

WELFARE RECIPIENTS TO GET VEHICLES VIA CHARITY GROUP

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Headline: WELFARE RECIPIENTS TO GET VEHICLES VIA CHARITY GROUP

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The Good News Mountaineer Garage will provide three more families in the Kanawha Valley with transportation to work and school.

Charleston Newspapers has donated three 1999 Chevy Cavaliers to the nonprofit organization that provides vehicles to welfare recipients who have no transportation to jobs or job training. The donated cars were used for newspaper deliveries and would have been traded in for newer models.

"Instead of trading them in, they decided to give them to us and we're just thrilled because it's a great car for our typical family," Good News Outreach Coordinator Arla Ralston said.

The organization was established in 2000 by community service leaders, members of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce and local social workers concerned about the lack of transportation for individuals and families trying to get off welfare.

The group has provided 85 cars to families in Kanawha and Lincoln counties. Families are referred to the program through the Department of Health and Human Resources and participate in Welfare to Work.

The Good News Mountaineer Garage spends up to \$500 reconditioning the vehicles and then sells them to individuals for \$1.

"We are looking for cars that with a couple hundred dollars work can last a family for two or three years until they get back on their feet," Ralston said.

Funding to renovate the cars first came through the Benedum Foundation and is now provided through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grants.

Good News' fleet of cars came mostly from individuals in the community who chose to make a contribution rather than trade in their vehicles.

"One of the biggest incentives . . . is they can take it as an income tax deduction on their federal taxes," Ralston said. "We also participate in the Neighborhood Investment Program, which allows individuals to get state tax credit for a portion of the vehicle's value. People have told us they actually come out better giving us the car and getting the state tax credit than they would have on a trade-in."

The organization is hoping to use the tax break as an incentive to get more used-car dealers and corporations to donate vehicles.

Allegheny Power was the first corporate donor, giving nine 1995 Plymouth Acclaims to the garage in May.

The economy cars donated by Charleston Newspapers are some of the most requested by typical families.

"Most of the people we provide cars to have one or two children, sometimes more, so we do like vans and stations wagons as well," Ralston said. "One man was about to lose his job at a construction company because he didn't have a truck, so when we got that donation it just fit right in with his family's needs."

Information on donating a vehicle is available at (866) GIVE-CAR or on the Good News Web site, www.goodnewsmountaineergarage.com.

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