

Mobility Matters Volunteering

People often ask why I volunteer to drive for Mobility Matters or as often ask: “What is Mobility Matters”? Mobility Matters is often a last hope for seniors who no longer drive. Mobility Matters operates throughout Contra Costa County offering two programs. The larger one is to provide one ride a week to seniors to the doctors or to go shopping. The other program offers rides to disabled veterans, no matter their age.

Mobility Matters is funded largely by grants and is dependent on a large cadre of volunteer drivers to accomplish its mission. Currently Mobility Matters provides well over 200 rides per week with the list of people needing rides forever growing. Any senior who no longer drives can apply for assistance from Mobility Matters. Each client is interviewed and assessed as to whether the program fits their needs. We can assist people with walkers and canes but cannot assist with wheel chair bound seniors. We offer door thru door service. That means (unlike, para transit, Uber, etc.) I can enter my client’s house to help them get things together to go and when we arrive at the doctor’s office I go in with them and wait until they are ready to go home. If I take a client shopping I go with them into the store and help with their shopping. When I take them home I help take the groceries inside.

So why do I volunteer? Because I am able to, I can afford the time and vehicle costs and, most importantly, because I enjoy it. The people I have driven are each unique, each one has something to share that often provides me with another view of life. I enjoy hearing about their different experiences and backgrounds. Can you imagine what an alert 94 or 95 year old can tell you about the past?

For an example, one of my clients, a second generation Japanese-American were talking about taking trips and I said I wanted to take an Amtrak sleeper car up the coast to Seattle. He then told me that he had been on a train once, to go from San Francisco to an internment camp during World War II. Wow, what different perceptions of trains. From there our conversations have explored our so very different backgrounds and perceptions about life. One thing that ties us together is our love of living in the Bay area. Another client talked about how between she and her husband, they had a total of 8 holes-in-one in golf, and then proudly told me her husband only had one of them.

Being able to help these seniors and getting to interact with them brings me joy with each trip. I am paying it forward as I know transportation for non-driving seniors is totally and completely inadequate in Contra Costa County. I don’t expect that it will be any better when I have to give up my keys.

As the Dali Llama once said: “If you want to be happy, help someone.” I do and I am.