

Our Members Tell Their Stories About Services Needed for an Aging Population

In 2003 Fairfax County had almost 8.3 % of its population over age 65. By 2020 this is expected to jump to 11.6%, according to Bob Harper of the Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke. Fairfax County officials are well aware of this changing demographic. We are fortunate to have a number of county-funded programs in place, even though some have been pared down in recent budget cuts. Most of them have means limitations that many of our members believe are too low. This collection of stories was planned to be the information-gathering and sharing phase of a longer-term look at where the greatest needs are, with an eventual examination of our present position on Human Services. We welcome your feedback at unit meetings, to the league Office, or by e-mail to loismpage@cox.net

By Lois Page, Karol McKalip, Kathleen Pablo, Ginger Shea, Sarah Mayhew, and a number of story contributors.

“Good Friends” (Member "A")

"A" is 85 and lives alone. She is a writer of essays and memoirs. A story she wrote about her correspondence with a British pen pal for over 50 years is in the Imperial War Museum and several other places. She has written and received letters from a number of important people and enjoys writing poetry.

"A" feels that the most important service she requires is transportation. She no longer drives. She called the **Fairfax Area Agency on Aging** (703 324-5438) in the Department of Family Services, Adult and Aging Division, and the County assigned her a social worker who called on her one time and interviewed her to see if housing, food and heat were adequate. She urged "A" to call her if there was a need. The social worker's mandate seemed to be to check on the elderly who live alone.

[Editor's Note: Persons seeking a complete list of services offered by the agency, and especially the criteria for receiving the services, should either call the number above or go to the website: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults. The agency's address is 12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite, 709, Fairfax 22735.]

Then "A" received a call from the Agency's Volunteer Coordinator, Christie Eliot, and she was provided with a car and driver to take her to the grocery store and to several medical appointments one day every two weeks. She says she and her driver, always the same person, have become good friends. The driver is a volunteer.

A community and faith-based organization called the **Shepherd Center** helps "A" if she needs rides on other

occasions. There are about 80 Shepherd Centers around the country; "A" attends one in the Oakton-Vienna area. The center's goal is to help seniors live a better, fuller life. They put out a newsletter with volunteers helping with the mailouts. "A" enjoys lectures and luncheons there plus the occasion volunteer "taxi" service. She says the center is staffed mostly by volunteers with one paid person. They often meet in a faith community's location. It is open to seniors 50 and over with no dues charged, but they do accept donations from time to time.



[Editor's Note: Among the several organizations that gather volunteers to provide services for the elderly are three Shepherd's Centers located in Fairfax County, loosely affiliated with Shepherd's Centers of America (www.shepherdcenters.org). The centers include the Shepherd Centers of Oakton-Vienna, Annandale-Springfield, and Fairfax-Burke. Each center is served by a partnership of individuals, faith communities, businesses and civic organizations in its area, from whom the volunteers are drawn, though not exclusively. The Centers serve anyone over the age of 50 who cares to use their services. There is no means test. All three have office space in one of the faith communities in their areas; Oakton-Vienna has a paid part time executive director. Although run almost entirely by volunteers, they receive minimal funding from the partners mentioned above

Bob Harper who is on the board of the Fairfax-Burke Center (www.fairfax-burkesc.org) says that most of the centers provide the same services that his does: "Friendly Callers"—volunteers who make phone calls to shut ins on a regular basis; "Visitors"—who pay visits to the ill and those in nursing homes; "Handy Repairman"—who makes simple

household repairs; "Transportation"—their most extensive and needed service for which they offer 35 drivers who volunteer to take non-drivers to the grocery and perhaps a doctor visit every other week. He says a surprising number of elderly people do not have close family near by and very much need transportation. The drivers do not ask for compensation but if it is offered, they put it in the general fund. He says that their motto is "Seniors Serving Seniors," as the volunteers fall into the senior age group as well as the people they are assisting.

Every other month the Fairfax-Burke Center serves lunch for \$8 to an average of 125 seniors at rotating faith community locations. The lunch is prepared by Fairfax County Public Schools' culinary arts program. According to Arlene Darke, Chairman of the Board, twice a year, for a six-week period, the center offers once-a-week classes in exercise, enrichment, and health subjects.

