

Driver Shortage

Imagine being a low income senior, veteran or person with a disability with little or no family around and no personal transportation options to remain independent. This could pose to be a pretty lonely scenario. There are many of our local citizens that are precisely living in this situation. So what do they do to get groceries, prescriptions or visit the doctor, the very basic needs in life? They rely on our local social service network that provides volunteer drivers to help!

Agencies rely on help for our most vulnerable citizens with necessary and critical errands and appointments. Training is provided, some that could even reduce your personal auto insurance premiums. Mileage reimbursement is also available.

Some drivers choose to stay in their local area and limit service to provide a ride twice a month to help someone get their groceries. Be that friendly face, help push the cart and reach for items on high shelves. Help carry bags and provide a safe and enjoyable outing for your client. Forming a bond and making new friendships is icing on the cake! Other drivers don't mind the longer trips to help clients reach doctor's appointments with specialists in another town. The mileage reimbursement not only fills the tank but helps with wear and tear on your vehicle too.

Judy Nicholson has been a proud volunteer driver for the Mason Transit Authority (MTA) for the last 10 years. In an average month Judy drives 1,000 miles transporting senior citizens to medical appointments and essential errands. Judy is



well aware of the importance of her job and the positive effect volunteering has on the community. "I volunteer because I firmly believe each person in a community is obligated to give back in the best way that they can", she says.

But Judy's dedication is above and beyond, having gauged 12,367 volunteer miles in 2015. MTAs Volunteer Coordinator, Haley Wooten, says, "Judy is an amazing volunteer. She is truly an asset to MTA's Volunteer Driver Program, with her dedication, positive attitude, and genuine heart she is a core part of making the Volunteer Driver program work". There's no doubt that Judy will be a volunteer driver for years to come, and she recommends volunteering to everyone for the rewards it can provide "I have recommended volunteering for the past ten years I have been doing this" she says. "It is interesting and educational and I have met many, many wonderful people".

Thank you Judy, for all of your volunteer efforts! For more info about becoming a driver, please contact Jennifer Thompson, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Volunteer Coordinator, at 360-943-2773, ext. 21 or email jthompson@united-way-thurston.org