

Carriage Connection



JUNE 2026



A SUNNY VISIT TO KOLLEN PARK

Welcome!

... to a newly formatted *Samaritan's Chronicle*, now called *Carriage Connection*.

Five years ago, when I said a resounding YES to becoming the next Executive Director of Samaritan's Carriage, I was grateful for all the routine pieces of the organization that I was able to step into. It was, however, 2022 and life was just opening up after the Covid Pandemic. I am now in my fifth year and thought maybe it's time again to refresh the newsletter.

Times have changed a bit since 2022. We have more homes involved, many more volunteers ([see page 2 to hear directly from some of them](#)), and have added some new excursions. For years, all the teams ate lunch at the Golden Corral on Alpine Ave, but that restaurant was torn down a few years ago.

What hasn't changed? God's blessings through faithful supporters of Samaritan's Carriage. [Read a special note of praise from our board president on page 3.](#)

Whether you're part of the new changes or a longtime supporter, thank you for choosing to bring joy!

Sara Buchholz

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Why did we start volunteering with Samaritan's Carriage? We did it to love God and people. We also did it to fill our own lives with something good.

It really came out of spending time with Gary and Eileen Ruiter. In the course of our friendship, we decided to give Samaritan's Carriage a try, since Gary and Eileen started that ministry so many years ago and volunteering for it would be a meaningful way to love God, love our neighbor, honor Gary and Eileen, and volunteer together. In our retirement, we were looking for ways to be useful to others. Samaritan's Carriage filled that void for us.

A Samaritan's Carriage outing is like going out on a date for us, with guests coming along.

The benefits we have found in volunteering with Samaritan's Carriage are that we do it together, we get exercise, and we are caring for people who may not be seen by broader society. We are happy we are able to serve those close in age to us.



Ruth & Marianne

Samaritan's Carriage teams build community as we go on outings together. We have developed real relationships with the people that participate and we get to know them and the stories of their lives. Marianne has gotten to know Ruth Biesbrock quite well. Marianne usually is the one to push Ruth's wheelchair on the outings, and she visits Ruth at Railside and occasionally they go out for lunch together. We asked Ruth about her impression of Samaritan's Carriage, and she expressed that it is very significant to her to go out on the outings and she treasures her relationship with Marianne.

The world of a resident can feel small in many ways, and going on outings creates anticipation, gets them out, expands their world, lifts their spirit and gives them joy.

With Gary and Eileen no longer here, we feel like we are carrying on their vision of responding to the

needs of an often overlooked community. **Being part of Samaritan's Carriage is joining God in His work and being Christ to someone.**

Their happiness gives us joy.

By Marianne & Larry Tanis

As a new volunteer with Samaritan's Carriage, I'm excited to be part of its mission—both to give and to receive. After recently relocating across the country in retirement, I looked forward to new opportunities to serve while also recognizing how challenging it can be to find a sense of place and community. That journey requires trusting God and remaining open to new stories and experiences. Samaritan's Carriage has given me a meaningful way to serve, connect, and build relationships with wonderful people.

On my initial outing to Meijer Gardens, I was a bit apprehensive. Assisting with unfamiliar equipment, i.e. the "lift," and securing wheelchairs in the bus produced a bit of anxiety as it was all new to me! My Rest Haven colleagues worked together to secure our seniors in short order, making me feel part of the team in the process. It was a joy to see our seniors light up while surrounded by beautiful butterflies and plants. Our subsequent outing to Rockford Dam was also a treat. Great conversation, sharing stories from the past and lots of laughter during lunch was a rich blessing for all. **If someone were to ask me about Samaritan's Carriage I would say, "Come and see."** Come and see how we can give dignity, new experiences and share in the joy. Come and see how we love one another in community. Come and see how richly God will bless each encounter.

By Shirley Steigenga



Shirley & Alyda at Rockford Dam





From the Board President

Greetings to all the volunteers and donors of Samaritan's Carriage. What a great start we have had to the 2026 season of our ministry to the nursing homes and senior facilities in West Michigan. As president of the Board of Directors of Samaritan's Carriage, I just want to take this opportunity to **thank all of you for your wonderful support in the past year.** Samaritan's Carriage has been blessed immeasurably with wonderful gifts and hours and hours of volunteer time. We are in a wonderful situation both financially and with volunteer participation. Without the support we receive from you folks it wouldn't be possible to meet the needs of our mission.

Being able to provide outings for the local facilities allows us to meet with people and **show them the love of Christ** through our outings. As we sit and talk and learn about their past, it is a blessing to hear how important these trips are and how thankful they are to be able to go. For some of the residents we serve, this is their only outing in quite some time. It doesn't really matter where we go or where we eat, the important thing is that they are being recognized, listened to, and valued on that particular day. To hear their stories and history is a blessing in so many ways and many of our volunteers feel that they are blessed as much as the residents that we serve.

As we continue on in 2026, I want to take the time to acknowledge Sara Buchholz, our

executive director, for the endless hours she puts forth to make the outings successful. We are blessed to have her and are so grateful for her fine efforts. I also want to thank the Board of Directors for their time and effort in supporting Samaritan's Carriage. Their time and effort is greatly appreciated. **Samaritan's Carriage is a true community effort** of volunteers, donors, board members and staff and through everyone's hard work, we have been a blessing to many and our hope and prayer is that we can continue for many more years.

The Lord has blessed us in so many ways and it is a pleasure to pay it forward to the people we serve through this wonderful ministry. Praise be to God.

William J. Botts
President, Board of Directors

**Donations to Samaritan's Carriage
Annual Fund**
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

Monthly donors, RMD and Legacy Gifts are
deeply appreciated.

Charitable Giving Number: 30-0065870



2431 Paris Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

Thank you for joining our mission to bring joy!

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Contact Us

Sara Buchholz *Executive Director*

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Our Mission

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.