Fairfax-Burke has office space donated by the Bethlehem Lutheran Church on Little River Turnpike in Fairfax. Volunteers answer the phone (703 323-4788) between 10 and 3 every day.

"Not Eligible" (Member "B")

"B" is also in her 80's, but unlike "A", she does not live alone. She also no longer drives. No doubt because of combined retirement income, she and her husband are not eligible for county transportation help that she also considers a major need in her life. If she had a magic wand, she would wish for the income eligibility levels to be raised so that more people could qualify for transportation help. In addition to the car and driver arrangement enjoyed by "A", she understands that those eligible can buy a booklet that allows them a reduced fare from taxis. She also is helped by Shepherd Center volunteers.

"Concerned About Cuts"

Jane writes: "I am concerned about the cuts on senior and handicap transportation in the Fairfax budget. According to the paper, the program Seniors on the Go is to be totally removed and FastTran is to be cut. Could you give me an update and if League could address the issue, especially FastTran?"

[Editor's Note: In response to some of the early stories for this study, Sherry Zachry included concerns about cuts in services for the aging in LWFA's testimony to the Board of Supervisors in March. Many of the proposed cuts were restored, but in some cases will cost somewhat more for the users, based on means. According to Sally Hottle, the Springfield representative on the Commission on Aging,

703-644-6041, the current status of the threatened services is as follows:

- 1. Annandale Adult Day Health Care Center, previously on the chopping block, will NOT be closed. Participation fees will be increased by 15%. "No one will be denied access due to inability to pay. Participants on limited or fixed incomes will not be denied services."*
- 2. Ditto for Groveton Senior Center.*
- 3. The Senior+ Program (for those who need more care and attention than just coming and participating in activities at Senior Centers) will now cost \$50 per month.*
- 4. All programs will be re-evaluated considering number of participants, cost, and effectiveness. (In so many words, there may be more on the chopping block.)*
- 5. There will be a fee for users of FastTran transportation. See earlier wording about ability to pay and more detail in a separate boxed material at the end the VOTER]*

"Aging is Contagious"

A respondent who does not want her name used, also in her 80's, feels that people don't want to talk about aging. Many have not observed aging people close up and don't want to be reminded that they too will age. She jokes that people avoid the elderly for fear aging is contagious.

She also finds transportation to be a huge need. Because of ill health and vision problems, no one in this respondent's family can drive. She finds herself not eligible for help and paying huge amounts of money for taxis. She reports a bill of \$130 for one expedition that involved providing help for an ailing relative. If she travels to NIH for a doctor visit, it costs \$120 round trip. One of her medical specialists is in DC, and it costs \$70 in taxi fares for a round-trip visit.

As for grocery shopping, she has no option but to take a taxi. She points out that Giant's PeaPod grocery delivery service requires that orders must be made on a computer, which many seniors do not have.



[Editor's Note: A call to the Pea Pod people revealed the following information: they used to take orders over the phone but it is time consuming, and the program got too big to handle it. The representative urged seniors without computers to find a friend or relative to help them make their orders. A minimum order of \$50 costs \$9.95 to deliver, between \$75 and \$100 costs \$7.95, and over \$100 costs \$6.95. She said that clients must realize that although Giant Foods fills the orders, the goods and prices are not the same as in the grocery store; they are separate companies.]

She says she has looked into retrofitted golf carts, which have received a lot of interest recently. A local company (Vienna) is selling them. However, they are restricted to streets with no higher than 35 miles per hour speed limit and she fears a driver may not even be able to cross a busier street.

This interviewee made several other observations of note. Regarding nursing homes, she says there are many jobs available on a professional level, but the more menial jobs that involve personal care for the elderly are lacking sufficient willing workers. She feels the various efforts to provide services for seniors to age in place “read well” but depend on the quality of the people who deliver the services. Her experience is that quality is lacking.

She relates a County initiative that needs upgrading. Libraries provide machines that help people with low vision and are promoted in County literature. However, her experience is that the machines are quite old and are in danger of being cut from a downturn budget. The respondent mentioned County-sponsored senior centers that are under the purview of the County Park Authority. The only service she was aware that they offer is driver education sessions.

