

A Dream Come True on the Joe Rodota Trail!



Laurie Bauer's vision began when she stumbled across a video about Cycling Without Age, a program founded in Denmark in 2012. Today, the international program serves over 1.5 million elders worldwide, offering volunteer-driven trishaw rides in nature. "I am going to make this happen here - someday!" she remembers thinking.

Laurie grew up in a small town in northern Ohio. "We lived in the country; it was there I came to appreciate the outdoors and nature," she shares.

Forty-plus years of cycling through Sonoma County's scenic landscapes with her husband, including multiple Wine Country Century rides, fueled Laurie's determination. Relocating to Sebastopol in 2021 and semi-retiring from a career in health care provided the perfect opportunity.

Almost immediately after settling into the area, Laurie presented her ambitious trishaw dream to the Sebastopol Area Senior Center (SASC) and hoped to deepen her connections to a new community. After a few hiccups, the program was launched in 2023, and Laurie became the volunteer program director of SASC's Cycling Without Age Trishaw program.

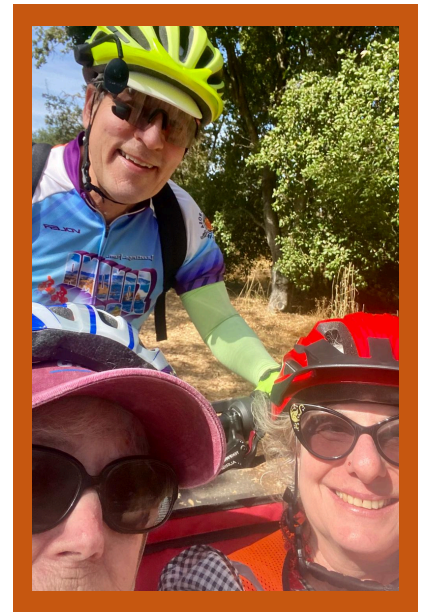
Laurie is grateful to work alongside amazing volunteers and meet fascinating elders. "My parents are in their mid-90s and still live in the town I grew up in. I know my Dad would love to go on rides, so I give others rides here to give back." Laurie is proud that the SASC's bike came from Denmark. "We have a real Danish Trishaw here at the SASC!"

Eric Strom, a volunteer trishaw pilot, believes "nature runs at a much slower pace than our electronic society. Getting outside is key to our health and well-being." Eric recently retired as the Vallejo Fire Captain and is enthusiastic about helping his community. "I had a lot of exposure to seniors in my line of work and witnessed the unfortunate health declines that can occur with isolation, so I signed up right away to participate in this program!"

Last year, Eric and other Trishaw volunteers participated in the Apple Blossom Parade, piloting a 104-year-old passenger. "It was inspiring to talk to someone 104 years old! A real live natural historian that could share some of her adventures and the way life has changed in her lifetime," Eric proudly admits.

Mark Wills, a retired ER doctor and Santa Rosa Cycle Club member, remembers seeing a SASC call for volunteer pilots. "I signed up the moment I learned about the program! I thought I could get my workout while volunteering too!"

Mark, a self-admitted exercise and health enthusiast, has been volunteering as a trishaw pilot since the program's inception. "I spent my life helping people, and now I enjoy doing it as a volunteer."



A lifelong love of cycling and the outdoors has been a thrilling sport for Mark. Now, he enjoys sharing it with his passengers and meeting elders in his community. "In my opinion, society doesn't value elders as much as it should. These rides have proven to be unbelievably meaningful and rewarding to me."

Studies from around the world, from Spain to Germany, Singapore to Scotland, on the Cycling Without Age program have consistently demonstrated its positive effects on seniors' well-being: reducing feelings of isolation, renewing connection with nature, rekindling cherished memories, and the simple joy of feeling the wind in one's hair.

The SASC Cycling Without Age Trishaw program powerfully reminds us of the importance of community, intergenerational connections, and the simple yet profound pleasure of a leisurely bike ride.

**Thank you, Laurie, for bringing your dreams to SASC and our elders!
And a special thank you to Eric, Mark, and our other volunteers for your pedal strength,
kindness, and enthusiasm!**



To sign up for a ride or volunteer as a pilot for the
SASC Cycling without Age program
visit us at www.sebastopolseniorcenter.org

