Thank you for your continued support and guidance as we embrace changes needed for the COVID-19 environment. We are pleased to have the opportunity to meet so many important needs during this critical time.

One of these needs is transportation to enhance mobility and accessibility. Through our award-winning Ride Connection Program, we are able to support the transportation needs of many individuals through rides to medical appointments and other essential locations. As reflected in this issue of Engage at Any Age, transportation is a priority need for older adults and individuals of all ages. Indeed, transportation and rides make important differences for our overall quality of life. Therefore, we are pleased to recognize the importance of the Ride Connection Program and announce two recent awards.

Ride Connection, officially organized in 2011, continues to grow and evolve every year. It is a person-focused program that serves the Richmond Metropolitan Region and its main goal is to address individual needs. This innovative program schedules rides and also provides vital information about available transportation options to the public, with focus on the needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities and caregivers.

In addition to providing the most appropriate rides based on individual needs, Ride Connection also serves as a clearing house for a range of resources and service options. In this way, Ride Connections facilitates the most cost-effective transportation service for older adults therefore, provides mobility management.

Ride Connections is also designated as the Human Services Transportation Coordinating Entity for the Richmond Metropolitan Region. In this regard, the program is bringing together a number of transportation service providers, community partners and advocates for planning and collaboration to address a shared vision for improvements, enhancements and new opportunities.

We are extremely pleased to announce two recent awards received by Ride Connection:

- Honorable Mention from the Commonwealth Council on Aging’s 2020 Best Practices on Aging Awards for its impressiv operating and innovative approaches to service delivery. This award is facilitated by the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services.

- Aging Achievement Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A) for its innovation in providing transportation and mobility. This award will be presented during the N4A conference in September.

Many thanks to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, sponsors, supporters, community partners and Ride Connections staff for making these awards possible.

Congratulations to the Ride Connection staff and leaders!

Thank you,
Thelma Bland Watson
Ride Connections at Senior Connections — Here to Help

The Ride Connection Program at Senior Connections provides older adults and persons with disabilities with important transportation information and assists them with accessing necessary transportation to allow them to age safely at home and live healthy, connected lives.

The Ride Counselors with Ride Connection offer transportation education, travel training, and they connect individuals to critical transportation resources. Ride Connection also helps with discounted GRTC fixed-route tickets, Care Van tickets, and Chesterfield Access vouchers on a limited basis.

The most critical service offered by Ride Connection is transportation for medical appointments. Through contracts with local transportation providers, Ride Counselors schedule round trip transportation to medical appointments. These transportation services are supportive and person-centered, and the program offers curb-to-curb, door-to-door, and threshold-to-threshold support for individuals with varying mobility needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges, and to meet these challenges the Ride Connection program has expanded the transportation services offered.

Typically, due to ridership levels and funding, the Ride Connection program provides support for up to two rides a month. Due to the pandemic, Ride Connection now offers up to four rides a month (or more under special circumstances).

Under normal circumstances, transportation is provided for medical appointments only. However, for an individual with diabetes, kidney failure or heart disease, transportation to medical appointments is critical, even during a pandemic. Some chronic medical conditions require a specialized diet and without transportation, some older adults and individuals with disabilities are unable to maintain a nutritious diet and are struggling to manage their chronic diseases.

And with other informal services being affected, such as public transportation, many older adults are unable or uncomfortable utilizing services like bus transportation. Furthermore, shutdowns in the community are making it harder for families to help the older adult members they support.

To meet these changing needs, the Ride Connection program has contracted with new transportation providers. VIP and Associates, Inc. and UZURV (part of Hanover Rides) are top providers, and our transportation providers list now includes EasyPeasy Transportation, Inc., TriCare Medical, Inc., and Richmond Taxi.

And with this growing list of providers, Ride Connection Counselors make sure to match program participants with the best provider to meet their needs.

In addition to providing more rides to more places with more vendors, Ride Counselors are also performing wellness checks with all program participants, especially those whom they have not heard from during the pandemic.

