



Google™

Search

 Web www.nwbusinessmonthly.com

Volume 32 • Issue 6 • June 2007

Note: Online edition is only partially provided, to receive a complete issue [subscribe](#) to our print edition.

[Back to content page](#)

Chauffeur to Skagit Valley's elderly
 Local businesswoman's enterprise ensures older residents are mobile – and cared for

by Amanda Baltazar



Chauffering seniors around town – and beyond – is the core of Lyle Turner's business Beck & Call, a concierge service for the elderly.

Lyle Turner has reinvented herself more times than most of us have changed our hairstyle. And it seems that attitude is also taking hold of her company, because thanks to her re-creative nature and an inability to rest on her laurels, business is booming.

Turner owns, operates and dreams Beck & Call, a concierge business that mostly transports seniors 55 and older to where they need to go, but has a few sidelines and continues to grow.

The main business generally involves taking seniors to medical appointments, but she also drives them to social engagements, on day trips to Seattle, or to and from one of the area airports. Turner's schedule is erratic as she tends to these people, lavishing them not only with a ride, but also with a big smile that travels all the way up to her dazzling blue eyes, and personalized treatment they couldn't find anywhere else.

Morning customers are treated to coffee, tea and Danish for their journeys, while the standard fare for the afternoon and evening is cheese and crackers, soda, water and other beverages. And since refreshment services have declined to nothing on most flights, she's been feeding all passengers she picks up from – or takes to – the airport.

Ads by Google

[2007 Holiday Calendar](#)

2007 Holiday Calendar
 Bargain Deals Get Terrific Value For Money
travel.eazydealz.com

[2007 Calendar Maker](#)

Print Your Own Calendars
 Free. Download & Register Today!
www.free-calendars-online.com

[Free Online Calendar](#)

Coordinate schedules, track events, & set reminders w/ Google Calendar
calendar.google.com

[Calendars 2007](#)

Seeking for Calendars
 2007 Look at Top 5 Results Nationwide
www.genialfinder.com

[What will happen in 2007](#)

With your birthdate, I will tell you what will it be 2007. Free
www.sara-freder.com/



But Turner, 52, doesn't stop there. She writes down the preferences of every customer and tailors her offerings to them. One frequent flyer (who's since moved to Florida) liked a certain drink waiting for him when he arrived at Sea-Tac, for example. If there are no special requests, Turner just does something special. "I drove a couple and their grandson on Easter Sunday and made an Easter basket for them," she says. During the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival, she gave customers a memory book and a candle. "It's the little things that make a difference to these people."

It's because of the people that Turner loves this job. She chose to work with older people because they're vulnerable. "We all are, but they're really vulnerable," she says. They also teach her a lot, and she regularly writes down the things they have to say. "For these people, the moment is important, and I've learned to live every day fully from them."

Turner has always worked with older people. Back in Dayton, Ohio, where she grew up and married (and at different times reinvented herself under each of her names – Mary, Jayne and Lyle, the latter originally her maiden name) she started working with the elderly, doing light housekeeping, maintenance and laundry, and offering companionship.

Eventually, she decided she needed a change of pace, which led to jobs in guest services on a cattle ranch in Colorado, then as a porter for the American Orient Express (now Grand Luxe Rail Journeys) and then the same company's boat, which went to Alaska.

All of this led her in many ways to where she is now. Work on the ranch was tough, she said, "but I knew I had to cowgirl up and stay, and now when I'm faced with a challenge, I tell myself to cowgirl up and keep on moving."

And she's had plenty of challenges. She moved to La Conner in 2004 to be with her boyfriend, but when that relationship soured, she didn't, and moved to Anacortes. And this is where her grand scheme was hatched.

"I officially went into business in March 2005, but I was just testing the water. I was totally lost in this community," she says, "because everything is so spread out here, and there are different needs [to Dayton]." Because of this, she ran the business out of La Conner, but remained living in Anacortes.

The first year was difficult, she says, still managing to retain the smile that's never left her eyes. She borrowed money from a friend, which she paid back within the promised 45 days, but was then forced to declare bankruptcy.

"After this," she says, "there was nothing else I could give." But she didn't have to, because her luck turned once more when the Skagit Council of Governments approved a loan, saving her business, and probably the little hope she had left. This gave Beck & Call "a sound financial base from which to grow," she says. So finally, Beck & Call, with its fleet of two cars – a '98 Dodge Caravan and a Toyota Camry – was up with its engine running.

