

SNOQUALMIE VALLEY RECORD

A wish list to help the Valley

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The dawn of a new year is often a time for people to set goals and make plans for the year ahead.

Valley residents whose New Year's resolution is to give back to their community can find plenty of ways to help their neighbors, from driving seniors to needed medical appointments to holding drives for the local food bank. The 2009 "wish list" for local non-profits and service organizations includes many opportunities to help others and make the Valley a better place.

Life or death rides

Snoqualmie Valley Transportation helps provide the community with shuttle bus and passenger car rides to work, medical appointments, school and other important destinations.

2008 was a big year for the Valley bus service, as it partnered with the Snoqualmie Tribal Nation to field two biodiesel buses. In coming years, that relationship could replace older buses with new ones that run on the cooking oil waste from Snoqualmie Casino.

"The ultimate goal is have a whole fleet that's self-sufficient," said SVT lead dispatcher Jonathan Nelson.

Snoqualmie Valley Transportation's most pressing need in 2009 is for more volunteer drivers for its senior medical transportation program.

Oftentimes, Valley seniors don't have loved ones close by who can give them rides to much-needed medical appointments in Seattle and on the Eastside. That's where the medical transportation program's volunteer drivers step in. Unfortunately, high gas prices and a poor economy have caused the service to lose almost all of its volunteers.

“It’s life or death,” Nelson said.

“If anyone is out there looking for an opportunity to make a difference, we could really use their help right now,” he added. “We need people who are willing to use their own cars and be volunteer drivers.”

Drivers receive a small mileage stipend for the rides.

While Snoqualmie Valley Transportation saw its ridership grow last year, it also extended service to rural areas of the Lower Valley. That brought the group’s rides-per-hour ratio down, “but we’re helping a broader community, reaching out farther than before,” Nelson said.

For 2009, SVT needs more riders in the Lower Valley, and also requests that riders help by scheduling ahead as often as possible.

Nelson reminds Valley residents that SVT isn’t just for seniors.

“We are for everyone in the Valley,” he said.