

DOWNNS

Chamber of Commerce

SPOTLIGHT MEMBER OF THE MONTH



Prior to 2011, citizens of Mitchell County had very limited access to any sort of public transportation. The Mitchell County Council on Aging provided service with one vehicle and one driver. The transportation was limited to trips within the City of Beloit with limited availability of service.

In 2010 Mitchell County Hospital Health Systems (MCHHS) held community focus groups throughout Mitchell County. From those discussions one common theme presented at each meeting was the need of transportation for the citizens of Mitchell County. Stephanie Simmons, Mitchell County Regional Medical Foundation (MCRMF), David Dick, MCHHS and Leanne Eilert, MCHHS met with the members of the Mitchell County Council on Aging (MCCOA) in hopes of combining resources to improve the current transportation system. Inquiries were made with Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) how partnering with the Council on Aging (COA) could improve and expand the current system being provided by the MCCOA. It seemed evident to the group that there was a greater need for public transportation in our area and it was not being met. The COA members were willing to provide funding and a representative to serve on a new board and realized after meeting with Eilert, Simmons and Dick that in order for general public transportation to succeed in Mitchell County more resources, both financial and operational were needed thus collaboration was started. After visiting with the COA and their willingness to turn over the bus and provide the funding the Mitchell County stakeholders came together recognizing the need and stepped up to the plate providing the necessary matching funds. The collaboration between Stephanie Simmons of MCRMF, Leanne Eilert, MCHHS, Jay Rowh, MCCOA and Silver Haired Legislature, David Dick, then the Administrator of MCHHS, and Representative Susan Concannon was the driving force behind the project. As a result of this collaboration SVT, Inc. was formed.

July 1, 2011 SVT began servicing passengers with one 14, passenger bus (transferred to us from the COA) and 1 wheelchair accessible mini-van (contracted for use from MCHHS). Original drivers for SVT were; Janna Frodsham, Sandy McBlair, Sue Creitz and Ken Sheppard.

SVT hit the ground with its wheels turning and experienced remarkable growth. In their first Fiscal Year (July 2011 - June 2012) SVT transported over 4,900 passengers and traveled over 69,000 miles. From July 2012 - June 2013 SVT served over 6,300 passengers and have over 81,000 miles.

In the summer of 2012 SVT received its first brand new mini-van. This vehicle was used in place of the bus to allow passengers a much more comfortable transportation experience than the bus. In the fall of 2012 SVT hired our first trip coordinator, Anita Reiter, Beloit Kansas. Anita worked part time scheduling the trips and grant reporting requirements.

It didn't take long for other counties to see what possibilities were out there. SVT was approached by the then Administrator of Osborne County Memorial Hospital, Kiley Floyd inquiring if Osborne County would be able to collaborate with SVT and provide transportation in their county. A development team from Osborne County began the processes to attain funding for their county. Funds were raised and SVT requested funding to expand its transportation service into Osborne County. After a few more meetings with KDOT, SVT was awarded the opportunity to increase their service area to include Osborne County and add another wheelchair accessible mini-van. In summer of 2013 SVT received its second brand new vehicle.

In November 2013 drivers for Osborne County were hired and services began early 2014 utilizing the wheelchair accessible mini-van received in summer 2013. Thus allowing two vehicles to operate out of Mitchell County and one van in Osborne County.

At the end of FY 2014 (July 1, 2013 -June 2014) SVT traveled over 99,000 miles and transported over 6,500 citizens. August 2014, SVT received its third new van that was wheelchair accessible.

SVT submitted its FY 2016 grant (July 1, 2015 - June 2016) in November 2014, to include all three counties; Jewell, Mitchell & Osborne in their service area. Not wanting to hold back the reigns for Jewell County, SVT hired two part-time drivers and began offering part-time transportation in spring of 2015. Once the FY 2016 grant year started, full time transportation was available to Jewell County citizens.

July 2015 SVT received two wheelchair accessible mini-vans allowing them 5 wheelchair accessible mini-vans, one straight mini-van and one 14 passenger bus to operate in the three county area.

In 2016, SVT was again approached by Quality Health Care, Inc. to see if an additional vehicle and drivers would be a possibility to provide transportation for their passengers needing trips to and from health care facilities. After inquiries with KDOT and securing additional funding, SVT was able to increase their budget and add an additional vehicle to their fleet making the total number of vehicles to be 8 and adding a regional trip to the schedule.

Currently, SVT operates one vehicle out of Jewell County, one out of Osborne County and three out of Mitchell County. We average 20,000 miles a month and transport between 750 - 900 passengers each month between the three counties. Our employee base includes 22 total employees of which two are trip coordinators, one transit manager and 15 part-time paid drivers and four volunteer drivers.

Solomon Valley Transportation - 785-534-2395