

Dial-A-Ride licensed to drive into Connecticut

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MILLERTON — The North East Community Center (NECC) has been chasing after its dream of expanding the Dial-A-Ride transportation program into neighboring Connecticut for nearly two years. On July 31 all of the pieces fell into place to make that dream a reality.

"It's going to be great for people who have a lot of medical appointments in Sharon and Lakeville who haven't been able to get there. I'm very happy that we're finally getting to do it. I know it's something I've been working on since I've been here and that my predecessor was working on very hard before that," said NECC Transportation Coordinator Sean Bennett. "I hope it turns out to be a great opportunity to serve a lot of residents."

Dial-A-Ride, which provides on-

demand curb-to-curb bus service for residents of North East, Amana, Dover, Pine Plains, Stanford and Washington both locally and to Poughkeepsie and beyond, is a lifeline for those without transportation. For \$3.50 one way, or \$1 for seniors and veterans, riders can get where they need to go even without a car. Mondays and Thursdays the bus travels throughout the county. On Wednesdays and Fridays it stays local, within the six towns the program serves.

It's on the local days that the bus will now travel into Connecticut, to both Sharon and Lakeville. The reason there was such a push to get into those areas? Because that's where most people in the Harlem Valley go for hospital visits and medical appointments.

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DIAL-A-RIDE SCHEDULE	
DAY & DESTINATION	TIMES
MONDAY: Anywhere in Dutchess County	8:45 AM - 4:45 PM
WEDNESDAY: CT & 6 towns	8:45 AM - 4:45 PM
THURSDAY: Anywhere in Dutchess County	8:45 AM - 4:45 PM
FRIDAY: CT and 6 towns	8:45 AM - 4:45 PM
FARES	
General	\$3.50 one-way
Seniors	\$1 one-way
Veterans	\$1 one-way
Children 5 years & under	free

CHART PROVIDED BY THE NORTH EAST COMMUNITY CENTER

For more information about Dial-A-Ride, or to book a ride, call 518-789-4259. It's recommended you call three days ahead to schedule a ride to Connecticut.

"So many people who live in this area use medical services there," said NECC Executive Director Jenny Hansell, who added the Care Car service will remain available for people who are especially frail or for those who

need to go places that Dial-A-Ride doesn't serve. "So when we first were looking for what the needs were for transportation, the ability to go to Connecticut was central to what we wanted to accomplish. We had no idea how difficult the

process would be, or that there would be so many steps, so much paperwork, so many delays."

What was even harder for Hansell to handle, she said, was that NECC was not the entity dealing with the details, so it had to sit on the sidelines and wait for the approval to be granted. That, Hansell said, was most difficult. But, she said, those that did make the program move forward, from Dutchess County Mass Transit to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, did a great job, and for that she was thankful. She also wanted to express her thanks to the Foundation for Community Health, which she said was instrumental with leadership, guidance and financial support.

In the end, Hansell said, she has high hopes for what the expanded service of Dial-A-Ride will provide.

"I hope it will mean that people will be healthier because they can get the care they need when they need it, and that they will make the appointments they put off because they couldn't get there," she said. "I really look forward to, in six months to a year, to tell you how many people are using the bus. And based on all the research going on I think that will be the case."

For more information on Dial-A-Ride call NECC at 518-789-4259, and see chart, this page.