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## ***Veteran Vanpooler of 28 Years Announces Retirement***

It's always sad to lose a loyal customer. But after 28 years of vanpooling with VPSI, Larry Berger is preparing to give up his van and retire.

Larry Berger first started vanpooling with VPSI in 1977. While working for the Department of Defense, he rode VPSI's 'Van #8' on his daily commutes to and from the Pentagon in Washington D.C.

In 1997 he accepted a position at the US Southern Command in Miami, working as a liaison between Department of Defense offices located throughout Central and South America and SOUTHCOM Headquarters.

In 1998 Berger successfully started up SOUTHCOM's first VPSI vanpool and wound up spending about an hour of his time each day acting as the Command's unofficial vanpool coordinator. He didn't have the Command's blessing, and received significant resistance to starting a vanpool program at SOUTHCOM but persevered - and in doing so, created the largest vanpool fleet in the state of Florida.

"Initially, I took a lot of heat from our Quality of Life Officer. Can you believe a Quality of Life program that discouraged vanpools? He was unwilling to support a vanpool program which might impact the work hours within the Command." A few senior officers realized, "This

is a great program!" which helped get the vanpool program going.

"I'm a strong believer in the program," says Berger. "It works. It's been successful." And now, as gas prices are going up, even more people are saying, "Wow! We've gotta get into this."

"Vanpooling requires a major change in the mindset of most people," explains Berger. "You have to get people out of the mindset that you need a car." But employees at SOUTHCOM realize that vanpooling is the ultimate benefit. Instead of commuting alone and spending \$70 to \$80 a week on gas, they can vanpool and ride for free.

Berger worked hard to turn SOUTHCOM's vanpool program into a great success. Of the 1,200 total employees at the facility, over 33% ride in 41 vanpools. He has even helped convince SOUTHCOM to reserve 26 spaces of preferential parking for the full size vans. The program has allowed vanpoolers to save over 120,000 gallons of fuel and take 65,000 cars off of the highway each year. The average employee saves \$4,000 annually in vehicle and fuel costs.

When asked about interesting things Berger has experienced while vanpooling, he remembers a crisp morning, while driving through

*See Larry Berger,  
Continued on Page 3*

## Wyeth Selected for EPA's "Best Workplace for Commuters" Top 20 List for Second Consecutive Year



For the second year in a row, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has selected Wyeth as one of its "Best Workplaces for Commuters" (BWC). The EPA recognizes the top 20 "Fortune 500" Companies who provide superior commuter benefits, such as subsidized transit/vanpool passes, telework programs, or shuttle services to their employees.

Wyeth's use of commuter benefits increased substantially in 2005 as a result of growth in both their carpool and vanpool programs. The Company's carpool program added approximately ten new carpools per month and the vanpool program increased from five vanpools in 2004 to 16 at multiple sites in 2005.

Wyeth was also a Gold level winner in the first annual BWC "Race to Excellence." The "Race to Excellence" is an exciting way for organizations involved in Best Workplaces for Commuters to receive additional recognition for

their efforts to actively champion and promote employee transportation programs. Award winners were recognized by the EPA at the annual Association for Commuter Transportation International Conference in Anaheim, California in September.

Wyeth's GreenWheels Program Manager, Jessica Barron, was recognized for her ongoing efforts to organize Wyeth employees into shared ride arrangements. During the second half of 2004, a number of Wyeth facilities were added to the GreenWheels program. In 2005, Ms. Barron worked with locations from Sanford, North Carolina to Andover, MA to increase employee use of transit, carpools and vanpools.

VPSI was hired in 2001 to establish and manage the Wyeth Commuter Assistance Center (CAC) as it assisted employees during the relocation of Wyeth's pharmaceutical headquarters. The CAC steadily expanded to provide services to

Wyeth facilities throughout the eastern United States, including vanpool subsidies, preferential parking for carpools and vanpools, and a "virtual" Commuter Assistance Center through the Wyeth intranet.

According to Barron, "GreenWheels is important to Wyeth because the company is committed to developing products that improve people's quality of life while also striving for environmental excellence. Wyeth brings its goals full circle by creating high standards for managing the issues of their commuters in an environmentally friendly way."