Nowadays, Turner has become a fixture in the lives of many of Skagit Valley's elderly. "I've become an advocate and a stand-in for their children or their families, because many of them live out of state or out of town." Indeed, she's almost one of the family and maintains contact with her customers' real families by email and phone, to let them know how their loved ones are doing.

It's generally a senior's family who approaches Turner in the first place, she says – probably 75 percent of the time. And while much of the work she's hired for is routine, not all of it is. She recently took a client to Seattle, for shopping and lunch, stopping at Shoreline to visit the client's friend on the way.

She also helped a client relocate to Huntington Beach, Calif. They drove down the coast together, stopping at Disneyland, then Turner helped her client unpack and stayed for two days before flying back to Washington.

This kind of life suits Turner, who spends long drives socializing, or daydreaming if her clients prefer to be left to their thoughts. "And I always have music," she says. "My clients often like jazz, but if they want quiet, I just turn it down."

Luckily, and not surprisingly, Beck & Call's business has grown solely through word-of-mouth. Turner does belong to the La Conner Chamber of Commerce,

Dayton, Ohio, transplant Lyle Turner brought with her a bounty of love and care for her clients, including Kathleen Halle of Anacortes.

Ads by Google

[Business Copiers Seattle](#)

Copiers, Printers, Fax, Color, Scan 9 Office Locations in WA State
www.FCBM.com

[Low Cost Health Insurance](#)

Fast, Free Online Insurance Quotes Low Rates - Great Deals Nationwide!
www.NetQuote.com

[24/7 Medical Help Button](#)

Home Medical Alert Button for Seniors Living Home Alone
www.LifeStation.com

[Two Lodgings in La Conner](#)

Condo In Heart of Cycling Country And Romantic Beach Cottage on Bay
www.TulipPedal.com

[Friendly Care For Elderly](#)

Find A Local Caregiver-Expert 24/7 & Hourly Assistance, Contact Us Now
www.HomeCareAssistance.com



Once you reach a certain age, it's all about having someone at your beck and call," says Turner.

which helps her by making referrals and giving out her business card.

Rates with Beck & Call barely change. Day trips run \$240, and there's an hourly base rate, although for ongoing medical trips, Turner adjusts it. And while she doesn't charge mileage, she has been forced recently to charge for gas. "I don't like to change my rates because this [elderly] population doesn't like change. So instead I do a gas surcharge."

This reluctance to change is not necessarily a good thing and the first time Turner increased her prices was because a client encouraged her. "He just started paying me more, so I increased [rates] for everyone," she says. "My clients are so kind to me and they all give me their opinion of my business."

There is little doubt that Beck & Call customers are kind to Turner because they're given exactly the same from her, in superlative amounts. But it takes time to build up a relationship with them, Turner points out. "It takes this age group a while to trust people. But my clients really care and I try to give back as much of me as I can -- even if it's just a hug.

"When my clients tell me 'Wow, I didn't expect that,' I know I've fulfilled my purpose because I've given them more than they expected. My goal is to fill their life at this point with everything positive I can give them. It's about their continued life enjoyment."

Turner sees herself not just as a chauffeur but also as a social stimulant. And it's true: Recent studies show that social interaction and intellectual stimulation not only help ward off dementia, but also help people live longer.

Because of the trust and relationships that are created, most of Turner's clients are repeat customers. She's also busy at certain times of the year such as during the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival or doing summertime excursions.

Next up for Turner is launching into concierge services for local businesses in the Skagit Valley. She already does some service work for clients, such as helping them clean, or simply being a companion, and the business side will be an add-on to this. She'll run business people to and from the local airports, pick up and deliver supplies, file papers -- there's not a lot that Lyle Turner won't do.

But Turner's long-term goal is to franchise the business. "I'd love to branch out and have Beck & Call babies because the need is everywhere," she says, a motherly glee coming into her blue eyes. "People are living longer and have more disposable income ... and once you reach a certain age, it's all about having someone at your beck and call."

[Back to content page](#)

[Click here to subscribe to the Northwest Business Monthly Magazine](#)

[HOME](#) | [MAGAZINE](#) | [PAST ISSUES](#) | [SPECIAL EVENTS](#) | [VIP CLIENTS](#) | [EDITORIAL CALENDAR](#) | [ADVERTISING INFO](#) | [PRESS RELEASE](#) | [CONTACT INFO](#)

Northwest Business Monthly, 1732 Iowa Street, Bellingham, WA 98229 • (360) 671-3933 • Fax (360) 671-3934