

our life



Travel  
December Issue

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# Eden Prairie woman plans people's trips – and often goes along for the ride

By **SUE WEBBER**  
Contributing Writer

It's a good thing that Carol Giuliani likes to travel. She's made it her life's work, and last year she took 27 trips.

Giuliani, a resident of Eden Prairie, is an attorney who also has been a caregiver for more than 30 years. She owns Senior Travel Companion Services.

She will plan the logistics for a trip for an individual or a couple and accompany them on the trip.

She works within a client's budget to craft and customize a trip or adventure that allows them to have the experience they desire, without the hassle of planning, or the worry of unanticipated consequences.

Giuliani said she gained knowledge of working with seniors starting at the age of 15, when she worked in a nursing home. She is used to hiring caregivers for disabled clients.

Of her 27 trips last year, 19 were relocation trips. On one, for example, she was asked to bring a widow from California to her family in New York. Another trip involved escorting a woman from Texas to Wisconsin.

"Sometimes a family member doesn't want to travel but needs to get a parent out of a particular living situation," Giuliani said. "It's been really rewarding to reunite folks with their kids." One of those trips involved a

man who was in Bulgaria and needed to get back to Denver because his visa has expiring.

Another man, from Arizona, was trying to make a trip to see his dentist in New Jersey but ended up instead in Connecticut. "I can do last-minute trips if I'm available," Giuliani said.

One client is a man who wants to travel with his wife, who has Alzheimer's. "He wants me to go along and keep an eye on his wife, and be an extra pair of hands," she said.

She escorted a 90-year-old man from Toronto to the Netherlands to visit relatives and stayed with him for the week.

"I know the best times to fly, the seats to get, and how to file for refunds and credits," Giuliani said. "If there's an unexpected lay-over, I know how to keep people safe and comfortable."

Some of the trips allow her to tack on a few days of vacation for herself. "I've been in Hawaii three times since the pandemic," she said. "They were work trips, but I was able to get in some scuba diving."

In the seven years she's been helping senior citizens travel, Giuliani has found a need for backup help. She is now collaborating with Jan Dougherty, a registered nurse, social worker, and dementia specialist from Arizona in a new venture called Certified Senior TravALZ Companions, LLP, to create the first

certification program for professionals who want to create their own business and assist older and disabled adults to travel.

"I don't hire people; I do help them to start their own businesses and then I refer work to them," she said. "This way I have back-ups and can meet demand, which has been growing."

"Jan Dougherty wrote 'Travel with Dementia'," Giuliani said. "We're basically starting a business and a new industry at the same time. There are 27 million Americans with dementia that travel. A lot of people need and want to travel, but sometimes their kids don't want to or are unable to travel with them. Or they don't have kids."

One recent client, for example, was a person with vision loss, obesity and dementia who needed to travel from Philadelphia to Phoenix. Another couple in Bangladesh needed help getting to Tampa. "I'm always learning something new," Giuliani said.

Giuliani and Dougherty trained 14 people in March from 10 different states at a workshop in Phoenix. A virtual session is planned for January 2023 to train people how to help clients get to their destinations from the U.S., Canada and other countries.

"They need a background check and some medical training," Giuliani said. "We are set-



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Carol Giuliani owns Senior Travel Companion Services in Eden Prairie, where she plans trips for individuals or couples, and often accompanies them on their travels.

ting high standards and mentoring them as they start new, independent businesses."

The two women have had some cooperation from MSP Airport, where there is a demonstration airplane they use on tours for children and other groups.

Giuliani was a bonded professional fiduciary, trained by the Volunteers of America in 1993. She practiced law for 10 years and is a 28-plus-year member of the Minnesota Association of Guardians and Conservators.

She volunteers on an international committee which is working to make airports more accessible and friendly toward seniors and people with hidden disabilities.

She won two awards last year: the Entrepreneurs Challenge in Eden Prairie (Shark Tank), and AARP's "50 Over 50" designation in the business category.

She and her husband, an attorney, have three sons.

## Shirley Carlson

Travel has been a passion and practice for Shirley Carlson ever since she was a teenager.

"I love to travel," she said. "I've been quite a few places. I have a couple of older cousins who loved to travel, and that's how it started. I went with them. We took short car trips to the Black Hills, Colorado, and several times to Branson."

Her long employment with Honeywell enabled her to expand her travels. "When I was about to graduate from high school, I started looking for a job," Carlson said. "I had an offer from Honeywell before I was out of school. I graduated on Friday, had a physical on Monday, and started work on Tuesday."

In 1978-79, Honeywell's travel club offered a trip to Austria and Germany, she said.

