

# the Quarterly Commute

"Keeping you informed on a better way to get where you're going."

## RideShare Recognizes Commuter-Friendly Employers on October 16th

### It's all part of RideShare's 4th Annual Awareness and Appreciation Week!

RideShare will host our 4th annual Awareness and Appreciation Week, October 15-19. The feature event for this week is our Awards Luncheon and Workshop on Being a Commuter-Friendly Employer. This event will be held at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville on October 16th and is sponsored by RideShare, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission and the Piedmont Workforce Network.

Presentations at the workshop will address ways commuter benefits can help companies deal with issues such as parking, expansion, and employee morale on both state and local levels, including success stories from employers in the Charlottesville area. RideShare staff will also be on hand to explain how they can help organizations become more commuter-friendly at different levels of investment. Many of the options presented at this workshop can be applied with little or no cost.

The workshop will be followed by a brief awards ceremony recognizing local organizations that have made outstanding efforts in the area of commuter benefits. Featured speakers include: Butch Davies, Commonwealth Transportation Board Culpeper District Representative; Sandra Lynn Taylor, State Farm Insurance Charlottesville Operations Center; and Louise Wyatt, County of Albemarle Human Resources. All area employers (two representatives at no cost) are invited to participate in this workshop. Registration is available at [www.rideshareinfo.org](http://www.rideshareinfo.org) or by phone at 434-295-6165 through Friday, October 11th.

### RideShare Appreciates Our Members, Too!

While many area employers promote smart transportation options in the workplace, it is you, our members that choose to take action and use alternatives to driving alone. RideShare wants the opportunity to thank you and share your story to inspire others to follow your lead!

Maybe you have lost weight after making the decision to bike or walk to work, or maybe you are saving money and reducing stress by carpooling or using transit. If changing your commute habits has made a positive impact in your



*Look for your save the date postcard for information about this special event*

life, please let us know! Send an email to [rideassistant@tjpd.org](mailto:rideassistant@tjpd.org) and let us know how you get to work (by carpool, vanpool, bus, bike or foot) and the biggest benefit you have received by choosing this form of transportation.

RideShare will feature the top three most unique responses in upcoming issues of the Quarterly Commute. These members will also receive a thank you gift including a RideShare tote bag, a free gas card and more. Send your story in to [rideassistant@tjpd.org](mailto:rideassistant@tjpd.org) by Friday, October 19th to participate. We look forward to hearing from you! •

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A quarterly publication produced by



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## Transportation Resources

- **ACCT** (Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation) promotes balanced transportation options, sustainable land-use and transit-oriented communities through education and leadership in the greater Charlottesville area. [www.transportationchoice.org](http://www.transportationchoice.org)
- **Charlottesville Transit Service** (CTS) is the public bus service for the City of Charlottesville and portions of urban Albemarle County. [www.charlottesville.org/transit](http://www.charlottesville.org/transit) October is Free Fare Month.
- **JAUNT** provides on-demand bus service and scheduled commuter shuttles in Charlottesville, Albemarle, Buckingham, Fluvanna, Louisa and Nelson. [www.ridejaunt.org](http://www.ridejaunt.org)
- **Greene County Transit** (GCT) provides on-demand bus service within Greene County and service to Charlottesville. [www.gcva.us/dpts/trns/default.htm](http://www.gcva.us/dpts/trns/default.htm)
- **National Center for Bicycling & Walking** is a non-profit corporation with a mission to create bicycle-friendly and walkable communities. [www.walkinginfo.org](http://www.walkinginfo.org)
- **Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission's** (TJPDC) transportation pages contain information on local and regional transportation plans for the city of Charlottesville and the counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson. The TJPDC is also home for the RideShare program. [www.tjpd.org/transportation](http://www.tjpd.org/transportation)
- **University Transit Systems** (UTS) provides free bus service in and around the University of Virginia. [www.virginia.edu/parking/bus/bus.html](http://www.virginia.edu/parking/bus/bus.html)
- **Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation** (DRPT) focuses on improving the movement of people and goods throughout Virginia via rail, public transportation and ridesharing. DRPT is the home for programs that provide for traffic congestion, including commuter rail and telecommuting. [www.drpt.state.va.us](http://www.drpt.state.va.us)
- **511 Virginia** is a statewide web and phone service that provides traffic and weather information on roads throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. [www.511virginia.org](http://www.511virginia.org)