[Editor's Note: Senior Centers provide a broad range of services. See county website above]

“A Speech Therapist?”

Helen's 89 year-old mother-in-law, who was having chewing problems, resides in one of the Sunrise facilities. To Helen's surprise, the staff there suggested she employ a speech therapist to investigate. She was very impressed with the “kind, respectful “speech therapist who works for a company called **Amedsys**. The woman consulted with the kitchen staff, checked with her client about her food preferences and together they worked out a way to prepare more easily chewable food that nonetheless looks like the regular food. Fortunately the therapist was paid for by insurance, as it costs \$140 an hour for the consultation.

Transportation issues enter into Helen's care for her mother-in-law as well. Her mother-in-law is in a wheel chair that Helen and her husband are not able to maneuver to get her to a doctor's appointment. They hire a temporary worker from **Homewell Senior Care** at \$92 an hour with a four-hour minimum to transport their loved one.

“I Need a Case Manager” (Member "C")

A 50-year member of LWVFA, "C" is in her late 80's, a recent widow and the sole support of a daughter with multiple health problems. She feels that the services

offered by the county are a mixed bag. The county does offer a number of sessions for seniors with information about where they can get help for various needs. She called this “a very good thing” and she has carefully saved all the information.

However, she says, the help that is offered doesn't always meet her needs. Her first shock, when her husband was in the hospital with what proved to be a terminal illness was that Medicare would not let him stay there when he was not improving. She requested a Case Manager from the County to be an advocate in case of need, but was told she was not eligible if she was making more than \$40,000 a year. When her income dropped below the limit, she was told she needed to have two of five disabilities to qualify.

When she was first widowed, she discovered that the sessions offered for the newly-widowed are very informal, run by the members, and are a monthly social event. Concerning some other services she has looked into, the Fairfax Station-Clifton area has a newly formed organization called “**Transition in Place Services**” (TIPS) that helps seniors find services that might be helpful. There is a membership fee of \$200 and clients may still have to pay for the services, although the group is hoping to develop volunteers and more funding. Clifton resident Fran McWhorter is president.

"C" says that the County Agency on Aging has monthly meetings with a representative from each district on a commission. This is for volunteers. (See reference to the Springfield representative on this commission.

Insurance Needs to Cover Home Health Care

Sarah's friend Karen made this observation about dealing with her mother-in-law's (MIL) care: “Many of the services we required and received for my MIL were via her health insurance, especially home care services in particular... PT, OT and also personal care services, as well as a visiting nurse . . . via a home health care firm which was covered by MIL's health insurance. If the services had not been covered by MIL's insurance, I am not sure what would have been available in the County.”

Sarah adds: “[Note] how important it is that health insurance cover home care services. This friend has two children—one high school and one middle school. She was juggling children's schedules with taking her MIL to doctor's appointments and working full-time. Not easy.”

Karen continued, “Transportation for someone who is not ambulatory is limited unless they have low incomes. We had no luck there and took turns taking off work to take MIL

to her various appointments (luckily, many wheelchairs are compact enough when folded to fit into a car trunk). I think that the county's Fastran system is a good one, but wasn't an option due to MIL's income . . . there are some taxicabs available with wheelchair accommodations, but pricey to use on a regular basis, plus not always easy to schedule (there aren't that many of them). [It] would be nice if we'd have been permitted to use Fastran, even if charged a fee of sorts (above what they charge their regular clients, which was a token \$1-\$2, which wasn't even required).

"There are lots of resources in this county . . . some private. As an example [we] definitely considered grocery delivery via PeaPod when MIL was not able to get around well but still in her apartment. I think that the philosophy of the County is to provide services and support to encourage a "stay in place" retirement (vs. moving out of the County when retiring, due to the associated expenses). They're not quite there in that, while there are lots of Fairfax County-sponsored services for lower income individuals, not quite enough are available for those who make enough to stay, but not enough to contract privately for everything. [I] suppose that this is the situation in most places! "

Good Amenities Available in Reston

Karol McKalip interviewed four women from Reston and made this general observation: "All these women are Reston residents and are in relatively good health. They live independently, but are connected to their community to some degree. Their social connections, particularly through their community centers, have been important. They all voiced some concern with a lack of readily available public transportation for themselves or others. But for these four, because of the amenities available in the Reston area, this has not been a major issue for them."

