

Media Release – For Immediate Release

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We'll Take You There! Volunteer Driver Program to launch in the Bow Valley This Fall

During the summer months the Towns of Banff and Canmore and the M.D. of Bighorn are working together to recruit volunteer drivers for the new “We’ll Take You There” Bow Valley Volunteer Driver Program. Designed to get seniors and people with disabilities to medical appointments in Calgary and throughout the valley, the program will be piloted this coming September. Others requiring rides for medical purposes will be accommodated as resources allow.

According to Mavis Sautner, FCSS Program Coordinator for the Town of Canmore, “The need for transportation for residents, particularly seniors in the Bow Valley to access medical appointments in Calgary has been an issue for many years. While municipal programs to assist with taxi passes has aided in transportation within each municipality, these programs have not fully addressed the need. The Volunteer Driver Program will fill an important need at a regional level.” There will be a compensation for drivers for the cost associated with providing the transportation which will be the responsibility of the passenger.

The Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) departments of Canmore and Banff and the Community Services department of Bighorn will initiate a shared-resources program including marketing and promotion, shared drivers and clients, and coordinated booking of rides. Screening of drivers and clients will be done by each individual office but to the same standard with the same protocols.

“In order to make this program a real success, we need volunteers to sign up and help get things started,” explains Sue Smythe, Seniors Program Coordinator with the Town of Banff. “There is so much to gain through volunteering with this program. From getting certification in First Aid/CPR to meeting new people to providing a much needed service to the community, the benefits are many.” Potential driving volunteers require a vehicle in excellent operating condition, a valid driving license, and a reasonable sense of direction in Calgary traffic. “A good sense of humour will probably be needed as well,” laughs Smythe. Volunteer applicants will be interviewed, have a police records screening and provide a current motor vehicle driving abstract.

A key issue with Volunteer Driver Programs in the past has been the concern about insurance coverage, both for the program and the driver. All participating municipalities have received unqualified support for the program, adding it under existing general liability insurance at no additional premium. Drivers will also not be required to acquire any extra personal insurance in order to participate.

All three municipalities are excited about the potential of this program. Emily Smith, Community Services Coordinator for the MD of Bighorn says “We are extremely hopeful that this program will greatly improve our resident’s ability to meet their medical needs and stay in our community. This is a true community partnership.”