

## A Little Help connects seniors with neighbors

By Deborah Swearingen

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Age may bring wisdom, but it can also bring challenges. Luckily, a local nonprofit organization is here to provide "a little help."



Judy Thomas provides transportation to Nancy Kenry's water arthritis class.

A Little Help, an organization that connects seniors with neighbors, began in Denver in 2005. Recently, however, it started moving into southern Jefferson County. Volunteers provide rides, conversation and help around the house.

While rides to appointments are certainly important, the social aspect is arguably even more valuable.

"It's less about the ride to the doctor's office than the connection and conversation that's had in between," said executive director Amanda Gregg.

Several weeks ago, Nancy Kenry utilized A Little Help for the first time as volunteer Judy Thomas stopped by her house to give her a ride to her exercise class at the Ridge Recreation Center. Kenry has known about the organization for some time and worked to get it off the ground in South Jeffco.

"It's a wonderful organization," Kenry said. "It's part of the village-to-village network. ... (It's) about people helping people. I just think it's wonderful."

Kenry has glaucoma, which prohibits her from driving. Even for someone who uses public transportation and ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft, coordinating transportation can be a real challenge.

"Especially when you live in the suburbs, there is so much that's related to driving," she said. " ... When you are transportation-handicapped, I guess you'd say, juggling all of the balls of who can take me where, and do you have to call seven days in advance. It's a challenge."

For Thomas, who also lives in South Jeffco, it was no brainer to start volunteering once she retired. She has helped with everything from rides to gardening and vacuuming.

"I just think it's such a great service to provide to seniors," she said.

### Providing social engagement

Although transportation is the most requested service, social engagement is next in line. Gregg said it's something the organization has focused on lately, and it's a big problem for those living alone who struggle with transportation and mobility.

"One of the main things that we're really talking about now is fighting the isolation and working through the power of community on helping through that process," she said.

According to her, the nonprofit's model thrives on word-of-mouth recommendations and works best when there is a four-to-one ratio of volunteers and members. Right now, there are about 100 of each in South Jeffco so A Little Help is making a push for volunteers. To learn more, visit [www.alittlehelp.org](http://www.alittlehelp.org).

**Want to go?** A Little Help is hosting a What the Help!? Party on Sept. 27 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Coal Mine Avenue Brewing, 9719 W. Coal Mine Ave, in Littleton. The event is meant to help folks understand what volunteering for a Little Help is like. RSVP at 720-242-9032.