

Driving Miss Daisy: ENABLING SENIORS TO KEEP THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND A BOON FOR BUSY PARENTS



At your service: Lorraine Buttimore (left) and Lynda Moore of new Hutt Valley business *Driving Miss Daisy*.

Hutt Valley franchisees Lynda Moore (Upper Hutt) and Lorraine Buttimore (Lower Hutt) have smiles as bright and fresh as their shiny blue daisy-painted vehicles as they talk about this new Companion Driving Service.

It's a Kiwi franchise business which provides a "companion driver through the door service" for senior citizens, the less mobile of all ages and for parents wanting to get children safely to sport, ballet or music lessons when they themselves are not available.

Based on a successful award-winning Canadian franchise, it was brought to New Zealand by Havelock North couple Melanie and Jack Harper after thorough world-wide research and was officially launched in Hastings last May. Now this unique and practical service has arrived in our region (there is one in Wellington city as well).

It's more than simply a taxi service, say Lynda and Lorraine. It is totally people focussed. Its point of difference over other transport providers is the 'physical accompaniment assistance' offered.

"We are happy to sit with a person at the

dentist – help them into the dentist chair if required – or wait at the chemist while they have a prescription filled. We can pop into a supermarket or the dairy on the way home and help carry heavy bags right onto the kitchen bench."

Lynda and Lorraine work flexible hours around their clients' needs.

Going to the airport for early or late pickups, they are happy to assist with baggage – checking in and collection – as well.

"We hear of so many stories where an elderly person on a zimmer frame and with a suitcase has trouble even opening the door to get in or out. We can make life so much easier."

Both Lynda and Lorraine have always worked in occupations where they have helped people of all ages and are finding their new venture highly personally rewarding.

"We are able to give the housebound back their freedom and take the worry off the shoulders of busy parents. It is a great feeling to enable people to once more be able to visit their friends for a cup of tea or visit an art show. It enhances their quality of life at a time when people are wanting to remain in their own homes as long as possible."

WHEN YOUR ELDERLY RELATIVE IS ARRIVING AT THE AIRPORT ON THE 6AM FLIGHT OR NEEDS TO KEEP A HOSPITAL APPOINTMENT AND YOU CANNOT BE THERE TO ASSIST...

WHEN YOU ARE WORKING LATE AND CANNOT GET JAMES TO HIS MUSIC LESSON AND CLAIRE TO JUDO...

THE HUTT VALLEY'S NEWEST BUSINESS *DRIVING MISS DAISY* CAN DO IT FOR YOU.

They are comprehensively trained for their driving roles – 'Police vetted' and now hold the necessary passenger service licences. They stress they do not act as a "courtesy van from the pub".

They regard themselves as more like an extended family member and keep clients' families fully informed if they do have any concerns. They are also happy to act in 'loco parentus' to, for example, take children for medical appointments during the day when a parent cannot get away from work.

Their distinctive blue Skoda Roomster vehicles they drive were especially selected for their comfort and space – they can carry up to two wheelchairs and can accommodate zimmer frames without having to collapse them and the two women say the cars are lovely to drive in.

Driving Miss Daisy offers a trip voucher scheme, which they say is an ideal gift from the family – the gift of increased freedom - for that elderly relative.

Driving Miss Daisy, honouring the spirit of the original aging but fiercely independent Miss Daisy of book, stage and screen right here in the Hutt Valley.