

COLUMNS

Special weekly coverage of Capital Region newsmakers and topics:

CARING COMMUNITY, published **Tuesday**, spotlights people helping people in the Capital Region.

LAW BEAT highlights news about the legal profession, law enforcement, the court system and criminal justice issues. It is published on **Wednesday**.

CAMPUS NOTEBOOK, which publishes on **Thursday**, looks at higher education issues and events at colleges and universities in the Capital Region.

INSIDE POLITICS, published on **Friday**, goes behind the scenes for news about government, politics and people in public office.

FOLLOW-UP ON THE NEWS updates recent developments on events and issues since they were last covered in the Times Union. Read it on **Sunday**.

Seniors get to enjoy a bus ride with a smile

By **CHRISTEN GOWAN**

Staff writer

COLONIE — Whenever bus driver Rob Armao picks up a client, he tries to use humor to brighten his passenger's day. Armao, 61, is a driver for a senior transportation program provided by the Colonie Senior Service Centers.

CARING COMMUNITY

"I really enjoy it because I meet interesting people," Armao said.

The driver, who works three days a week, starts at 8 a.m., driving local seniors to medical appointments, grocery stores and to get their hair done. He always likes to keep the mood light on his bus though. He dresses things up for the holidays — with scary costumes on Halloween, Thanksgiving decorations and a Santa costume at Christmas.

"I enjoy entertaining people," the bus driver said. "They get a big kick out of it, and they get smiles on their faces."

He's developed a close relationship with his clients. Whether picking them up at their doorstep or loading groceries into their



PAUL BUCKOWSKI/TIMES UNION

ROB ARMAO of Latham drives for the Colonie Senior Service Centers, taking seniors to stores and medical and other appointments, helping them stay independent.

house, he always tries to add a personal touch to his job.

The transportation program runs weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and allows

seniors still living in their own homes to remain active and independent in the community.

Born and raised in Troy, Armao retired from General Electric after 33 years as a machinist. After one year of retirement, he decided to go back to work after receiving encouragement from his wife, Irene.

The Latham man is one of eight drivers chauffeur local seniors around and has been driving for seven years. He logs about 120 miles per day, escorting about 20 seniors.

Always playing a jokester, Armao said he likes to keep his bus rides exciting. He tells jokes and plays small pranks.

Armao jokes with the seniors that he gets to keep any groceries that may roll out of their bags. The seniors play along with their jokester driver.

"This puts a little excitement into their life," Armao said.

To learn more about the Colonie Seniors or the transportation system, call 459-6064 or visit <http://www.colonieseniors.org>

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