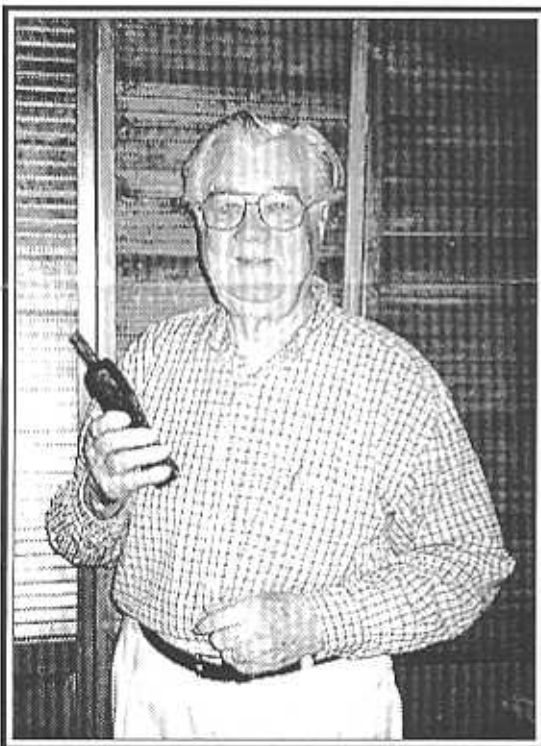


PUTTING a HUMAN FACE

on Downtown Campbell

by Bob Sneed



James Malone, the Campbell man who brought free Cell Phones for the Elderly to California

About three years ago Campbellite James (Jim) Malone, a long time active member of the West San José-Campbell Lions Club, noticed in the paper that all cell phones must be able to call emergency 911 with no charge for the service. He also knew that many elderly people living alone have no quick reliable way to call for help in an emergency. And he knew that cell phones technology is changing so rapidly that thousands are being thrown away, and that discarded electronic devices really don't belong in landfills.

Putting all this together, he came up with the brilliant idea of collecting discarded cell phones, checking to see that the battery and phone work, and giving them, with battery chargers, free to seniors who are living alone. For particularly frail people it's a

good idea to wear one all the time around the neck. It costs absolutely nothing if it is used only for 911.

Jim did some research and found that South Carolina was the first state to do this and had handed out five thousand phones, followed by Texas which had given out ten thousand, but no one in California had done it yet.

He gave me two examples where they have been lifesavers:

An elderly couple from Santa Clara intending to drive toward San José drove north instead and ended up off the road in a gulley. They called 911, and help finally found them, but only because they could describe their surroundings.

In another case in another state, a woman was kidnapped and locked in a car trunk, but she had a hidden cell phone in her bra, was able to call 911, and was rescued. As a retired electronic engineer I was amazed that the signal could get out of the metal car body. Maybe they're making trunk lids out of plastic these days!

All Bay Area 911 calls go to a central office in Vallejo and are rerouted to the local jurisdiction. A phone call from a residence registers the address automatically, but a call from an automobile is only traceable to the near-

est cell antenna that picks up the call, and needs the callers to describe their location if they can.

Jim tells me there is a new Federal law that requires cell phone manufacturers within two years of its passage to add global positioning system (GPS) capability that can locate the phone within two to three hundred yards, independent of the caller's voice.

Jim talked up the idea of collecting phones, refurbishing them and giving them free to seniors, at his Lion's Club, which took it on as a project. It was written up in a page and one-half article in the AARP Magazine, and Jim got calls from all over California. He approached several West Valley cities to see if their Senior Centers would consider joining the program.

The Santa Clara Senior Center at 1303 Fremont Avenue, (408) 984-3266, and the Los Gatos Senior Center, at 208 East Main Street, Linda Gallo, (408) 354-1514, joined the program, and between them have handed out between five and six thousand phones in the last 2-1/2 years.

Unused cell phones, working or not, may be handed in at the Santa Clara Valley Lions Blind Center at 101 North Bascom Avenue in Santa Clara between 9 am and 4 pm on weekdays. The Club sends those that need reconditioning to a company in Michigan, and also supplies them to users free.

It's a good idea for everyone to have a cell phone in the car with a recharger that plugs into the cigarette lighter whether or not you are paying for phone service. 911 works all the time. So far as Jim knows, the Bay Area is still the only place in California that Cell Phones for Seniors is active.

The International Lions have one million four hundred thousand members, and Jim wishes they would pick up this idea as a worldwide project for the abused, the blind, and seniors. See the web at www.donateaphone.com, and

www.geocities.com/sanjosecampbelllions/