## Commuter Focus:

### Easing the Commute from Rockingham County

The proverb, "Good things come to those who wait," has meaning for Todd Palmquist when it comes to his carpool from Massanutten to Charlottesville. Palmquist works for the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission in downtown Charlottesville and has a one-way commute of nearly 50 miles. The length of his commute motivated him to sign up for RideShare. He was unable to find a carpool at first, but decided to remain active in the program to see if something worked out.

Steve Sofinski learned about RideShare through his employer, LexisNexis, and decided to give it a try. "It seemed like a great idea," he said. "Promote the ecology while saving on commuting expenses." Palmquist and Sofinski were introduced through RideShare and realized that they were neighbors, living a half mile from each other in Massanutten and working a few blocks apart in downtown Charlottesville with similar schedules. They decided to start carpooling a few days a week.

Flexibility plays a big part in the success of this carpool. While RideShare works to connect commuters, it is up to the individuals to set up a schedule that is most convenient for them. Palmquist and Sofinski work together on a week-to-

week basis. "We are pretty flexible," Palmquist relates. "We usually carpool twice a week and the day varies - we check calendars the week before and set days and drivers at that time."

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Palmquist says the largest benefit of carpooling is the savings on gas and decreased mileage on his car, but there are other benefits as well.

"When we carpool and run into traffic its nice to have someone to complain with," he says. "Just the company on the ride is a nice change of pace." Steve Sofinski adds, "We're doing our part to promote the ecology. We're helping to reduce the overcrowding of cars on the highway. We save some money. I've made a great new friend!"

Busy schedules at work and at home can make it hard to find a neighbor to carpool with on your own. Todd Palmquist is glad that RideShare was able to help. "Even though it took a while to get hooked into a carpool, it has proven to be very successful for me." Sofinski remarks, "It's a great program. I urge everyone to at least give it a try."

RideShare's carpool matching service serves anyone that works or lives in the Thomas Jefferson Planning District, which includes the City of Charlottesville and Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson. Even if you are commuting from outside the district, there may be a RideShare member that is a convenient match for you. There is no obligation to form or join a carpool, so why not give it a try? Apply online at [www.rideshareinfo.org](http://www.rideshareinfo.org) or give us a call at 434-295-6165. We look forward to making your commute a little easier. •



Todd Palmquist (left) and Steve Sofinski (right) share the commute from Massanutten to downtown Charlottesville

## **SchoolPool is Back in Session**

### **Connecting Parents for Less Stressful School Commutes**

SchoolPool was introduced a few years ago as an extension of RideShare's carpool matching service. Schools that participate in the RideShare SchoolPool program provide a formal way for parents to connect with each other to share the ride to the same school - on a daily basis, occasionally or in an emergency. All schools in Charlottesville, Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson are eligible to participate, and RideShare operates the program at no cost to schools.

Once a school has agreed to participate, parents can register with RideShare to find other parents at the same school that live in the same neighborhood and have similar schedules. Parents can then contact each other and make mutually agreeable rideshare arrangements. Match lists are only sent to parents who have registered with the SchoolPool program and have children attending the same school.

RideShare has been working with participating schools to re-introduce the SchoolPool program and register new parents at open houses, PTA meetings and other school events. If you are interested in learning more about SchoolPools, visit [www.rideshareinfo.org](http://www.rideshareinfo.org) and click on the SchoolPools icon. You may also learn more about this option for your child's school by calling RideShare at 434-295-6165 or via email at [rideassistant@tjpc.org](mailto:rideassistant@tjpc.org).



*Parents and students get ready for the new school year at The Covenant School Lower Campus*

### **RideShare recognizes the following schools for participating in SchoolPool during the 2007-08 school year**

Baker-Butler Elementary School (Albemarle County)  
Burnley-Moran Elementary School (Charlottesville)  
The Covenant School - Lower Campus (Charlottesville)  
The Covenant School - Upper Campus (Albemarle County)  
Greenbrier Elementary School (Charlottesville)  
The Peabody School (Albemarle County)  
Red Hill Elementary School (Albemarle County)  
St. Anne's-Belfield Lower School (Charlottesville)  
St. Anne's-Belfield Upper School (Charlottesville)  
Tandem Friends School (Albemarle County)  
Woodbrook Elementary School (Albemarle County)

## **Local Motion:**

### **Active Living in Charlottesville and Albemarle**



Representatives from Albemarle County, the City of Charlottesville, and the Thomas Jefferson Health District are

launching a new active living campaign specific to the Charlottesville area. The Local Motion: It's Your Move campaign is the culmination of months of joint participation by the City and the County, along with local agencies that focus on health and wellness and reach all segments of the population. In the long term, the effort is intended to partner with agencies, businesses and events that promote a healthier and more active lifestyle.

The latest statistics show the need for such an initiative, specifically as the numbers of overweight children and adults continues to rise. Since 1990, Virginia's obesity rate has climbed 154% - driving up the statistics on weight-related problems like diabetes, which affects hundreds of thousands of Virginians and is the state's 6th leading cause of death. This new campaign is intended to make a long-term difference in the lives of Central Virginians by encouraging outdoor activities, including visits to our growing local parks and open spaces.

As a Local Motion partner, RideShare is committed to promoting programs that encourage physical

activity for people at all levels of ability. Many RideShare members already benefit from the activity of walking or biking to work, or walking to a transit stop. Sharing a ride and leaving your vehicle at home also encourages activity - for example, you might take a walk on your lunch break instead of driving to a restaurant. Local Motion has created a list of ways to incorporate activity into your day and encourages families to come up with other unique ways to make sure that an active lifestyle is followed. For more information on Local Motion and to discover some simple ways to improve your health, visit [www.LocalMotionHome.info](http://www.LocalMotionHome.info).

# ~ The Employer Corner ~

## Commuter Benefits in Disguise

Large employers across the nation are incorporating conveniences into the worksite beyond the standard break room or company cafeteria. It is not uncommon to find an ATM on-site or even a branch of a bank or credit union down the hall at some of the area's largest worksites. Other on-site conveniences may include a gym, walking trails or even dry cleaning services, making it unnecessary for employees to have to leave during the day to run errands.

On-site amenities at work can make the day more productive for both the employer and the employee. But did you know that these are also a form of commuter benefits? Less time off the worksite also means fewer cars on the road during the day, and that benefits the community as well.

Perhaps there are other perks at your organization that may fall under the realm of commuter benefits. For example, there may be a few employees that incorporate telework into their schedule. Many employers are also taking advantage of schedule alternatives such as flextime or compressed workweeks to help alleviate parking issues while also offering options to employees.

Outside of salaries, benefits and perks rank as important factors to employees and those considering a job offer. The desire to work in a comfortable environment with flexible schedules, good transportation options and other conveniences is becoming more prevalent in the job market. Highlighting these features can add value to your overall benefits package and help attract and retain employees.

How many commuter benefits are "in disguise" at your company? RideShare can help analyze what you are currently doing and add elements to create a formalized commuter benefits package for your employees. You may be surprised at how easy it is to combine what you already have in place with simple no-cost additions, such as carpool matching, to enhance current employee benefits. Get started by contacting RideShare at 434-295-6165 or visit [www.rideshareinfo.org](http://www.rideshareinfo.org).

And, don't forget our upcoming Awards Luncheon and Workshop: Being a Commuter Friendly Employer! Register today at [www.rideshareinfo.org](http://www.rideshareinfo.org).



RideShare is a program of the  
Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission.

RideShare is a member of the Commuter Information Team (CIT)\*, a partnership that works to enhance the quality of life and mobility of people in the region.

*\*The CIT is RideShare, CTS, JAUNT, UTS, and Greene County Transit*



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