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**Drivers**

from 1A

Trips to the medical centers provide a number of advantages to veterans, beyond simple transportation.

“One reason I drive the van is that I get the opportunity to tell veterans what they’re entitled to,” Swant said. “You’d be surprised how many veterans don’t know

what they’re entitled to. Some people think that they only get three years of medical care, but it’s not true. They get lifetime medical care if they meet the qualifications.”

The program also acts as protection for veterans against being taken advantage of.

“Back east, there was a time when people were painting vans to look like DAV

vans and taking veterans to the hospital — then charging them,” Jim said. “Some veterans don’t know any different, they figured it was a ride and they had to pay.”

The trips also provide an extra cushion of safety for the veterans, where the drivers can facilitate urgent medical care if a problem arises. While the drivers are not allowed to provide medical care to the veterans — they are not even allowed to have physical contact with them — the drivers can contact emergency personnel.

“We’re also authorized to call a sheriff’s or emergency department if something comes up so we can go in there and let them take care of the problem,” Swant said.

The idea of driving veterans to facilities started in Florence before the DAV became involved.

“The program was originally started by Al Stapleton,” Swant said. “He used his own private vehicle. He went through three vans transporting vets to Portland and Roseburg with his own gas money.”

But as the cost of the program ran higher, along with liability issues, the program was taken over by the Florence DAV around 15 years ago. And throughout its existence, the program has received strong support from the community.

“We get a lot of local support from the merchants, like Tony’s Garage,” Swant said. “I told him we needed to get fog lights and I asked him what he would charge. He said ‘I wouldn’t charge anything.’ He asked I drop the van off on Friday night and he would have the lights on ready for the morning, and he did. That’s the kind of support you get from the local area.”

But to keep the program going, they need drivers. As to the qualifications?

“You have to have a pulse,” Swant joked. “Drivers need a valid driver’s license and to go through a background check and a physical and be insurable.”

For drivers like Swant and Casey, the benefits to driving are in the people that they serve.

“You’re just helping your veterans out,” Casey said. “It’s a well-needed thing. I’ve had people try and give me tips, and I say, ‘If I didn’t want to do this, I wouldn’t be there.’”

“They couldn’t pay me to do this,” Swant added.

To learn more about the program, or the schedule a ride-a-long, contact Swant at 541-968-9512.

To become a driver for the DAV, call 541-440-1272 for the Roseburg route, or 541-997-1123 for the Portland route.

**Earth**

from 1A

Chandler affirmed the local electric utility’s alignment with long-term changes in energy consumption.

“We very much support conservation,” she said, “and we have programs to encourage people to save electricity.”

Programs and options offered by the community-owned utility include cus-

tomers rebates for investments such as energy-efficient household appliances, windows, insulation and renewable energy systems, as well as paperless billing and energy-saving advice.


More information on energy conservation and Central Lincoln’s rebate programs can be found at [www.clpud.org](http://www.clpud.org).

Those interested in participating in Earth Hour can find more information at [www.earthhour.org](http://www.earthhour.org).


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