When our Ride Counselors hear of a need that a program participant has, they are making referrals to other programs.

For more information, call (804) 672-4495. Our Ride Connection Counselors will return your call within two business days.

Ride Connection Guideline Changes for COVID-19

Our Ride Counselors are screening each individual rider by asking questions about their risk and exposure to COVID-19. If someone screens as possibly having symptoms or exposure, we are asking them to postpone the ride and contact their medical provider.

During this time, our drivers are not able to provide hands-on assistance or assist with bags. Drivers are also not able to enter provider offices or rider’s homes.

Due to the Virginia Governor’s Executive Order 63, all riders and drivers must maintain social distance and wear a mask.

For individuals who use public, fixed-route transportation, if you are uncomfortable or unable to use those services (or have not yet signed up for those services), we can accommodate a ride for you.

We have temporarily suspended fees for the Ride Connections services. Donations are always appreciated.

For more information, please call the Ride Connection Hotline at (804) 672-4495.

Ride Connection Long-Term Outcome Goal:

Older adults and persons with disabilities will have the knowledge of and access to transportation for medical and non-medical needs to age in place at home and live a healthy, socially connected life.
Stories from the Road — Riders Share Their Stories

“I really appreciate Senior Connections, especially transportation to my medical appointments and grocery shopping. It is more than just a ride! You cannot put a dollar value on this service. I feel very secure with you guys. It gives me hope.”

David Ross, a born go-getter, was the first member of his family to graduate from high school and attend college. Mr. Ross was born in Richmond and raised by his grandmother in Baltimore. He returned to Richmond as a young man and attended the Richmond Professional Institute (now Virginia Commonwealth University). Richmond is where he made his home and where he raised two daughters and four sons, delivering his youngest son.

Mr. Ross began his career as a youth counselor for an experimental program at the Virginia Department of Corrections. “I wasn’t much older than the program participants at that time. I was a tough little guy and street-savvy. I knew how to relate to and empathize with these kids,” says Mr. Ross. He worked at Wheat First Securities and 3M before turning to Richmond as a young man and attending the Richmond Professional Institute (now Virginia Commonwealth University). Richmond is where he made his home and where he raised two daughters and four sons, delivering his youngest son.

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In a desire to give back again, Mr. Ross became a mentor for the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Richmond. After serving as a mentor in the athletic program called “Hoop-It-Up,” he was hired as the assistant director of their summer program.

After retiring when he was 63 years old, Mr. Ross suffered a major stroke followed by a heart attack which left him in a coma for two weeks. “I went through a period when I was on 21 different medications.” As a result, Mr. Ross lost his home and everything he owned.

But he is making a comeback. Mr. Ross credits his faith for the comeback, and at age 70, continues to be forward-thinking. His latest plans are to attend culinary school to become a certified chef, and he wants to be a homeowner once again.

More than Just a Ride. Stories that Touch our Hearts.

Each month, the Ride Connection program at Senior Connections receives 200 to 300 calls, and Ride Counselors provide information about transportation options, connect people to transportation providers, advocate with Medicaid-funded transportation, and schedule rides.

A big part of a Ride Counselor’s job is listening. Feelings of loneliness and isolation have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among older adults and individuals with disabilities. Our Ride Counselors share their stories here.

Mr. B is a caregiver for his elderly mother. He has a heart condition that leaves him short of breath with the simplest of tasks.

Mr. B. had wonderful things to say about a Ride Connection transportation provider after a trip to the grocery store. The driver volunteered to help with his groceries, even though Mr. B. could manage on his own.

“They [VIP drivers] were absolutely great. They were on time and were friendly and courteous. Best of all, they didn’t ask me too much about my health condition.” Mr. B. likes his privacy and appreciated the driver helping him without prying too much into his situation.

