

Janice Dzigiel of Senior Transportation Connection keeps our town on the go: My Cleveland



Janice Dzigiel is the executive director of Senior Transportation Connection. (Lisa DeJong/The Plain Dealer)



[\[http://connect.cleveland.com/user/gsegall/index.html\]](http://connect.cleveland.com/user/gsegall/index.html) By **Grant Segall, The Plain Dealer**

[\[http://connect.cleveland.com/user/gsegall/posts.html\]](http://connect.cleveland.com/user/gsegall/posts.html)

Email the author | Follow on Twitter [\[https://twitter.com/GrantSegall\]](https://twitter.com/GrantSegall)

on December 03, 2015 at 10:30 AM, updated December 03, 2015 at 10:31 AM

Janice Dzigiel has led the nonprofit Senior Transportation Connection for nearly all its 10 years.

How do you say your name?

Zeegle.

So what's Senior Transportation about?

We provide transport to adults 60 and older. We serve Cleveland, 26 suburbs and a number of nonprofits. We're doing 500 trips a day on average and about 7,000 riders in the year.

Older adults need to get around. Oftentimes, they don't have children nearby or, like my parents, they don't want to bother their children. So we provide them the independence.

Where do you take people?

MY CLEVELAND

To community centers, senior centers, medical appointments, shopping trips, the West Side Market, golf, lunch with their friends. We take a nun to a local hospital to volunteer.

Ballgames?

If it's a day game. Our service is pretty much 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. But we're looking at expanding to weekends.

For lots of reasons, the only place we don't go consciously is the casinos. But some people try to fool us. They'll ask to go to Tower City.

Do the passengers pay?

That depends on their city. In Cleveland, it's \$1.25 per ride.

We do not require financial eligibility. We know about 42% of our seniors are low-income. Most are women. Most are minorities. Twenty-five percent use a mobility aid.

Is it hard for seniors to give up the car keys?

Cleveland's very car-dependent. People can't imagine living without it. We have to find ways to ease that transition. A study says older men outlive their ability to drive by eight years on average and women 10.

The only places one individual wanted us to take her was the car dealerships. The second time, her daughter finally called and said, "We recently took her car keys away." We were able to work with the resident to become her transportation.

I really call the service "high tech meets high touch." You call us at least three days in advance, and our software is able to group people's trips together. Our drivers are helping people on and off the bus, carrying in the groceries, getting the mail from the mailbox. They report concerns to a social worker in the community.

Does Cleveland's weather get in the way?

We have our challenges. We'd cancel only if the police tell me to. But in winter people often cancel their rides.

Had any accidents?

Fender benders. We've fought about three garage doors at our West Side depot and a couple awnings at Vocational Guidance Services.

Do you ever take a turn behind the wheel?

We're all licensed to drive the buses. I did it one day. The superintendent said, "All you have to do is pick up Shirley, and she'll tell you the rest of the route." Shirley was in the front seat: "Turn here, turn there." That day earned me a lot of credibility with my drivers.

Where are you from?

I live in Old Brooklyn. Raised in Slavic Village. My father and mother still live there in the house he was born in.

I was born at St. Alexis. no longer open. I went to grade school at Sacred Heart of Jesus, no longer open. I went to Cleveland South, no longer open. I got a bachelor's at Kent State and a master's from Cleveland State.

The universities are still open, at least. So where do you live now?

In old Brooklyn.

Janice Dzigiel of Senior Transportation Connection keeps our town on the go: My Cleveland [<http://www.cleveland.com/mycle>]

Robin Johnson of Singing Angels helps make our town noteworthy: My Cleveland (photos) [<http://www.cleveland.com/mycle>]

Geigers count on downtown for their third store: My Cleveland [<http://www.cleveland.com/mycle>]

Hospice's Rev. Chuck Behrens says locals live and die with pluck: My Cleveland [<http://www.cleveland.com/mycle>]

Ice cream purveyors Pete and Mike Mitchell serve up local flavor: My Cleveland [<http://www.cleveland.com/mycle>]

All Stories [<http://topics.cleveland.com/tag/r/cleveland/posts.html>]

Household?

My partner. She's an adjunct in social work at Case Western.

What do you do for fun?

We love gardening. The garden grows well. I had a double batch of green beans this year.

We also participate in community shares with Rising Harvest Farms on Memphis. Best eggs in the city there.

Where do you hang out?

The Metroparks, the neighborhoods, the West Side Market, the towpath. I walk my dogs. I live very close to the Harvard trailhead. I'm looking forward to the path's extension past Steelyard all the way downtown.

My favorite restaurant is Fat Cats in Tremont. I start with the calamari, and the salmon is pretty fabulous, too.

I love Cleveland. It's my city. I haven't lived anywhere else. I love how friendly Clevelanders are. I went downtown once where there was a convention of some sort, and everyone seemed available to offer directions. We're going to do well with the Republican convention. I'm going to volunteer to welcome them to my beautiful city.

Cleveland quirks?

Catholic Clevelanders always identify by their parish. "Where'd you grow up?" "St. Hyacinth's."

Is Cleveland a good place to grow old?

Cleveland is fabulous for services for the aging population, not only care but research, at the Mandel school and the Benjamin Rose Institute. The city of Cleveland has a tremendous department on aging, as do many suburbs. I'm a member of an advisory committee for Cleveland undergoing this study of how to create age-friendly communities, where you reduce the need for transportation.

When I retire, do I want to move to Florida, to a gated community? No. I want to live in a neighborhood where I can watch kids walk to school and play basketball.

For more information, see ridestc.org [<http://ridestc.org>].

Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our **User Agreement** and **Privacy Policy**

© 2015 Northeast Ohio Media Group LLC. All rights reserved (**About Us**).

The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of Northeast Ohio Media Group LLC.

Community Rules apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site. **Contact interactivity management.**

[▶ Ad Choices](#)