

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

Paratransit car sales specialist lifts vehicle price barriers for disabled

By Cathie Anderson
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Sacramento's Paratransit Inc. moved into the car sales business without a hitch earlier this year, hiring industry veteran Richard Rosebush to find affordable vehicles for the disabled.

The challenge for Rosebush hasn't been finding the right cars or finding buyers with good credit. Rather, Rosebush has struggled with getting traditional banks and credit unions to understand the value of a used, modified vehicle.

"I have a 2000 Windstar with 80,000 miles on it," he said. "Go to Kelly Blue Book and it's going to say it's a \$5,000 vehicle. In reality, it's a \$15,000 vehicle.

"If a customer says, 'I've got \$3,000 to put down and I need financing on the rest,' then we have a challenge as far as trying to find a bank to recognize the real worth of this vehicle."

Rosebush said the difficulty arises mostly with minivans and other vehicles older than 2005, but those are precisely the

vehicles that are affordable for families he serves. Rosebush's goal is to sell new and used vehicles for between \$7,500 and \$50,000.

A spokeswoman for the American Banking Association said it wasn't a problem she'd run into before. Rosebush said it's not a barrier too many people understand until they're facing it.

He predicts that car sales will bring in upward of \$200,000 after expenses, money that will be funneled back into services provided by the nonprofit Paratransit.

The agency has offered transportation services to individuals with disabilities, the elderly and others since 1978.

It's located in the Florin Road facility that once housed the Mel Rapton dealership.

Expansion comes naturally

The entrepreneurial Linda Deavens has added consultant and now car dealer to the roles played by Paratransit Inc.

Deavens started at the nonprofit



Cathie Anderson is a featured columnist for The Sacramento Bee.

33 years ago as a part-time, temporary secretary. She's now the chief executive.

"We had six vehicles when I came," she said. "Today we have 180 vehicles in service, 90 at peak time every day. We operate almost 24 hours a day."

When Deavens took the reins five years ago, her budget was \$20.6 million. It is now \$30 million. The new revenue has helped her maintain services, even when Sacramento Regional Transit reduced service hours.

These days, Paratransit regularly wins consulting contracts from cities as far afield as Honolulu and Boston. Their consulting work includes training people

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wheelchair vehicle price barriers lifted

with disabilities on how to use public transit and assessing whether the disabled qualify for paratransit service.

Geri Ung, a planner with Honolulu's Department of Transportation Services, said the agency has received improved marks on compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act because of Paratransit's work.

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Paratransit, Inc. / Destinations Mobility CEO Linda Deavens with MV-1 customer Colleen Montini.



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