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Senior Transportation Service seeks drivers

by [jgoralski](#) • August 3, 2018 • [0 Comments](#)



By SHERIDAN CYR

STAFF WRITER

DRIVERS WANTED—Senior Transportation Services, Inc. and the United Way are looking for volunteer drivers for a free transportation service in Southington for seniors aged 55 and up. STS offers rides to doctor appointments, pharmacies, banks, hairdressers and barbers. To volunteer with STS, call (860) 224-7117.

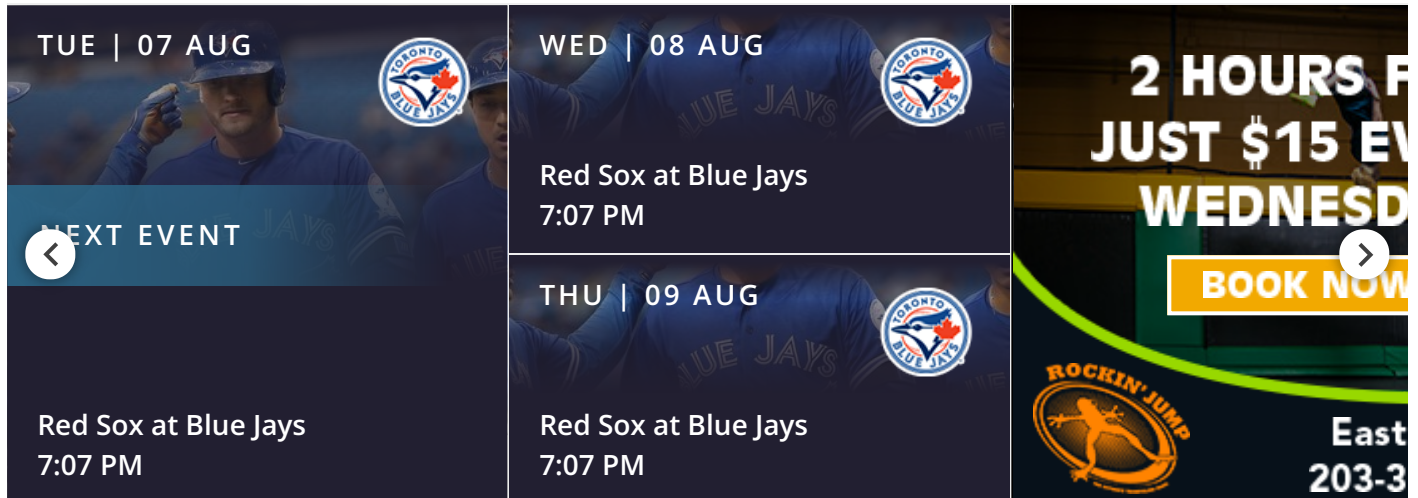
“We found there is a glaring need for rides for seniors in town,” said Jack Eisenmann, executive director of the United Way of Southington. “Services like the Calendar House transportation and Dial-a-Ride serve an important role, but can be restrictive. STS offers much more.”

Starting last November, STS was able to expand their free transportation service in Southington for seniors ages 55 and up with the help of a \$40,000 grant distributed by the Main Street Community Foundation from the Bradley Henry Barnes and Leila Upson Barnes Memorial grant. With numbers of senior clients climbing, the United way and STS are now calling on locals to volunteer as drivers.

“Main Street Community Foundation stepped in, like they always do, and now clients can receive rides for free with no membership or ride fee. Our numbers for seniors looking for rides are increasing, and we are so pleased to offer this service to the town,” said Eisenmann. “Now, we need drivers to pair up with our clients.”

STS serves an important role in Southington, where there is no public transportation and the demand for rides at Calendar House is too high to support. The number of rides offered in Southington by STS doubled from fiscal

year 2016-2017 to 2017-2018, jumping from 392 to 692, and executive director Nancy Morrissey said the current year is projected to reach over 800 rides.



“The ‘baby boomers’ are now at the age where they’re retiring and needing services like these,” said Morrissey. “For many, they don’t drive anymore. They may be unable to, or maintaining a car is too expensive for them. They may not have family nearby who are able to take the time off to drive them places, so this service is important to them.”

STS has received funding from the United Way for several years. Every three months, the United Way participates in a stakeholders meeting to discuss needs in the community.

“The United Way came to us with their application for the grant. They said there was this excessive demand for transportation for seniors,” said Susan Sadecki, executive director at MSCF. “The grant provided the opportunity for all seniors, regardless of income, to sign up. We love the concept, and it is a social opportunity for both the seniors and the drivers. We were pleased to provide this grant.”

While most senior centers don’t offer rides until their regular business hours, Morrissey said she has personally provided rides to clients as early as 4:45 a.m. Some transportation services are limited to stay within the boundaries of the town, but STS will bring clients as far as 20 miles from their local senior center and at times will make exceptions to go beyond that.

STS currently has 33 volunteer drivers, and are looking to reach 50 as soon as possible. Drivers use their own personal vehicles for rides. All drivers are subject to a background check. While the job itself is voluntary and does not receive compensation, drivers are reimbursed for mileage and are provided a supplementary insurance policy above their own automobile policy.

“The reaction from our clients who receive these rides is just amazing, and they love their drivers,” said Morrissey. “Many of our clients, I would say close to 95 percent, live alone, so once they’re with that driver it’s like a companion. And, drivers benefit from that relationship as well.”

Morrissey shared that one driver came to STS to volunteer and was adamant about only taking the bare minimum amount of drives: twice per month. Since April, that driver has given 68 rides.