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Learn about programs and services available to seniors by visiting [www.homage.org](http://www.homage.org).

*"It takes special people to do that job"*



Jenny Anderson and her service dog, Nevi, board a DART bus with driver Kevin Oh after a visit to Swedish Edmonds hospital. (Andy Bronson / The Herald)

# Clients regain mobility with Dial-A-Ride Transit

## Partnership between Community Transit and Homage serves 500 to 700 weekly

By Ian McCabe  
Special to The Herald

When the bus stops in front of Jenny Anderson's Lynnwood home, she is helped aboard by the driver — who cheerfully welcomes her by name, as always, and makes sure she is sitting comfortably.

In 1993, Anderson, 59, discovered she was legally blind. Since she can't drive and has difficulty navigating the regular bus system, she signed up for Dial-A-Ride-Transport. She's been using the DART bus ever since.

DART was established through a partnership between Homage Senior Services, formerly Senior

Services of Snohomish County, and Community Transit about 40 years ago. The bus service is designed to help those with health issues and disabilities in Snohomish County get out and about.

About 5,000 county residents are signed up for the service, and 500 to 700 clients ride each week.

"I use it about three to five times a week," Anderson said. "I go to the gym in the morning, usually to an appointment in the afternoon, and in the evening I use it to go to church."

For the same fare as a regular bus, DART riders can schedule a mini-bus that takes them where they want to go and bring them back home. As long as the ride is booked 24 hours in advance, a driver will be there.

DART has the same service area as Community Transit buses, which covers most of Snohomish County. It is available only for residents whose disabilities or health conditions prevent them from using the

regular bus services, and they must apply through Homage to use it.

The buses are wheelchair-equipped and well-maintained, and operated by trained drivers who will assist passengers to and from their homes. They will even carry up to four grocery bags to the front door.

"We take people anywhere they want to go," said John Hagen, who manages the DART call center. "If they want to go to the doctor's, work, the grocery store, a social event — anywhere — we'll take them."

"It was built because of the need to get people out of their homes, and that's a big deal. Getting them out is very important. For some, they're using it to survive."

Residents in rural areas of Snohomish County that are outside of the usual transit routes are covered by the Transportation Assistance Program.

"Our drivers are really, really good. We train them to know how

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Community Transit Dial-A-Ride call center manager John Hagen at the call center office in Everett. (Andy Bronson / The Herald)

# DART: Transit service can prevent isolation that can accompany illness

FROM PAGE 1

to take care of the customer,” John said. “What they do in comparison to any other transportation truly is amazing — the help and the care they give is why I’m here.”

For some, such as Karen Mason, DART is a necessity. Also a Lynnwood resident, Karen has been riding with DART for more than 10 years.

“I am what they call door-to-door,” said Karen, who is a double amputee and needs a manual wheelchair. “That means they come to my door, and they assist me down my ramp, which I can’t operate by myself.

“Plus, I’m no spring chicken either. I’m 73, after all.”

After all these years and all their help, she said the drivers have become like family.

“I know all the drivers. They’ve got wonderful guys,” Karen said. “It takes special

people to do that job.”

Karen rides the bus numerous times per week, for anything from grocery shopping to going to sing karaoke with her friends — some of whom she made while riding with DART.

She said illness isolates people. After she lost her legs, she didn’t go anywhere for three years. DART was the service she needed to get out of the house.

“DART has given me so much convenience to get out,” she said. “It’s my window on the world. It’s the difference between being house-bound and being free to go out and participate.

“My grandparents didn’t have anything like this. We’re truly blessed.”

*For information or to apply for the bus service, call 425-347-5912 for DART or 425-423-8517 for TAP. Or go to [www.homage.org/transportation](http://www.homage.org/transportation)*

# Be sure your benefit is correct by checking your past pay records

By Kirk Larson  
Social Security Washington  
Public Affairs Specialist

Whether you’re ready to retire, just joining the workforce or somewhere in between, regularly reviewing your Social Security earnings record could make a big difference when it’s time to collect retirement benefits.

In some situations, if an employer did not properly report just one year of your work earnings to us, your future payments from Social Security could end up being \$100 per month less than they should be. Over a lifetime, that could cost you tens of thousands of dollars in retirement or other benefits to which you are entitled.

Social Security prevents many mistakes from ever appearing on your earnings record. On average, we process about 236 million W-2 wage reports from employers, representing more than \$5 trillion in earnings. More than 98 percent of these wages are posted with little problem.

But it’s ultimately the responsibility of your employers — past and present — to provide accurate earnings information to Social Security so you get credit for the contributions you’ve made through payroll taxes. We rely on you to inform us of any errors or omissions. You’re the only person who can look at your lifetime earnings record and

verify that it’s complete and correct.

So, what’s the easiest and most efficient way to validate your earnings record?

Visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount) to set up or sign in to your own My Social Security account. Under the “My Home” tab, click on “Earnings Record” to view your online Social Security Statement and taxed Social Security earnings.

Carefully review each year of listed earnings and use your own records, such as W-2s and tax returns, to confirm them. Keep in mind that earnings from this year and last year may not be listed yet.

If you notice that you need to correct your earnings record, check out our fact sheet at [www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10081.pdf](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10081.pdf)

Sooner is definitely better than later when it comes to identifying and reporting problems with your earnings record.

As time passes, you may no longer have past tax documents and some employers may no longer be in business or able to provide past payroll information.

You need to make sure all your work history is posted. When we calculate your benefit payment we use your top 35 years of earnings and adjust your past work history for inflation.

You can learn more about how your benefit amount is calculated at [www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10070.pdf](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10070.pdf)



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