

# Giving the Gift of a Lift

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Potomac Community Village's rides program offers much-needed transportation for seniors.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

One of the biggest challenges that 93-year old Randy Kurkjian faces is mobility. While he is in good health and walks with the assistance of a cane, he cannot drive. He needs transportation to medical appointments and social engagements, which help him live independently, stay active and avoid isolation and loneliness.

Kurkjian, who is a member of the Potomac Community Village (PCV), receives free transportation through the organization's rides program.

"My other alternative would be to take a cab, which can be expensive. Without this service I would be very helpless," said Kurkjian. "My son and daughter help me but they are working and don't always have the time."

The service offers seniors who no longer drive transportation to doctors' appointments, physical therapy, social activities and other events. Potomac Community Village volunteers say the program is vital to helping seniors stay happy, healthy and connected to the community as they continue to live in their own home.

"One of the most important needs for people as they age, but want to stay in their existing community, is transportation," said Sheila Moldover, PCV Communications Chair. "The [village rides program] is one of the most important volunteer services that our village provides for those who can't drive anymore."

Recruiting volunteers and let-



PHOTO COURTESY OF POTOMAC COMMUNITY VILLAGE

**Potomac Community Village's rides coordinator Sheila Taylor is also a volunteer driver.**

ting seniors know about the service are PCV's top priorities for the program. To ensure safety, volunteer drivers receive training, undergo a background check and an examination of their driving record. "They can't have points on their records," said Sheila Taylor, who coordinates the rides program for PCV.

The rides program is structured to offer flexibility and protection for those who choose to drive. For example, drivers cannot provide medical assistance and are instructed to call 911 in case of an emergency. "We don't offer hands-on care, like helping somebody in and out of a wheelchair. You pull up to a house and as a courtesy, you might get out of the car, open the door and help the senior get in," said Moldover. "You can choose when you want to drive, there's no obligation as to the amount of time you spend."

In addition to transportation,

He's gotten up at our events and talked about his experiences. He's a very interesting person."

Rides programs offer a service that public transportation cannot meet, says Johanson. "A senior with a walker can't walk a quarter mile to the nearest bus stop. That's like asking them to run a marathon," she said. "If you use a walker you might be served by Metro Access, but it can take all

day to run to the bank."

PCV is also hoping that local businesses will post signs in windows or other visible places to get raise awareness of this service.

"Like any volunteering [opportunity], you're giving back to the community and helping to build something that you hope will be there when you need it," said Moldover.

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