**Giving a lift to those in need**

**Santa Clara, November 2022**: Seventy-five-year-old Lillian Squiers no longer drives, and macular degeneration robbed her 74-year-old husband Larry of his ability to pilot a car years ago. They had nowhere to turn for transportation. Then they found Sourcewise — a nonprofit in Santa Clara County that offers free rides to medical appointments to adults 60 years old or disabled.

“I don’t know what we would do without them,” Larry said during an interview at the couple’s apartment in Gilroy.

The couple estimated they use the service two to three times a month. Lillian described the drivers as “very friendly, caring and understanding.” But funding for the vital service is running thin. Sourcewise is seeking $10,000 through Wish Book to help keep the service in place through at least September 2023.

“These funds will give us an additional three to four months, depending on how many clients use the service,” said South County Services Director Rosie Jimenez.

Sourcewise added the medical appointment rides to its existing transit service program during the pandemic. Jimenez said the agency formed a partnership with Morgan Hill Taxi and used Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act funding to help cover the cost of more than 650 rides between July 1, 2021, and Sep. 30, 2022.

“Morgan Hill Taxi has been a great partner,” Jimenez said. “They know why we’re doing it and they give us a discounted rate.”

Jimenez said Sourcewise also has three drivers and a small fleet of vehicles. One driver helps clients get to medical appointments and run errands. The others only provide rides before 9 a.m. and after 1 p.m., when they aren’t ferrying others to senior centers. For now, the rides are available just to residents of Morgan Hill, San Martin, and Gilroy. To use the service, clients must either be at least 60 years old or have a disability. Jimenez said many clients have health insurance that does not cover the cost of transportation to appointments.

“Transportation has been a really big issue,” the director said. “This fills that gap.”

The service ensures clients are receiving the routine medical care they need to age in place and maintain their current quality of life as much as possible, Jimenez said.

“If they don’t go to these appointments,” she said, “sometimes they end up in the hospital.”

For example, clients who are unable to visit a doctor to adjust a prescription medication that is making them dizzy could fall and injure themselves, Jimenez said. Jimenez said other residents have expressed appreciation for the service, with one going as far as to leave tips for the drivers. The money was collected and returned.

“This is a free service,” she said.

Along with rides, the service provides residents, many of whom are isolated and lonely, with a human connection, Jimenez said. They get to know the drivers and share their life stories with them.

“We kind of become an extended family to them,” she said.

The CARES Act funding for the service ran out in September, but Sourcewise is aiming to provide medical appointment rides to South County residents for another 12 months, Jimenez said. The success of that endeavor will hinge on a reallocation of agency funds as well as an influx of funds from outside sources such as Wish Book. The agency is also exploring the possibility of extending and expanding the service – something Jimenez said would likely require a mix of local, state and federal funding.

“We partnered with Morgan Hill Taxi because we don’t have the bandwidth,” she said. “It would be great if we could get an additional driver or additional vehicles, and then we would do this on our own and it might offset the cost. For now, this is what we can do.” And, for the Squiers, that’s been a godsend.

“They are good to me and my husband,” Lillian said, adding that the drivers keep a stepstool on hand to help her climb into some of the taller vehicles. “We are very thankful.”

**How to help**

Donations will help [Sourcewise](https://mysourcewise.com/) pay for roundtrip rides for seniors in Morgan Hill, Gillroy or San Martin with Morgan Hill Taxi, and will coordinate rides for those seniors who need transportation to medical appointments in northern Santa Clara County.

**Goal: $10,000**

[Donate to Sourcewise](https://ssl.charityweb.net/wishbook/event/?ProductID=7404-sourcewi-22)

[Donate to the general fund](https://ssl.charityweb.net/wishbook/event/?ProductID=6718-wishbook-17404)

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