Mr. B is much like Mrs. I, who shared similar sentiments. “I am so appreciative of you all getting me to the store. Things have been crazy lately and I get nervous leaving the house. The drivers are so nice and helpful. You guys are great.”

Mr. M. is a 58-year-old rider with disabilities and stage 4 colon cancer. Margaret Robinson, a Ride Connection Ride Counselor, can hear the exhaustion in his voice as he calls for appointments. He is also the father of a five-year-old girl who has health concerns as well.

Margaret looks out for Mr. M. and, in addition to scheduling rides to his cancer treatments, she listens when he needs to vent his feelings. “I am so glad I can be there for him,” says Margaret. “When I have trouble reaching him, I reach out to his older daughter to make sure he is okay, or to provide her with information he may need.”

And recently Mr. M. received great news! He was approved for Medicaid and he can now use the transportation benefit provided by Medicaid.

Living alone during COVID-19 is hard. For some of our program participants, like Mrs. R, the pandemic is harder due to her mobility challenges.

Until recently, Mrs. R was driving herself despite the challenges driving caused her. She had to use her wheelchair to get to the car. She had to put her wheelchair in the trunk and use her rollator to get to the driver’s door. And after securing the rollator, she would shuffle to the driver’s side and get in. It was an arduous process that became more difficult after her infu-sion therapy.

Hearing about her struggles, a Ride Connection Ride Counselor arranged transportation for her with door-to-door pick-up and drop-off using a wheelchair lift van. Mrs. R is now able to get to her infusion therapy without all of the challenges.

And since drivers are not allowed into facilities because of the pandemic, Mrs. R’s Ride Counselor made arrangements for a nurse at the infusion center to meet Mrs. R at the provider’s door. Mrs. R said, “Thank you, thank you. Everyone was extremely helpful, and the transportation provider always gets me there on time.” Mrs. R was so appreciative that she even sent VIP & Associates a thank-you note.

Ride Connection

Our goal at Ride Connection is to help older adults and persons with disabilities know about, and access to, transportation for medical and non-medical needs to help them age in place at home and live a healthy and socially-connected life.

Adults age 60 and over (and adults under age 60 receiving SSA disability benefits) are eligible for service.

Ride Connection:
• Provides information on mobility planning, education and referrals.
• Provides transportation to a limited number of medical appointments each month.
• Provides assistance with accessing public transportation.

For more information, please contact the Ride Connection Hotline at (804) 672-4495.

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News from Our Transportation Partners

Chesterfield County Mobility Services

Chesterfield County Mobility Services continues to serve all Chesterfield County residents eligible for this transportation service. During the COVID pandemic, our staff is working virtually and we are processing all registrations through mail, fax or email. Mobility Services staff process all registrations daily and mails them out immediately. Chesterfield County Libraries will be selling vouchers through their curbside service. Central Library, Meadowdale Library, and North Courthouse Road Library are open to the public; however, curbside pickup is still encouraged at these locations.

Voucher sales can still be handled through the mail by using our Voucher Order Form (PDF). It is taking between 8 and 10 days for Mobility Services to receive orders through the mail, and staff are processing all sales daily and mailing them out immediately. With that, it could take up to 14 to 16 days to get vouchers.

With the COVID-19 or coronavirus warning, we are recommending Access On Demand service, when possible, to ensure more social distancing, and require that all passengers wear a mask.

Chesterfield County Mobility Services is focused on improving existing transportation options and coordinating a community-wide transportation service network comprised of the transportation providers to meet our community needs. Persons in need may include older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals without personal vehicles.

Services Available in Chesterfield County:

- Access Chesterfield, curb-to-curb shared ride service (804) 706-2796
- Access On Demand, door-to-door - point-to-point service for riders registered with Access Chesterfield: Dependacare On Demand (804) 745-1818 Owl, Inc. Transportation (804) 930-8448 Roundtrip (804) 277-4866
- UZURV 8 (804) 655-0255
- GRTC Routes (804) 358-4782; V2X Commonwealth Express (CHF) III along U.S. Route 1, from Food Lion at Falling Creek to John Tyler Community College.
- Care Van service available for those that live ¾ of a mile beyond (Route III) GRTC’s fixed route bus lines.

