

VOLUNTEERS

Keep program in motion

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICE

Natalie Savino

A VITAL community service that is keeping elderly and disabled people socially active and independent desperately needs volunteers.

LINK Community Transport helps frail and elderly people and those with disabilities attend social and recreational activities through its Out and About Program.

It covers nine municipalities, including Banyule, and plans to expand. It needs volunteer drivers to help its door-to-door transport service keep up with demand.

Volunteer co-ordinator Briony Hamilton said the pro-

gram helped those who no longer had family nearby to go to shopping centres, senior citizens' clubs, cultural groups, holiday programs and outings. She said she needed at least 20 people to donate their time.

The Campbellfield-based organisation has a fleet of about 25 vehicles, ranging from sedans to minibuses with wheelchair hoists, and has been providing much-needed transport since 1995.

"We're starting to really notice a few gaps, which means that we've got a few drivers who are taking on extra days to fill those gaps," Ms Hamilton said.

 Our volunteers absolutely adore the work that they're doing

- VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR
BRIONY HAMILTON

"Generally we tend to attract retirees, but we're very, very open to and happy to take on drivers of any background, any age."

Helper's range in age from 20 to 82 and include students.

Ms Hamilton said it was a good way for people to upskill. "Our volunteers absolutely adore the work that they're doing," she said.

"It's not just being out in the community and helping out clients. It's also, I find, really good for them in terms of forging new friendships and networking."

According to 2011 Census data, there were almost 14,000 people between the ages of 65 and 84 living in Hume, 1232 aged over 84 and 7625 with a disability.

Ms Hamilton said LINK's work fitted in with Home and Community Care's mission of helping people age independently, rather than sending them to nursing homes.

Training and support is provided. Email volunteering@lct.org.au or call 8358 8000.

22/09/2015
Heidelberg Leader