

Marketing mobility

Social enterprise helps wheelchair users get vehicles

By Dell Richards
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Multiple sclerosis keeps Fairfield resident Nancy Devore from driving, but she still wanted her independence and that meant being able to get in and out of her own van while in her wheelchair.

Because her van was 15 years old, however, she was worried the lift might collapse. "I was frightened the old lift would give way," said Devore, 68.

When seniors find themselves with a disability, there's not only the shock of the change itself, but there can be sticker shock when they go to buy a much-needed van. New, wheelchair accessible vans can run up to \$90,000.

After doing some research, though, Devore found a Northern California nonprofit that had exactly what she wanted – and at a more reasonable price.

She turned to nonprofit Paratransit, Inc., and its



Photo: Tammy Gass

Fairfield resident Nancy Devore shows off her new wheelchair equipped van.

Destinations Mobility, a fairly new and very different kind of dealership in Sacramento.

Destinations offers wheelchair accessible vehicles – mostly used minivans – for sale and rent to individuals, companies and organizations. It also

retrofits vehicles with lifts and other mobility equipment.

Lower-cost, used models rarely are available from traditional dealers. That's why Paratransit, Inc. says its social enterprise, Destinations Mobility, was

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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.

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launched – to sell wheelchair accessible vans at less expense.

"Even when people have had a disability for a long time, when they age or find themselves with one, they still want to drive," said Linda Deavens, Paratransit, Inc., CEO. "It's the California dream to have freedom of the road.

"With these vehicles being so expensive, we're really searching to find reliable ones that haven't had a whole lot of use and provide them at an affordable price," said Deavens. "We're in the business of creating mobility for people and giving them options."

Because Destinations Mobility is part of a nonprofit, the staff can sell used and new vans from \$7,500 to \$50,000, depending on the model, modifications and mileage.

The staff also brought the van to Fairfield three times so that Devore, her daughter and son-in-law could make sure it was what they wanted. "I really appreciated the dealer coming to me," said Devore. "That saved me having to have a driver for several hours."



Destinations Mobility vans can be equipped with hand controls for customers who are able to drive themselves.

Driving to customers in the Bay area and beyond is not unusual, the firm said. "We deliver vans all over Northern California and up to Tahoe and Reno," said Richard Rosebush, Destinations Mobility division manager.

Today, Devore has a manual ramp on her van that even her "7-year-old granddaughter can lift in and out easily," she said. While Devore bought a used van, it only had 24,000 miles on it.

In addition to a sturdy ramp, Devore's van also can be

parked almost anywhere. "With my old one, I had to have at least two spaces or hope there was a van-accessible handicap spot," she said.

Destinations Mobility does business throughout California from a showroom at 2501 Florin Road in Sacramento. It is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information, visit www.destinationsmobility.com or call (916) 868-6797.



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