

Seniors' charity needs volunteer drivers

Ray Rideout is in his early 60s and retired. He maintains an active lifestyle through various hobbies and activities, but he knows that as the years pass, that may all change.

That's why he volunteers at the Seniors Assisted Transportation Society of Greater Edmonton (SATS) as a driver.

"I'm watching how (seniors) are coping with losing their eyesight, mobility and dealing with being alone for a lot of the time, and yet most of them

are still cheerful. We live in a society that doesn't talk about declining health and aging, yet it's a fact of life. My connection with the seniors in my life helps

me confront it."

He explains how caring for his ailing mother-in-law—driving her to appointments and taking care of her—shortly before she died got him thinking.

"There's gotta be a lot of other people without relatives to drive them around," he says. When he saw a poster from SATS seeking volunteer drivers, it was a natural fit for him.

Anna Der, executive director of SATS, hopes to recruit more volunteers to meet the

growing demand for volunteer drivers.

"Transportation is vital to well-being," Der says. With so many older, low-income, frail seniors



lacking affordable transportation options, accessing basic needs like food and medicine becomes an everyday challenge.

GROWING DEMAND

The nonprofit organization has been working hard to meet growing demands from the community, but times can be tough when more and more seniors are added to the waiting list.

"Sometimes seniors end up waiting for years for a driver," Der admits.

"We have about 50 drivers, but we'd like to see that number at 100 so we can serve more seniors. That extra 50 could carry 300 seniors."

To make the volunteer recruitment process easier for potential

volunteers, SATS arranges for a security clearance and pays for a driver abstract that's needed to ensure volunteers are safe drivers. In the event of an accident or if the volunteer is hurt, the organization has purchased coverage from the Workers' Compensation Board.

Der also adds that the organization hasn't had one single accident involving a senior in a vehicle since it opened for business on 2001.

Aside from a good driving record and adequate insurance, the only other requirement is that volunteers need to be 18 years and older. It also helps to enjoy spending time with seniors. Rideout mentions one of the seniors he drives and describes how he enjoys learning about her life growing up in South Africa, and the journey she's made to Edmonton.

"These people have accumu-

lated so much wisdom. I find it a privilege to drive her and talk with her," he says.

Der hopes to find others like Rideout who want to make a noticeable contribution to deservng seniors.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

"You can really make an immediate difference," Der emphasizes. "You can feel it that day when you pick them up, take them to an appointment and take them home. They get their needs met because you've enabled it."

To learn how you can volunteer with the Seniors Assisted Transportation Society, visit their website at www.satsfedmonton.org or call 780-732-1221.

For more information or suggestions for story ideas, please contact Evelyn Pham at epham@volunteeredmonton.com, call 780-732-6655 or check out our website at www.volunteeredmonton.com.

Play it safe this holiday weekend
DON'T DRINK & DRIVE

While you enjoy the long weekend, if you drink, don't drive.

Edmonton St. Albert
Constituency Office
Brent Rathgeber, Q.C.
Member of Parliament www.brentrathgeber.ca

St. Albert Office:
#220, 20 Perron Street
St. Albert, AB T8N 1E4
Phone: 780.459.0809
Hours: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Email: RathgB1@parl.gc.ca

Edmonton Office:
#107, 12222-137 Ave NW
Tel: 780.475.6906
Tuesday & Thursday, 9 am-4:30pm
Or by appointment



**"Drinking and Driving:
There are dumber things,
but it's a very short list."**

Thomas A. Lukaszuk, MLA
Edmonton - Castle Downs

Constituency Office, 12120 - 161 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5X 5M8
Phone 780 414-0705 Fax 780 414-0707
edmonton.castledowns@assembly.ca

www.thomasmla.com