"We stayed in a hotel in a little town in Austria," Carlson said. "We rented a car in Munich and trav-



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Shirley Carlson has been traveling since she was a teenager.

eled around Austria and down into Italy."

Eventually, her work at Honeywell expanded into Carlson's training people, working in the Protection Services Division, which installed and monitored home and building alarms.

"I traveled quite a bit for them," she said.

She also traveled with friends or family, logging trips to Alaska, Hawaii, Ireland, England, Greece, Netherlands, France, Austria and within the U.S.

Carlson retired from Honeywell 23 years ago,

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# Edina woman has traveled the world since graduate school

By **SUE WEBBER**  
Contributing Writer

Sandra Shearer of Edina started traveling when she was in graduate school and never stopped. “I went to Europe with two friends and took trains starting in Amsterdam,” she said. “We circled the European countries over two months as kids did back then.”

“Maybe it was really my mother that put the ‘bug’ in me,” Shearer said. “She took me to Chicago to see the museums and to California on a train trip when I was in high school.”

A graduate of West High School in Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota, Shearer earned degrees in social work and psychology. She practiced as a clinical psychologist for years and eventually was hired as the CEO of a nonprofit



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

**Sandra Shearer of Edina has traveled throughout the world since she was a graduate student.**

organization with offices in Minnesota and Wisconsin. She retired from that position and began consulting, which entailed traveling the US. A final step in her career was to circle back to clinical practice. She is now retired.

During her early professional career, Shearer was invited to join a group

of psychologists to study women’s issues in China. “It was hosted by the All China Women’s Federation,” she said. “We traveled throughout China giving lectures and learning about Chinese society.”

A couple years later Shearer went with a social work group to study social service systems in the Soviet Union. She even got out to Samarkand in Uzbekistan. While she was there, she watched Gorbachev on TV as he met with President Reagan, the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union.

With a ski club she belongs to, Shearer went to Australia and New Zealand and another time to Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. Different trips have taken her to the Galapagos Islands, to Patagonia, a safari in Tanzania, Viet-

nam, and Egypt, as well as trips to Cuba, Peru, sailing in Belize and the coast of Turkey.

She once took her 13-year-old granddaughter to Paris through Road Scholar, a travel provider that she selected for its ability to provide wonderful trips for parents and grandchildren, Shearer said. “It was an exciting time for her and a bonding for the both of us,” she said.

Shearer also went to Utah on a geologist-led Road Scholar trip to tour the national parks and learn the history of those parks.

In 2018 she took a two-week Hurtigruten coastal cruise along Norway to the Arctic Circle by herself. “I encourage people to go on their own,” Shearer said. “If you do it once, you’ll do it again

and again.” Iceland and Ireland were also trips she did alone.

More recently in May, she and three friends rented a car in Sicily and drove from the west to east coast, visiting the Greek and Roman ruins and eating “fabulous Sicilian food.” Two of them spoke Italian, which made the trip easier, she said.

In October, Shearer and another friend drove to Bentonville, Arkansas, to go to the Crystal Bridge Museum of American Art. “It was a spontaneous trip along with beautiful fall colors,” she said. On Nov. 12 she left for a one-week trip to Mexico, just for the sun. “November is a dark month,” she said.

Although she takes a lot of photos, Shearer hasn’t done a lot of journaling on her trips. She

journalled when she began her travels years ago, but hasn’t kept up with it because, she said, she never went back and read the old ones. “I decided there was no point,” she said.

Is there anything left on her travel bucket list? “I would like to go to Bali but it’s a long distance from here” she said.

In the meantime, her newest hobby is pickleball. “I volunteer for the Stages Theater in Hopkins and the Guthrie Theatre and projects for the University of Minnesota volunteer organization,” Shearer said. “I was a Red Cross mental health volunteer and went to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina,” she said. “It was devastating. I wore sunglasses so people couldn’t see my tears. I wish I could still do that work.”

## Trips

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but still travels with her sister and cousin.

“Before the pandemic, we went to Myrtle Beach,” Carlson said. “Last spring, we spent a week in the South Padre Island. I found a time share on the east coast. Hurricane Ian hit while we were there; we had rain and

wind but were safe otherwise. We rented a car so we could tour the area.”

Asked about her favorite trips, Carlson said, “I enjoyed Ireland, and Alaska is beautiful. I’m open to anything. It’s fun to

go and get away.”

Since retirement, she has been active with Honeywell’s retirement program. “It’s a social outlet,” Carlson said. She also volunteers at the St. Louis Park Senior Program at Lenox Com-

munity Center.

A 44-year resident of St. Louis Park and member of the St. Louis Park Seniors group, Carlson said she and her sister have bought a home in Annandale, where they grew up.

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