



Paratransit Mobility Training and Job Search Shuttle Service for the Homeless

## Press Release

For Immediate Release  
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### **“Wheels to Work” Drives to End Homelessness in Sacramento**

*New program launched this week to provide transportation, mobility training, and employment assistance for the homeless*

Sacramento, California — Last week two 14-passenger vans operated by *Paratransit Community Outreach Ambassadors* kicked off a new program that will provide homeless people with transportation, employment search services, health resources and training about how to use public transit. *Paratransit’s Mobility Training and Job Search Shuttle Service for the Homeless*, more commonly known as, *Wheels to Work*, is the product of a unique collaboration between Paratransit Inc., Women’s Empowerment, the Sacramento Housing Alliance, Sacramento Steps Forward, the Department of Human Assistance, the California Department of Rehabilitation and other homeless and housing service providers. The vans will be used to transport homeless men and women to job interviews, training programs, access a mobile computer lab, and reach several key service sites — without the transportation, they would be unable to perform these most basic activities to gain steady employment.

The partnership began in 2009 when two passenger shuttle vans were donated from Thunder Valley Casino to a sub-committee of Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) that addresses homeless employment issues. The chair of the SSF Homeless Employment Committee and Executive Director of the Sacramento Housing Alliance, Bob Erlenbusch, immediately thought of how the newly acquired vans could be utilized.

*“A recent survey of homeless people shows that thirty percent of the responders identified transportation and access to transportation as a significant barrier to employment. We needed to develop a plan to directly address those barriers. We started by collaborating with our community partners to find real solutions for change.”*

One of those community partners, Paratransit Inc., also recognized the need for employment services and transportation for homeless people. Linda Deavens, Paratransit’s Chief Executive Officer agreed to take on the project. After working with the Department of Human Assistance to secure federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) funding, Paratransit registered, insured, repaired and retrofitted the two vans, adding them to their vehicle fleet.

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[www.paratransit.org/wheels-to-work](http://www.paratransit.org/wheels-to-work)



### **DRIVING TO END HOMELESSNESS**

The Paratransit Mobility Training and Job Search Shuttle Service for the Homeless is a collaborative effort between Paratransit, Inc., the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance, Sacramento Housing Alliance, Sacramento Steps Forward, and Women’s Empowerment. Vehicles donated by Thunder Valley Casino.

*“We saw an opportunity to become partners in an innovative program that would provide much needed transportation and employment services to homeless men and women. We pulled together our resources and with the help of the Department of Human Assistance we secured federal funding for a year. We got to work with employment service providers and the result is a program that we can all be proud of.”*

## **Formerly Homeless Women Find Work Driving for Paratransit**

*Wheels to Work* not only provides access to employment services and transportation but it also employs people that were formerly homeless. The program provides “on the job” vehicle operator training to seven formerly homeless women with various disabilities. The *Community Outreach Ambassadors*, as they are called, are graduates of an 8-week employment skills training program run by Women’s Empowerment. Women’s Empowerment is a non-profit that works with homeless women to help them build the skills they need to go back to work and maintain stable housing. The California Department of Rehabilitation has also been working in collaboration with Paratransit and Women’s Empowerment to provide vocational rehabilitation services to the women.

*“This program has successfully put seven women back to work,” said Lisa Culp, Executive Director of Women’s Empowerment. “It’s a great example of how effective partnerships can lead to successful employment outcomes for homeless people.”*

The Community Outreach Ambassadors provided input about the route and began to compile resources from a variety of employment services agencies to include on the vans. They began their vehicle operations training in August and by the end of October they will have logged nearly 330 training hours both in class and behind the wheel.

*“I’m glad to be involved in something that allows me to give back to the community” said Sharniece Monroe, a Wheels to Work Community Outreach Ambassador. “We understand what people out there are going through and what they need to take that first step to get out of homelessness. For many, Wheels to Work will be a bridge to that first step.”*

A press conference and light reception to introduce Wheels to Work has been scheduled for October 10th at 10 a.m. at the Volunteers of America Family Center located at 470 Bannon Street.

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*Paratransit’s Mobility Training and Job Search Shuttle Service, “Wheels to Work” is a collaboration between Paratransit, Women’s Empowerment, Sacramento Steps Forward the Sacramento Housing Alliance, the Department of Human Assistance and the California Department of Rehabilitation. To learn more visit: [www.paratransit.org/wheels-to-work](http://www.paratransit.org/wheels-to-work).*



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