

Local nonprofit makes life easier for people in wheelchairs and their families

By Dell Richards
September 27, 2012

When Carla Gillett – an inventor who has a patent and prototype for a wind turbine with solar power – saw a totaled van at a storage company, she saw the potential: A specially equipped van for her husband, Stephen, who is in a wheelchair.

“The owner thought it would be parted out, but I knew exactly what I wanted to do with it,” said the 56-year old who lives near Executive Airport. Gillett’s husband has had multiple strokes and has been in a wheelchair since February.

Luckily, a friend told her that Paratransit, Inc. – the local nonprofit known for its blue-and-white mini-buses that give rides to the people with disabilities – had started a new division to sell and repair wheelchair-accessible vans.

Because Gillett said “... it needed a lot of repair,” the work took three weeks.

Staff at Destinations Mobility pulled out seats to make space for a wheelchair, repaired the lift, changed out components in the dashboard and console – and much more. “We completely rebuilt the vehicle,” said Richard Rosebush, division manager.

Unlike her old van, the new one now is “...up to code. With this van, my husband faces forward and is much safer,” said Gillett.

For more than 211,280 people with disabilities and seniors in Sacramento County, being able to go places can be a huge problem. Without a specially equipped van, going to the store, a doctor’s appointment, even out for a drive is impossible.

“While Paratransit provides rides on our wheelchair-accessible buses, we felt there was a huge need for personal vehicles for the people with disabilities,” said Linda Deavens, Paratransit, Inc., CEO. “It’s the California dream to have freedom of the road.”



Photo: Richard Rosebush
Service Manager Brian Duymich adjusts the wheelchair lift.

New, specially designed – or modified vehicles – can be very expensive, costing up to \$90,000. Lower-cost, used models rarely are available from traditional dealers.

Depending on the vehicle, modifications and mileage, Destinations Mobility is able to sell used and new vans from \$7,500 to \$50,000. In addition to selling used vans and taking trade-ins, Destinations Mobility also is one of the few businesses that are willing to

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MOBILITY

A nonprofit, Destinations Mobility provides affordable wheelchair accessible vehicles. For more information, call (916) 868-6797 or visit our website at DestinationsMobility.com

A division of Paratransit, Inc.

Local nonprofit

service, repair and even remake these particular vehicles.

"Since we opened recently, we've done a lot of repairs, including major ones like Carla's," said Rosebush.

"To me, it was worth the cost to get this van made for Stephen. The lift for his wheelchair makes it so easy to get him in and out of the van, it has given us our independence back," said Gillett.

Now that Gillett has a new van for her husband – and that project completed – she also can make sure Stephen gets to his physical therapy appointments to regain his mobility.

She also can concentrate on promoting her renewable energy power system and other patents she has pending. "This allows me to continue my goals as well as Stephen's," said Gillett. "I can take Stephen with me everywhere now."

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By DELL RICHARDS
Special to the Pocket News

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Destinations Mobility does business throughout California. The showroom is located at 2501 Florin Rd. and open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information, go to www.destinationsmobility.com.

Founded in 1978, Paratransit, Inc., provides transportation services to individuals with disabilities, seniors and related agencies in Sacramento County. The local nonprofit also accepts vehicle—and boat—donations. For more information, go to www.paratransit.org.

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