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Group looks to give cars a new lease on life

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SHEPHERDSTOWN, W.Va. - Feeling a little charitable?

How about donating that old car you've been thinking about unloading?

Formed in August, a nonprofit organization is reaching throughout the state for donated automobiles for a program to help low-income people get the transportation they need.

The Good News Mountaineer Garage specializes in providing automobiles to low-income people with credit problems, said Hal Weber, donated vehicle coordinator for the organization.

Low-income people with credit problems can have difficulty purchasing cars because the interest they are required to pay on car loans can be up to 25 percent, Weber said Sunday at a car drop-off site in Shepherdstown.

Qualified car buyers purchasing an automobile from Good News Mountaineer Garage can qualify for loans with an interest rate as low as 4.75 percent, Weber said.

It is important that low-income people with credit problems be able to purchase cars because an automobile is often the only thing holding a person back from getting a job, Weber said.

"It's economic development, one job at a time," Weber said.

Lack of a car also could cause people to lose their jobs, Weber said.

Some people without a car sometimes have to rely on a patchwork system of transportation to get to a job, which can threaten their ability to stay employed if any part of the transportation schedule is interrupted, Weber said.

Donating a car to the Good News Mountaineer Garage can be a good deal for the car owner because the owner can get a federal tax write-off and a state tax credit of \$1,000 or more based on the value of the car, Weber said.

The Good News Mountaineer Garage has received about 45 cars, which are being kept at the organization's headquarters in Charleston, W.Va., Weber said.

Sunday afternoon, Weber set up a car drop-off site at Asbury United Methodist Church along W.Va. 480 near Shepherdstown. Shortly after setting up the drop-off site, Weber said he received two telephone calls from car owners who were thinking about stopping by for more information about the program.

Weber will operate the drop-off site at the church today from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The low-interest car loan program is only available to low-income people in Kanawha, Clay, Putnam and Boone counties, but the organization can sell cars outright at a reduced price to program participants in the Eastern Panhandle, Weber said.

The price for the cars is lower because Good News Mountaineer Garage sells them for the loan value, which is less than the fair-market value, Weber said.

Anyone with questions about Good News Mountaineer Garage can call 1-866-GIVE-CAR.