Powhatan County – Ride Assist Services (RAS)

In Virginia’s current COVID-19 status, we have resumed accepting ride requests from registered riders for medical appointments while keeping distancing and protection a priority.

Eligible Riders: Seniors age 60+, able to walk with cane or walker, unable to drive themselves, can register as a rider in the program and be able to make ride requests for medical appointments.

Registering: An eligible senior may call (804) 698-0438 or email RAServices.PVA@gmail.com to have registration sent to them via mail or email.

Drivers: Ride requests are sent out to the volunteer driver team. RAS will continue adding more drivers to the program, as the number of registered riders has grown significantly since March. Please direct anyone interested in driving for RAS to the same contact info. Drivers only accept individual rides that suit their schedule, and each driver is provided masks, gloves and sanitizing products.

Hanover Senior Rides

In late March, when Governor Northam asked citizens to stay home to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, we began curtailing the rides provided by our volunteer drivers. We could not secure face masks or sanitizers to use for cleaning hands and vehicles, so we stopped all volunteer rides on April 1.

The most critical rides, such as those for dialysis, were assigned to our paid service provider, UZURV. For those clients who need food, we set up arrangements for them to call in their orders to the food pantry and a Hanover Senior Ride volunteer makes the delivery.

Over the past four months, rides for seniors have averaged 85 trips per month. Before the COVID-19 shutdown, trips averaged about 425 a month. We are now making plans to gradually begin having our volunteers provide rides to our senior clients. However, we do not expect to reach full operation again until there is a reliable COVID-19 vaccine.

For further information, Hanover residents living in ZIP Codes 23005, 23059 and 23069, please call ACES (Ashland Christian Emergency Services) at (804) 543-6115.

Bay Transit of Warsaw

III Commerce Pkwy, Warsaw, VA 22572

Bay Transit continues to operate many of our services and can be contacted by calling the Bay Transit Ride Line at (877) 869-6046.

Hanover Dash

Hanover Dash continues to offer service to Hanover County Residents 60 and above or disabled. We are currently providing prescheduled trips with no fee assessed until the end of September 2020. Applications can be submitted online at HanoverDASH.org, or request an application by calling (804) 365-DASH (3274).

Goochland Cares

Goochland Cares is a volunteer-staffed transportation service for ambulatory patients (those able to walk unassisted). They resumed providing rides on July 1. They have the capacity to provide about 20 rides per week and provided 21 rides in July. Goochland residents please call (804) 556-6260 to register.

Road to Recovery

Due to public safety concerns related to COVID-19, your American Cancer Society is not currently setting up or coordinating patient rides to cancer-related appointments. We will let the public know when our conditions change. For other ACS support, please reach out to us via live chat, or call our Cancer Helpline at (800) 227-2345.

Donate to Senior Connections

Ride Connection

$18 can give a book of tickets to a Care Van or Chesterfield ACCESS rider
$25 can take someone to the doctor
$50 can help give someone a ride to dialysis

Complete form below and mail to
Senior Connections, 24 E. Cary St., Richmond, VA 23219
or visit https://seniorconnections-va.org/giving/donate/

First name: ______________________ Last name: ______________________
Organization: __________________________ Phone: __________________________
e-Mail: __________________________ Address: __________________________
City: __________________________ State: __________________________ Zip Code: __________________________
Donation Amount $ (US$): __________________________
Purpose/destination for your donation: ________________________________________________________________
In memory/honor of: ________________________________________________________________
☑️ I wish my donation to remain anonymous.
☑️ Please send me more information on how I may be of more assistance to Senior Connections.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE for IMPORTANT INFO & EVENTS
seniorconnections-va.org

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

@seniorconnectionscaa
@seniorconnectionscaa
@scceaa