"County's Taxi System?" (Member "D")

"D" is 82 years old and lives alone. She moved to the area because she had children living here. However, she found a niche in her community and is actively involved in a number of activities. Although "D" still drives, she has used the County's taxi system both alone and also with several friends. She is concerned that this service may face reductions because of budget cuts. The county bus system is not as accessible. An easier transportation system is on her wish list. Because she still drives, she is easily able to get to supermarkets and medical facilities. She does have some limited, home-based help, recommended by a family member.

"D" has learned about available services in two ways: through her local synagogue and through her activities in

her local community center. She has found the County newsletter to be very helpful. The printed materials regarding services for the elderly that the County places in the Community Centers have been useful as well.

Because of her past profession as a social worker, "D" feels confident in her abilities both to seek out and utilize services that she would need. This knowledge and her continued independence are serving her well. She encourages people to engage in their community, whether it is joining a book club, taking Tai Chi, or attending George Mason University's Learning in Retirement (OLLI).

FISH

Another respondent (81years-old) voiced similar thoughts on the importance of being engaged in her community. She lives alone and still drives, though not at night. She also moved to the area because of family and says, "Reston is a good place to grow old." Shopping and medical facilities are in close proximity to her home. She described two particularly important local places where she volunteers her services: **FISH (Friendly Instant Sympathetic Help)** and a low-vision support group. These are community-based services dedicated to serving special populations. Her volunteer activities serve to keep her involved and knowledgeable about services for the elderly. For example, she learned about the County's subsidized taxi system. Though she has yet to use it, she sees it as a vital service to the aging population.



Because this respondent is still active and involved, she has not had to rely on Services for the Aging for herself but has been able to provide for others.

Community Centers Provide Needed Help

Member "E" is in her mid 70's and lives with her husband in Reston. She has not had the need to use any County services, but does utilize the Herndon Community Center, taking advantage of the classes and the exercise facility. Affordable passes are available. She and her husband have no transportation concerns, but do see that a more accessible public transportation system would be of great benefit to the community.

Member "F" is 81 years old and lives in Reston with her husband. She, along with other Reston seniors, relies on community services and neighbors rather than Fairfax County Services. **The Reston Community Center** provides her excellent access to water and land aerobics. Since both

she and her husband still drive, they volunteer to chauffeur their neighbors, as needed. While local transportation is adequate in the daytime hours, "F" sees the need for improvement, particularly in the evenings."

"F" also volunteers with FISH. This group was organized in 1969 by a couple of local women with no institutional affiliations. While she says she has not had the need for County Services for herself, "F" has accessed them for others in need.

Her wish list for helping the elderly in need, in addition to the evening transportation noted above, would include the development of a telephone list of local providers of home services (plumbers, electricians, etc.).

"Mt. Vernon At Home"

While **Eleanor** has not personally used any services for the aging, she reported on a developing group in her area of Hollins Hills called **"Mt. Vernon at Home."** (Mary Carol Potter at 703-768-6590 is heading up this effort.) Its goal is to find ways to support an aging population to stay in place by providing transportation to doctor's appointments, shopping, etc. Eleanor stressed the importance for the elderly in maintaining social contacts.

[Editors' Note: With so many of the comments centering on a need for transportation, an article in the April 2009 edition of the South County Chronicle might suggest a solution. The article is entitled: "One Solution to Senior Mobility" and is written by Greg Werkheiser, Director of the Phoenix Project.

He states: "Each year more than 1 million Americans aged 70 and older stop driving and become dependent on others to meet their transportation needs. By 2030, the number of licensed drivers aged 65 and older is expected to nearly double to about 57 million . . . At the most recent White House Conference on Aging, mobility was ranked the third highest issue for older people—ahead of Social Security and Medicare." He describes an effort called the **Independent Transportation Network (iTN)**. The website is www.itnamerica.org.



"iTN works by making volunteer drivers with their own cars available [to transport seniors] 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to take seniors wherever they want to go. The passengers pay a fare for the ride, typically half what a cab ride would cost. The volunteer drivers earn credits that can be applied to their future rides when they give up driving.

