



This Company Has Disrupted Senior Transportation as We Know It

By Susan Saldibar

Imagine, for a moment, that you are one of your residents. Have you ever thought about how you want to get around after you can no longer drive yourself?

I have, and I know what I want:

- I want to be picked up by someone who looks respectable and treats me with respect.
- I want a driver who understands my challenges and adjusts to my special physical or mental limitations.
- If I'm in an assisted living or independent living community, I want the option to go and have an intimate lunch with my daughter, instead of Norm's Restaurant just because it's "in the van loop".
- Most of all, if I have a doctor appointment on the 7th floor of the medical center, I want to be taken up to the doctor's office on the 7th floor, not dropped at the curb!

Well I just found out that there is an organization that checks all these boxes and more, disrupting the traditional senior transportation model in a way that could make going back to old ways unthinkable.

The company is Envoy America (a new Senior Housing Forum partner) and (at the risk of sounding like a cheer leader) frankly there is so much that makes sense about these folks that it's hard to know where to begin. They are already in 12 major cities and expanding rapidly. Here, in a nutshell, is how their solution benefits residents, communities and even the city!

Benefits to residents:

- **Person-centered.** We talk a lot about person-centered care. What is more person-centered than a ride that takes Joe to his ball game, Fred to his favorite barber and Mary to have lunch at her niece's apartment? Envoy disrupts the old model where you have a van essentially making a big glorified loop around the neighborhood. Their model provides individualized choices to residents and family members.
- **Going beyond the curb.** This makes so much sense, I'm amazed it hasn't been done a long time ago. Why should an individual with physical or cognitive impairment have to miss an appointment, just because they need more help getting up the curb and up the elevator and in the door to see their doctor or get their hair done, for that matter? The Envoy driver companion will take them all the way in to that doctor or dentist appointment, which means they will get there on time, and without being physically (and emotionally) taxed. After the doctor appointment, the Envoy driver companion is trained to assist the resident in picking up prescriptions from the pharmacy, and even grocery shopping for proper nutrition. Think about how this can help reduce illness or (re)admission to hospital.
- **Driver Companions who are trained to understand the challenges of aging and dementia.** Envoy drivers receive extensive training on how to transport riders with dementia, a program designed and administered by Jan Dougherty, Director (retired) of Banner Alzheimer's Institute. So they are knowledgeable about the challenges of aging and know how to make each journey as anxiety free and pleasant as possible, regardless of one's condition. (I suspect there are caregivers who are not that well trained.)

Benefits to the community:

- **Saves about 20-40% off your traditional transportation van model.** Having to purchase and maintain vans, as well as pay for the employees who drive them, adds up to a pretty massive cash outlay. Using Envoy you have zero capital expense and you don't have the overhead of an employee. That equates, according to Envoy's calculations, to an estimated 20-40% savings.
- **Branding.** Communities can have their names and logos adhered to the Envoy car or van, which keeps the brand active and visible out in the greater community.
- **Provides a clear competitive advantage.** If you claim to be truly "person-centered", this is a pretty good way to demonstrate your respect for the individuality of each resident. To be able to tell prospective residents and their families that you will take them beyond the curb, all the way in to their appointments and bring them back safely speaks volumes about how a community cares for its residents. And it goes a long way in establishing trust and providing peace of mind for their families.

Benefits to the greater community and city:

- **Many of the drivers are retired or semi-retired . . . all are passionate about what they do.** This part I really like. Many of the drivers are former teachers and social workers with a desire to give back and serve their communities. For them, this isn't a "job", it's a lifestyle. Who doesn't love the idea of providing employment to folks who might get passed over for other work? And who doesn't love the idea of having a loved one driven by someone dedicated to serving their needs, as opposed to a clock watcher counting the minutes before his/her lunch break?

I've only scratched the surface here. There are many more benefits and ways communities can use Envoy America to really create value for their residents and family members.

I do have one gripe, however. They don't service Pasadena, California (yet!). My 92-year old mom would love them!



This article has been brought to you by [Envoy America](#) in partnership with [Senior Housing Forum](#).