chaperoning. No special license is required, but there is a training class, for more information call (925) 284-5546. To schedule a ride on the Lamorinda Spirit Van, call (925) 283-3534.

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