They can also earn credits by donating their vehicles to iTN when they give up driving and volunteering as dispatchers. iTN sets up a fund for low-income riders and a gift certificate program. iTN has 11 affiliates in cities across America (none yet in Virginia) and plans to have affiliates in a few dozen more communities nationwide by 2011."

County Agency on Aging/ FILE OF LIFE

Member "G" found the County Agency on Aging to be helpful as she researched appropriate follow-up care facilities for her husband when he left the hospital. Personnel from the local hospital also provided them with relevant suggestions.

"G" also recommended **The Golden Gazette**, a monthly publication/bulletin published by the Agency on Aging. It provides tips and suggestions that could prove useful to an elderly population. Other relevant publications to this group can often be found in the county libraries.

She added some important advice: "A patient of any age in any facility (hospital, rehab, nursing home, whatever) needs an advocate, an adult to check on things for them. With or without an advocate, the most important thing any individual can do for her/himself or loved one(s) is to **KEEP AN UPDATED RECORD OF EACH INDIVIDUAL'S MEDICATIONS AND THE DOSAGES OF EACH.**

"G" adds "It's also helpful to know which physician prescribed each medication and the reason for taking each one. If unsure, the physician should be consulted and asked for that information. It's also a good idea to ask: 'Is this medication still needed? Could the dosage be cut?'" (Doctors don't always think of these things.)

"Keep an extra copy of the list of these current medication(s) on hand for an emergency situation. Give it to EMTs or hospital or other health provider personnel, as needed. The **Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Dept. gives out a FILE OF LIFE kit** (one set to be kept on the refrigerator and a smaller one to carry in your wallet). Call 703-246-3506 to request a kit. If you can't get one of their kits for some reason, make up your own."

"Pea Pod and ACCA"

Member "H" concurred with several of those interviewed earlier. Finding reliable transportation is a significant issue as people give up driving. As they find it difficult to drive, accessing services like Giant's PeaPod through the internet can be a solution. **Meals on Wheels** is another way to help. Keeping the elderly involved in social activities is critical to avoid the isolation and insecurity that could occur, especially if no immediate family is available.

Mrs. "H" described **The Annandale Community for Christian Action (ACCA)**, a faith-based organization of 25 churches broadly organized to assist those in need of transportation, funds (i.e., utility bills), food, and children's day-care.

[Editor's Note: While the need for transportation is a major theme in our interviews, obtaining information is another reiterated necessity. Since the internet is such a major factual source, Senior Navigator Centers have been established in public locations in the community, including libraries, community centers, and senior centers. These centers, specifically designed for individuals without a home computer, serve as community access points for county residents. All centers have trained staff that uses the Senior Navigator Website to assist residents in locating local support services. Those assisting seniors at home can find the location of the center nearest you by going to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults/seniornavigator/centers.htm>



“We Need to Reintegrate the Generations”

Kathleen Pablo writes this about a recent family reunion: “My many aunts and uncles are now in their 70s and early 80s. The oldest uncle celebrated his 90th this weekend. Some observations from these senior citizens:

What do you mean, “study on aging?” The focus should be on whether there is universal access to the things that EVERY citizen might need or appreciate—shopping, opportunities to meet with friends, opportunities to volunteer and help others, libraries, concerts, religious activities, sports (they're almost all into sports because that's how my extended family was raised and they don't see how age should come to mean fewer opportunities for that), political activism), WORK, etc. ALL but the 90-year-old (who just retired from dentistry two years ago) are still very active in their professions or businesses, even when their children may now have the leadership positions.

“They were adamant that I should not be thinking in terms of special things or programs for the ‘elderly.’ They feel that whole frame of mind smacks of . . . not discrimination exactly, but perhaps of ‘thinking that they are different.’”

“They all strongly believe that it's vital that older citizens have the chance to be part of an ‘integrated’ social order,

with interactions with young people. Indeed with others of all ages. But I should say here that they all have 15 or 16 grandchildren, and that as an extended Irish Catholic family there are constant opportunities for big family occasions.

