

The engine at Paratransit, Inc.



By Ed Goldman,
 Columnist
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Paratransit Inc., which gives rides to the elderly and disabled and also offers mobility training, is throwing itself a 35th anniversary open-house party tomorrow and all of us are invited.

Linda Deavens, the private nonprofit's CEO for nearly six years — who began as a temporary part-time secretary there in 1979 — says the free party will include “a light lunch served in a bag that people can keep and hang over their wheelchairs for future use.”

The event will also include tours of the facilities, which Deavens says are as much for her employees as her customers. “A lot of our people who make what we do possible, whether they're in I.T. or they're reservation agents, have never met the people we serve,” she tells me. “I think they're going to like knowing the impact their



Linda Deavens, CEO, Paratransit Inc.

work has.” The party, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., is at Paratransit's headquarters, 2501 Florin Rd. (Details are at paratransit.org.)

Since Paratransit receives money from a variety of social-service and quasi-government partnerships — for example, Sacramento Regional Transit funds 43 percent of the agency's Dial-a-Ride program — I ask Deavens if the federal government shutdown is directly affecting her services.

“Oh, goodness, all of us just want this thing to be resolved,” she says with a semi-resigned

laugh. “Ultimately, it can hurt RT and its release of the federal funds it receives, which would impact us for sure.”

Paratransit has been expanding on her watch. In addition to providing more than 450,000 rides a year on 145 buses that operate “nearly 24 hours a day,” the company is active in Hawaii, Washington and Boston, its newest location.

Paratransit is assessing the eligibility of people who use that city's disability transportation “to see if they're capable

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enough for us to teach them to ride a regular bus," Deavens says. "But there's more to take into account," she says. "For example, Honolulu, Boston and Spokane have some of the worst sidewalks in the country."

Deavens (rhymes with heavens) is a trim 68 — and keeps that way "by working on a treadmill and walking around our facilities all day."

In fact, whenever she meets with Richard Rosebush, who runs Paratransit's spinoff Destinations Mobility, "we walk and walk around the buildings and talk nonstop." (Rosebush was profiled here on Dec. 24, 2012, and is included in my book, "But I Digress").

Married to commercial real estate agent Don Deavens for 18 years, Deavens says she thinks of retiring "one of these days, but my husband says, 'You'll get bored sitting in the house all day.' He's probably right." I think so, too. If she does, she can always go outside and walk around the house a few times a day.



Linda Deavens speaks at Paratransit's 35th anniversary celebration, October 9, 2013.

Highlights:

- About 300 people attended.
- Media representatives included KCRA and Univision TV.
- Attendees toured the nonprofit's sales & service facilities.
- Chris Flores, Senior Field Representative for Congresswoman Doris Matsui, presented Paratransit CEO Linda Deavens with an official Congressional Record which will become part of the permanent collection at the United States Library of Congress.

Visit Paratransit.org and DestinationsMobility.com for more information.

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