

RART rides ready for those who need a lift



Roger Werth / The Daily News Linda Webster, a Reserve A Ride driver for CAP, helps Kelso resident Pat McIntosh in Webster's car.

[By Brenda Blevins McCorkle / The Daily News](#) The Daily News Online | Posted: Tuesday, November 9, 2010

Pat McIntosh could never have managed without RART.

Back in 2005, the Kelso resident underwent chemotherapy for breast cancer. The therapy left her with heart, lung and cognition problems, and she eventually was diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

With no car and no bus service because she lived outside the city limits, McIntosh had a hard time getting to twice weekly doctors' appointments.

Her family tried to help, but "it was a real hardship," McIntosh, 61, recalled. "They would need to take time off from their jobs to take me to my medical appointments."

In March of this year, she discovered RART — Reserve A Ride Transportation. After she signed up for the program through Lower Columbia CAP, volunteer drivers came to pick her up and took her to her medical appointments, sometimes in vans, sometimes in cars.

"They have the most courteous people working for them," recalls McIntosh. "Kind and caring. Real people people."

But it's too much of a secret, and program organizers are trying to get word out to more people.

The program has been available for about a year, but only about 70 people have signed up for the service, said B.J. Jacobson, Transportation Services manager for the Human Services Council in Vancouver. The council administers the program.

Jacobson said the agency believes there are many more community members eligible in need of the service, which is funded by a Washington State Department of Transportation grant for low-income people not eligible for Medicaid.

"Our challenge is to get the word out in the community that this service is available," Jacobson said.

Kelly Wagoner, transportation manager for CAP, said RART gives the nonprofit organization one more way to help people who need medical transportation.

Besides CAP, Trans-care, Volunteer Chore (Catholic Community Services), Woodland Wheelchair and Wahkiakum on the Move also offer RART rides.

Although McIntosh is now eligible for CUBS Paratransit, she remembers the kindness shown toward her by the drivers who arrived at her apartment doorstep to take her to appointments.

At the time, she walked with a walker and pulled a portable oxygen tank with her. The drivers helped her out to the vehicle and got her and the awkward tank and walker into the car.

"Then on the return, the same thing," she said. "They would come into whatever ... doctor's office I was at, and do the same thing in reverse."

McIntosh said she would "recommend them to anyone in the community."

To learn more about RART, call 1-800-752-9422 or CAP at 360-425-3430, extension 235.