“There were dozens and dozens of very young family members who came on their own to honor a great uncle, and who didn't seem too cognizant of the ‘elderly’ among them. I asked a teenage second cousin what he thought of the number of family members who were reaching advanced ages. Looking around at the rooms full of white-haired relatives, he said, ‘Who? Uncle Matt?’ (the 90-year-old birthday boy) He just didn't think in terms of aging, perhaps because the family has always spanned about 90+ years in individual ages.

“And THAT really struck me as the basic truth here—society has made ‘elderly’ a caste. That's the piece that shouldn't be. I would guess that most don't want to be thought of as different or especially needy (so I hope that the LWV approach would make that point strongly). Instead, ‘programs’ (and even that way of approaching it should be handled with care) and opportunities should be accessible. I think ACCESS should be key here, access to most of what is out there for all. Otherwise, the county, or society, ends up with programs or activities filled just with ‘old people,’” which totally destroys the normal dynamic, and perhaps much of the essence of the activity.

“One lady to whom I was introduced told me she had been in a book club with Uncle Matt for 30 or 40 years. But there were also members in their thirties in that group. They all enjoyed hearing the ‘takes’ of other generations when values were discussed. And it occurred to me that that is an important missing part in modern society—we don't frequently have the chance to have such formative cross-generational conversations, which build empathy, transmit values (or at least the realization that others may hold such values. I think we used to call that ‘wisdom.’) As a teacher and administrator, I have been guilty of carting loads of teenagers to retirement homes, to briefly interact with residents in several ways. I would never do such an artificial thing again. (Looking back, I think that just reinforced in the minds of both groups the separateness and differentness of the other.) So I really hope that one of the topics of this LWV discussion is how to re-integrate the generations in more natural ways.”

Think Green . . .

Transportation Information

Since many of the issues in our study this month center on transportation, the study committee has compiled the following list of updated public transportation information. Please note in the study itself references to volunteer sources of transportation:



Bus and subway: The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) operates Metrobus and Metrorail transit services within Fairfax County.

There are Metrorail stations in or near Fairfax County on the Orange, Blue and Yellow lines. All Metrorail stations in Fairfax County are served by Metrobus, most are also served by the Fairfax Connector. Many of these stations also offer parking facilities and bike racks.

Metrobus operates many bus routes in Fairfax County in areas such as Centreville, Chantilly, Fair Oaks, Burke, Annandale, Baileys Crossroads, Seven Corners, Tysons Corner, Alexandria, Fort Belvoir, and Springfield. . . Almost all Metrobus routes connect with Metrorail stations. The Fairfax Connector bus system is funded separately by Fairfax County and provides additional bus routes. Discounted bus fares are offered for older adults and the disabled.



MetroAccess Paratransit: MetroAccess is a shared-ride, door-to-door paratransit service for people who cannot

use public transportation due to a disability. Paratransit means alongside of conventional transit. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 mandated that public transportation authorities may not discriminate against people with disabilities. According to the Livable Communities report, paratransit services are not always convenient: "In many jurisdictions, people with disabilities must travel from their homes to the Paratransit stop, often without help, and Paratransit vehicle drivers are not permitted to leave their vehicles to assist passengers, the report stated. "Paratransit schedules are often inflexible and people may be left waiting for hours for the vehicle to arrive, although the growing use of cellphones is helping to alleviate this problem."

TaxiAccess: There was no cut for the County TaxiAccess program for residents with disabilities who are registered MetroAccess users. TaxiAccess users can purchase coupon books for taxicab rides at one-third face value.

Seniors on the Go

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' budget vote April 27, 2009, increased the charge to seniors of the "Seniors on the Go" program, which provides subsidized taxicab fare in the form of paper coupons for low-income or moderate-income seniors.

Under the program, Fairfax County or Fairfax City residents, 65 years of age or older who have an annual income of \$40,000 or less for an individual or \$50,000 or less for married couples, may purchase coupon books at \$10 per book for coupons worth \$30. This cost will be increased to \$20 per book in fiscal year 2010. Eligible individuals may purchase up to sixteen coupon books per year and couples may purchase 32 books. In short, in recent budget cuts the subsidy of the subsidized taxi fares has been reduced. Formerly 2/3 of the cost was covered. Seniors paid only \$3 for a \$10 fare. Now they'll have to pay \$6.