Steven Tasher, Wyeth's Vice President of Environmental Affairs and Facilities Operations and Associate General Counsel, adds, "Wyeth is pleased to be recognized again this year as a BWC Top Twenty employer. Our commitment to the environment and our employees is demonstrated through support of our commuter assistance programs."

## TSA Starts Three New Vanpools at MCO

VPSI's Brevard County, Florida Office started their third vanpool supporting the Transportation Security Agency (TSA) operation at the Orlando International Airport. On October 1, Leticia (Letty) Duarte received an eleven passenger van. Letty's van is supporting Agents living in South Brevard who work the early shift, 4:00 am to 12:30 pm.

The TSA Agents participate in the Commuter Choice Program and each participant receives a Transit Tax Benefit of \$105.00 a month in CommuterBucks to apply towards his/her commute costs.

The second van supporting the TSA Agents was a fifteen passenger van delivered to Rachel Jones effective September 10. Rachel's van is accommodating Central and North Brevard Agents working the afternoon shift from 12:00 pm to 8:30 pm.

The Brevard/TSA Program began on June 1 when Steve Reynolds started service for South and Central Brevard Agents on the 12:00 pm to 8:30 pm shift in an eight passenger van. Steve has recently upgraded to an eleven passenger van due to increased interest by other agents.



**TSA employees commuting from Melbourne, Florida to Orlando International Airport**

All three vans operate on a seven day schedule to support the Homeland Security Program at the Orlando International Airport.

## Larry Berger (continued from Page 1)

Roslyn, Virginia. Berger's vanpool drove up to a car, burning on the side of the highway. He handed the owner the fire extinguisher from his van, allowing the owner to quickly put out the fire.

Berger also recalls a Friday evening when a passenger left a cantaloupe in the back of the van. It went unnoticed over the weekend, until Monday morning, after the melon had been sitting in 90 degree heat all weekend. "It was not a pleasant experience," laughs Berger.

Berger continues, "Once, one of our riders fell asleep on the ride to work - his snoring kept everyone else awake. When we arrived at the Pentagon, we all snuck out of the van and left him in the back seat of the van, fast asleep."

"But most importantly," he says, "through vanpooling I was able to sell one of my cars. I wasn't using it. On top of the savings in commuting costs, vanpooling was saving me over \$600 a month in car payments, insurance and gas."

Over the years, Berger has developed friendships with many of his fellow vanpoolers. "We are like one big family" he explains. Everybody knows what everybody else is doing - we know each others' lives. We're all friends." In addition, Berger finds that vanpooling has helped his work life. Through contacts with his fellow riders, he has "established working relationships with individuals who, in other circumstances I would not normally work with. For example, one rider

in our vanpool, who works in the SOUTHCOM transportation division, is helping me find a mover."

Berger has set his retirement date as January 3, 2006 and has bought a house about 35 miles outside of Atlanta, Georgia.

After retiring, he's not sure what he will do with his time. "I'm not the type of person who's going to sit around in a rocking chair and eat Bon Bons. I want to do something fun and keep busy."

### LAST MINUTE UPDATE:

Having said all of the above, Larry now advises that, although he is definitely moving from the Miami area, there is a chance he may continue his federal career with an Atlanta based agency. Now, about that Atlanta vanpool . . .

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## **Transportation News That Moves You**

### **Maintenance Reminder**

Winter will be here soon. We encourage all vanpoolers to take their vehicles in for timely preventative maintenance. A list of “friendly” fleet services can be found on page three of your vehicle’s Volunteer Driver Guide. Drivers should also check their tires, tire pressures, fluids and get ready for winter. If



**Check Tire Pressure Weekly**



you have any questions or concerns about your vehicle, don’t hesitate to contact your local office.

### **Insurance/Registration Reminder**

By the time you receive this edition of the *Commuter Chronicle*, each Primary Driver should have received new insurance cards. VPSI issued new cards on November 1. If you haven’t received your new cards, please contact your local office for assistance.

Primary Drivers should also check other vehicle related documents to ensure their timeliness.

### **Hurricane Katrina Relief**

VPSI, Inc., and its approximately 120 employees, raised \$7,390 in contributions for Hurricane Katrina relief. Thanks to all VPSI employees who gave time and money towards the relief efforts.

***If you have a story idea  
you’d like to contribute,  
please e-mail us at  
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