

CAREVAN:

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served as the GSMC board of trustees' chairman for a number of years, and he thought the hospital should offer a less expensive way to get people to their much-needed appointments. After his death, the hospital realized just how much of a needed service it was.

"They found out that people didn't have a way to get to their appointments," Schaan said.

Schaan said Cricket Nichols, of United Way, completed a feasibility study and learned that more than 900 people could use the service every week in the region, which stretches from Pendleton to Hermiston to Echo to Hat Rock. After receiving a grant from the Wildhorse Foundation to cover some of the start-up costs and funds from Paul Parish of Special Mobility in Kennewick and the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation, the hospital purchased a van equipped with a ramp and all other necessary equipment for people with medical issues. In its first month of service in December 2006, the hospital gave 77 rides.

Since then, the van has provided nearly 18,000 rides to people. The service is nearly entirely funded by donations, largely given by the riders using the service.

Fitch said she donates \$5 every time she uses the service. She also donates \$100 on her husband's birthday and on their anniversary because

CareVan service

The CareVan operates from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. CareVan travels to Hermiston, Echo, Stanfield, Umatilla, Irrigon and Boardman to pick up and deliver patients to medical appointments in Hermiston. For more information, or to reserve a ride, call 541-667-3888.

she not only appreciates the service, she also wants to honor her husband's memory. She said her husband gave much of himself for the hospital, and it deserves a little something back from her as well.

"I'm so proud of him," she said. "This is a service that is so wonderful."

Tina Cullers, coordinator for CareVan, said the service also wouldn't be possible without its volunteer drivers.

Retired area school teacher Gary Miller said he has been driving for the past three and a half years, and it has brought him nothing but joy.

"It was recommended to me by another driver who told me that, after 32 years of teaching, it would be a good way to give back to the community," he said. "I love being able to visit with people. It is nice to be able to help out people who can't do some of these things on their own. I'm glad to help out, and most people seem very thankful."

The program has also given back to other organi-

zations that provide similar services. This week, CareVan donated one of its older vehicles, a 2006 van worth about \$6,800, to Clearview Mediation Disability Resource Center. Darrin Umbarger, career counseling specialist for the organization, and his son Jeremy Umbarger, program manager, said they offer rides to clients from Pendleton and Hermiston to as far as Portland for medical appointments. While the service typically isn't free, the center works with insurance and other health organizations to fund the program.

Schaan said hospital administrators are happy to provide transportation to area residents and also help others doing the same thing.

"We are thrilled when we found out the hospital decided to donate it to you," she said to Darrin and Jeremy Umbarger.



MAEGAN MURRAY PHOTOS

Good Shepherd Medical Center Volunteer Manager Cindy Schaan hands the keys to a van to Darrin Umbarger, career counseling specialist at Clearview Mediation Disability Resource Center. GSMC donated the van from its CareVan program to Clearview so that Clearview could expand their service offerings in Hermiston.

About Clearview

Clearview is in the process of obtaining an ambulance, which will have the capability of transporting non-emergency patients on stretchers. The organization operates with volunteers and two paid drivers and is always looking for more volunteers. For more information about the Clearview Mediation organization, call 541-276-1130.



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