

Seneca County medical transport program gets trial run

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OVID — As of July 1, residents of the towns of Lodi, Covert, Ovid and Romulus who don't have their own vehicles and need to get to a medical or dental appointment have a new transportation option.

It's a six-month trial program being called the South County Transportation Corps. It is a partnership of the Seneca County Board of Supervisors, the Cayuga-Seneca Community Action Agency, and Seneca Towns Engaging People for Solutions.

Volunteer drivers, using their own vehicles, will take ambulatory people in the four towns for medical, dental and other health-related appointments if they have no other means of getting there.

The 11 drivers will be reimbursed at the federal rate of 54 cents per mile. Passengers also are asked to make a donation based on the length of the trip. It is suggested that they pay \$5 per ride to local destinations of less than 10 miles one-way.

For rides between 10 and 25 miles, the suggested donation is \$10. For rides of more than 25 miles one-way, riders are asked to consider a donation of \$20 to \$30.

At the end of each trip, the rider will be given a stamped envelope addressed to CSCAA in which they can make contributions by cash or check and mail it in.

The drivers agree to have criminal and driver background checks and receive excess automobile liability insurance.

On July 1, volunteer driver and dispatcher David Dresser picked up 85-year-old Mary Storrs of Ovid and took her to a medical appointment. It was the first use of the program.

“It’s a six-month pilot program, and if it proves successful, we hope continued funding will be forthcoming from the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, the CSCAA and the county,” Dresser said.

The STEPS organization received a grant from the Greater Rochester Health Foundation to cover the cost of driver background checks and additional auto liability insurance premiums for the drivers.

In May, the Board of Supervisors voted to underwrite the mileage costs for SCTC drivers at the federal rate for the final six months of the year, up to a maximum of \$5,400.

The Cayuga-Seneca Community Action Agency, based in Waterloo, was approached by the county to handle the money and administer the program. The donations from riders will help offset the agency’s administrative costs.

“It was County Manager John Sheppard who put STEPS on the trail of the CSCAA,” Dresser said.

“This fits right into our mission of helping make people sustainable and self-sufficient. Transportation is a key for a lot of people needing to get to health-related destinations,” said Anne Wilkes, CSCAA director. “This is a collaborative local program that provides a solution to a problem.”

The new program is designed to supplement the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program that provides people 55 and older with transportation to medical and dental appointments.

There is no age requirement for the new program, and the SCTC does not transport Medicaid eligible residents because that service is provided by the county and state.

For health-related transportation, residents age 55 or older should call the RSVP dispatcher at (315) 665-0131.

Medicaid-eligible people should call the Medicaid Answering Service at (866) 753-4437.

Others can call the SCTC dispatcher at (607) 532-4891. A week’s advance notice is requested for the SCTC program.

“Who knows? The program may someday serve the whole county and could be a model for other counties. That is my dream,” Dresser said. “The program also provides an opportunity for residents to interact with their neighbors in a manner that will form relationships and a sense of community.”

In addition to Dresser, other volunteer drivers in the program are Jim Anderson, Bill Braunig, Harold Bush, Mary Louise Church, Jean Currie, Gerard DeGaray, Deb DiLallo, Janet Lynch, Jeff Williams and Gail Zabawski.