Taxi Discount?

Some local taxi companies claim to offer a 10 percent discount for senior citizens. This was noted in the response to questions presented at the March 18 LWV budget meeting. The Redtop cab website notes that discounts are provided and a phone a number for information. However, committee phone calls to check this out resulted in considerable confusion and inability to get an answer. According to researcher Ginger Shea, "If I go through the other cab companies in the yellow pages, it could well be that one or more of them may offer a 10 percent discount for senior citizens, but if it is this hard to find information, I don't think it is something people ages 60 and up should try to rely on or figure out. I am especially skeptical about this supposed discount since the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging doesn't have knowledge of it, and if it were really a readily obtainable benefit, they would know about it. Also, I would assume that such a discount would probably involve some sort of registration process." If readers have additional information about this, please pass it on.

FASTRAN

Fastran is Fairfax County's Paratransit Bus System division within the Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services. Door-to-door transportation is provided to County programs, medical care, groceries and other shopping for two types of clients:

- Clients who are sponsored by human service agencies and who cannot drive, find a ride, use Metro or Connector buses, or afford taxi fares.
- MetroAccess riders who are unable to use traditional fixed route bus or rail service due to physical or cognitive disability.

Dial-a-Ride users deposit \$1 - \$2 in the farebox each way, depending upon the length of the trip. Critical medical care users pay \$0.00 - \$5.00 per one-way trip depending

upon income.

Currently FasTran riders to senior centers are not charged a fare. However, at the April 27 budget vote, the Board of Supervisors maintained FasTran trips to senior centers and group trips from senior centers, as well as other services that had been proposed for cuts, by instituting a new \$48 per year fee, which will generate approximately \$434,601 in revenue. Participants with limited, fixed incomes will not be denied services due to inability to pay. The transportation formally provided to seniors in county senior housing developments on a weekly basis (to malls, grocery stores and the like) has been reduced to twice a month.

LWV-VA State Convention Hosted By LWVFA

By Sherry Zachry

Delegates from all over Virginia gathered at the Sheraton Hotel in Reston on May 2 and 3 to participate in the 34th Biennial Convention of the League of Women Voters of Virginia. With the theme of "Leadership for the Next 100 Years" in recognition of the founding in 1909 of the Equal Suffrage League, the predecessor of the League of Women Voters of Virginia, President Olga Hernandez conducted the two-day meeting that set out priorities for the Virginia League for the next two years. Some items of business included: amending the LWV-VA Bylaws to provide for "electronic" board meetings; adopting the FY 2009-2010 annual budget; and electing officers and a board of directors. Current positions on election laws were approved as an item of study for the next two years. A proposal to add a study item on Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), proposed by Loudoun Co. delegate Shelley Tamres, was not successful.

Among those elected for 2009-2011 terms were: Olga Hernandez, President; Lynn Gordon, 1st Vice President & Membership; Anne Sterling, 2nd Vice President & Legislative Director; Sherry Zachry, Secretary; Therese Martin, Treasurer; Molly McLendon, Program Director; Sue Worden, Voters Service; Karen Cronin, Publicity; and Betsy Mayr as Nominating Committee Chair.

A workshop on leadership, presented by LWVUS Board

member and liaison to Virginia Marcia Merrins from New York State, was held Saturday morning preceding the first plenary session. Fairfax County BOS Chair Sharon Bulova welcomed the delegates to the convention and to Fairfax County at the opening session at 1:00 PM. The Fairfax Area LWV hosted the event and provided over 20 volunteers to help with the proceedings.



Merrins

The delegates and their guests enjoyed a delicious dinner at the Banquet on Saturday evening. Ms. Merrins gave a short greeting after dinner and all were entertained and educated about the suffragists who were held at the Occoquan Workhouse (in Fairfax County) in 1917 by "Mrs. Walker"—a real suffragist—beautifully portrayed by LWVFA member Lynne Garvey-Hodge. Lynne mentioned the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, a new place created in the Occoquan Regional Park dedicated to the suffragists held in 1917, and invited folks to visit the site.

A silent auction of over 50 items was arranged by Bonnie Franklin and brought in some additional funds to the

(See **State Convention**, Page 10, Col 1)