

## Mission Statement

As an expression of God's love, Samaritan's Carriage tailors experiences and personal encounters that affirm, bless, and bring joy into the lives of persons having limited mobility.

In 2002 Gary and Eileen Rüter founded Samaritan's Carriage to serve people who lived in senior living facilities. These people experienced the debilitating effects of loneliness caused by the lack of mobility. "Loneliness ... harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death. The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day."

Samaritan's Carriage currently serves nine senior living homes, most of them are smaller facilities without their own form of transportation for residents. Once a month the carriage comes and takes five of their residents on an outing. 45 seniors get out of their four walls every month on the Carriage.

The nine teams are created from 70 plus volunteers. The commitment is about five hours. The volunteers have as much fun as the residents. Our mission of bringing JOY is evident on every excursion.

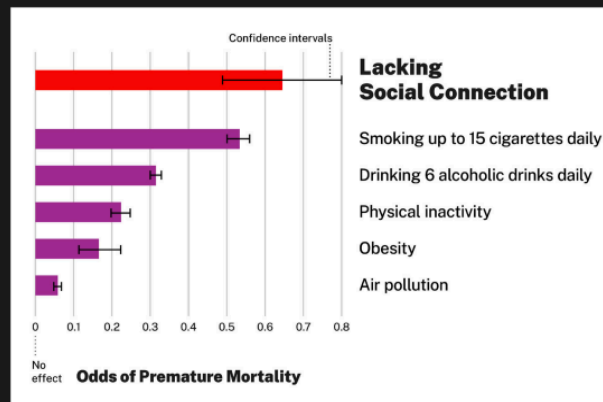
On a recent outing a new guest explained to the volunteer that she had not left her room for six months, and on a recent trip to Holland State Park one of the ladies shared that she had never been to the beach to see the gleaming water and bright umbrellas.

5 people x 9 homes x 9 months x 20 years = an infinite amount of JOY and smiles shared by everyone involved.

# Samaritan's Carriage



## Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.



Source: Holt-Lunstad J, Robles TF, Sbarra DA. Advancing Social Connection as a Public Health Priority in the United States. *American Psychology*. 2017;72(6):517-530. doi:10.1037/amp0000103. This graph is a visual approximation.

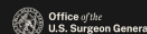


FIGURE 4: Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.



Lunches are sometimes the highlight of an outing, especially when they can choose their own food. The conversations are lively and many times, they just aren't quite ready to return home.

## Carriage Campaign

Our bus or "carriage" is now 21 years old. Gary Rüter explained to me that the bus represents the donkey in the Good Samaritan story. The carriage has transported approximately 8,000 guests from senior living homes on excursions to many different locations in West Michigan. Our volunteers and guests enjoy a morning of sightseeing and exploring and then a leisurely lunch chatting and sharing life stories. They share old memories and make new memories, learning from each other. The relationships that develop throughout the years are beautiful, we give them a sense of being seen for who they are, not just someone living in a senior living home.

"A culture of connection rests on core values of kindness, respect, service, and commitment to one another. Everyone contributes to the collective culture of social connection by regularly practicing these values." How does this culture of connection get played out in everyday life of a mobility challenged senior citizen in a senior rehabilitation facility? Samaritan's Carriage comes bringing joy and a sense of freedom to the guests of the outing. **BUT, what happens if the bus breaks down?** Our bus runs well right now but finding replacement parts for a 21 year-old bus is not easy. **Our goal is to never miss an adventure.**

### How can you help? Please donate to the Carriage Campaign.

Donations to Samaritan's Carriage can be mailed to:

Samaritan's Carriage  
C/O Sara Buchholz  
2431 Paris Ave SE,

Grand Rapids MI 494507

or you may give via the website at

[www.samaritanscarriage.org](http://www.samaritanscarriage.org)

Charitable Giving Number:

30-0065870