

## **The Driftwood, November 2009**

### **Salt Spring Island Foundation at work in the Community by Pat Burkette**

Imagine yourself alone at the age of eighty, craving company and a view beyond familiar paces and spaces, and you'll understand the importance of the Salt Spring Island Foundation's help in purchasing a Salt Spring Community Services(SSCS) van used for a seniors excursion program. Generous Foundation donors contributed half of the van's purchase price.

SSCS Wellness Programs Coordinator Sharon Glover, who guides the excursion program, says the van trips give seniors a chance to have a day out off-island and offer socialization and stimulation along the way. "It's a wonderful, comfortable van," she adds, and is much appreciated by seniors making journeys.

Glover says the excursion program is meant for seniors who are able to manage independently, both mentally, and physically, albeit with a cane or walker. "We try to reach out to people who are needing some friendly contact. Most of the seniors who have been taking part in the program so far," says Glover, "are eighty years plus."

Van driver Deb Stevenson, Excursion Program Coordinator Anne Sutfin, and six senior passengers set out on an excursion once or twice a month. "We try to plan interesting excursions and make trips between a Monday and a Thursday," explains Glover, "so the seniors can use their gold card on the ferries".

Seniors pay their own way on each trip, and for the past couple of years, a popular trip has been afternoon tea at the Empress Hotel in January. "It's half price for seniors then," explains Glover. Seniors themselves actually play a big part in excursion evaluation and planning. "They fill out an evaluation form every time they go on a trip and assess whether the excursion was successful."

Sutfin says that evaluation forms aside, seniors are quick to express their appreciation for trips. "It gives seniors who can't get out something to do. One lady, who's in her nineties and bright as a button, said these trips are wonderful for her, especially since she has no close neighbors or family on the island." The eighty-three year old Sutfin has a list of about sixty seniors wanting to make trips. "I sit down with the list beforehand and try to get people who haven't gone in quite awhile."

A recent trip destination is a perennial favorite- the Crow and Gate pub in Cedar on Vancouver Island. "Deb takes the back roads if she can, to make the drive more interesting," says Sutfin. "We had a great group the last time we went- we were all singing." When she's asked for a song list, Sutfin says, "Oh, old songs - " Down by the Old Mill Stream", "Sweet Genevieve" and "I Been Workin' on the Railroad".

A van full of singing seniors or the sounds of silence? No question, Foundation dollars well spent!

For more information on the seniors excursion program, call:

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