

Published August 1st, 2012

Vantastic New Vehicle for Lamorinda Seniors

By Cathy Tyson



The trio of Spirit Vans ready to serve seniors in Lamorinda. Because the van on the far right is so new, identification above the windshield isn't ready yet. Photo provided

government turn mighty slowly.

The newest ride couldn't have come at a better time. The original van is a 1999 model that was donated to the Senior Transportation Program by County Connection. The second van is slightly newer - a 2002 model also from County Connection. The oldest van will now serve as back-up, in case of break-downs or maintenance.

It takes a village to run the program. "We have two new volunteer drivers in training which will bring us up to 13 volunteer drivers," said Bruns. "By September, 2012, we expect to have all the shifts covered and will be able to offer morning and afternoon service Monday through Friday."

She's always on the look-out for grants and donations to help with fuel and maintenance costs. In May, gas to keep the two vans busy ferrying seniors cost \$1,243. To schedule a ride or get more information call (925) 283-3534.

With two vans that have racked up a combined total of over 430,000 miles, it seemed like the best birthday gift ever when the newest Spirit Van arrived at the Senior Transportation Program in Lafayette. Tricked out with a built-in grocery rack to help elders handle packages, a smoother ride and better gas mileage, the first-ever brand new van is already popular, providing rides to seniors for medical appointments, errands and the senior lunch program in Walnut Creek.

While Moraga and Orinda contribute to the cost of the program, Lafayette pays the largest share; inexpensive rides are available for any senior in Lamorinda, \$5 each way; or, for those going to the C.C. Cafe at the Senior Center in Walnut Creek, round trip rides are free and the lunch is only \$2. The program has been steadily gaining ridership and now boasts roughly double the amount of patrons who were served in 2006, helping seniors independently age in place as long as possible.

Mary Bruns, Lamorinda Senior Transportation Coordinator, was able to get the van for a fraction of the purchase price; and over 88 percent of the cost, or \$54,889, was paid by a federal grant. Bruns had been patiently waiting for the grant to come through since she applied for it back in May of 2009 - apparently the wheels of the federal

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA