

## What's driving this new volunteer program?

Giving up driving is one of the hardest transitions in one's life. It often results in dropping activities and staying at home more and

more, leading to isolation and depression. The Wellesley Council on Aging, with funding from the Fund for Wellesley, began a pilot program a little more than two-months ago to address this issue. The purpose of the Wellesley Volunteer Drivers Pilot Program is to provide Wellesley residents age 60 and older the opportunity to stay active and involved when they find themselves in circumstances where they are unable to drive, either temporarily or permanently.

I was thrilled to be hired as the coordinator of the program. Many older adults fear the loss of independence if they had to stop driving and may continue to drive after it is really safe. When Wellesley residents

call our "Drive" phone line, they leave information about their ride request on voicemail, which we retrieve at least twice a day. We educate "passengers" about the several other transportation resources available to them, including options for medical visits and the Council on Aging bus service that will also drive people to all destinations within Wellesley. When none of those options is a "fit" or available, we attempt to find a driver who can fill that need.

We find that many people are more comfortable calling for a ride that they *need*, like a medical appointment, than one that they *want*. Our program aims to encourage access to "want" rides, to get people out to have fun, to socialize, to do some self-caring!! To date,

we have driven people to go clothes shopping, to attend classes, to go swimming, to go to sporting events of their grandchildren, to beauty salons, and to restaurants, among other destinations. Imagine the increase of quality of life this provides!! Our drivers also receive immense satisfaction from helping, as well as from meeting incredibly interesting and nice neighbors who otherwise would be inside their homes. Please leave me a message on the DRIVE phone line at 508-479-9301 or email me at [Drive@welleslema.gov](mailto:Drive@welleslema.gov) if you *want* a ride or *want* to drive!

**Lois Camberg, Coordinator, Wellesley Volunteer Drivers Program**