

news THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT DALLAS

southwestern medical school • graduate school of biomedical sciences • school of allied health sciences

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******The University of Texas Health
Science Center at Dallas boasts a
nine-year-old carpool from Pilot
Point and Denton.*

DALLAS--It's the "only remaining original permanent floating carpool" from Pilot Point to The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas (UTHSCD). And the six members, all UTHSCD employees, are carpool evangelists.

Chris Lunsford, accounting clerk in the Payroll office, is the only charter member who has stayed in the carpool for the whole nine years. And actually she and her daughter, Cathy Moore, accounting clerk in OB-Gyn, are the only Pilot Point residents in the carpool. The other four members are Denton residents.

All meet in Denton at 7:00 a.m. "on the dot."

"This is a hard, rigid routine, and there are no alternatives," says Walter Gilchrist, administrative service officer in the Microbiology Department. Gilchrist emphasized the necessity of regular hours (8:00 to 5:00) for the carpool to work. Members said bosses have to understand the importance of leaving at 5:00 with the group. Most bosses are understanding and arrange necessary meetings within the 8:00 to 5:00 time period, said Ms. Moore.

The group has had some technicians drop out because they had to change their hours to match their bosses' later hours.

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first add carpool

Gilchrist said he gets up at 5:15 to make the 7:00 meeting. They used to have a member, however, who could get up at 6:55, shower ("such as it was"), boil two eggs and make the 7:00 deadline. Asked if they believed the five-minute preparation, Gilchrist answered, "If you could see him and smell him, you'd believe it."

Did they kick him out?

"Oh, no, he was a lot of fun," said Ms. Lunsford.

Four-year member Gloria Cho, research associate in OB-Gyn, was shocked at the idea that the group might get tired of seeing each other.

"We have fun together," said Ms. Cho. Other carpool members said they get to know each other's personal problems, they discuss current events, and sometimes they read or sleep.

Ms. Cho and Elinor Reinmiller, reference librarian, are the two non-driving members of the carpool. Each of them pays the driver \$10 per week to ride.

The drivers are Ms. Lunsford, Ms. Moore, Gilchrist and Dieter Gaupp instructor in pediatrics. They take turns, driving a week at a time.

Besides saving money on gasoline and driving expense (Ms. Lunsford estimates she saves about \$125 monthly on gasoline), the group shares one parking fee instead of paying six individual fees. They suggest that carpools could be encouraged by reserving a close-in parking area for carpools.

"If five have been driving, and they start driving together, that releases four parking places," said Gilchrist. He said they were the only carpool meeting at the Denton parking lot when he joined three years ago, but now they see more and more carpools every day.

If someone has to work overtime, he or she drives alone that day or has a family member drive in late for the ride home. With an errand to run during the day a member will plan ahead and trade driving days or borrow the driver's car.

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second add carpool

One of the advantages of carpooling is that only one, usually the driver, has to remain alert all the time although everyone watches the traffic.

"Mother and I are backseat drivers for each other, but nobody else ever says anything about anybody's driving," said Ms. Moore. She was another charter member of the carpool but moved away in 1969. She rejoined the group last March.

Asked if there are any disadvantages to carpooling, Gilcrist joked, "Well, when Chris drives and you sit in the front seat, you have to assume the fetal position, but other than that...."

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