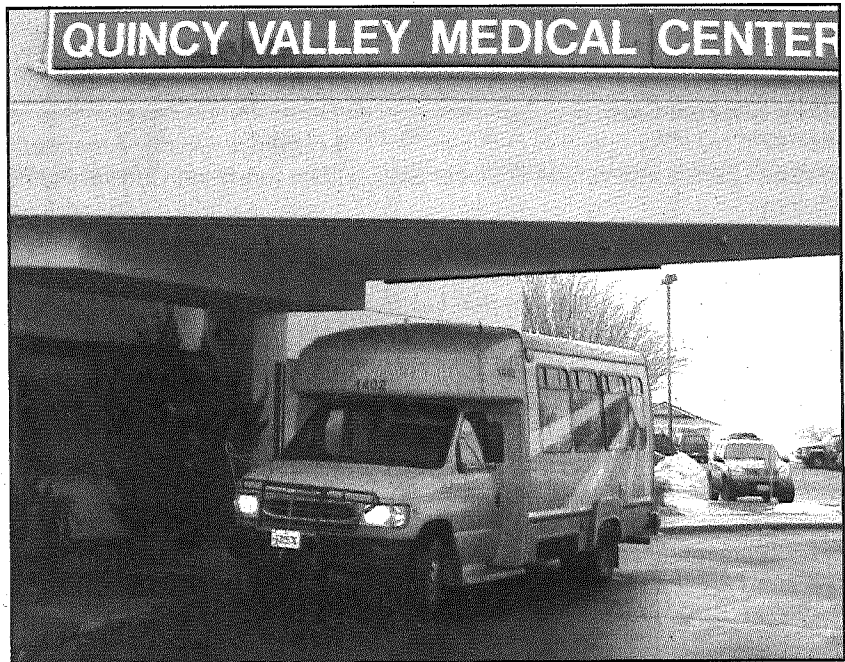


The Health Shuttle makes a stop at Quincy Valley Medical Center.

Rebecca Young/
Post-Register



Health shuttle helps locals

BY REBECCA YOUNG
Post-Register Writer

Every day, a Grant Transit Authority bus stops at the Quincy Valley Medical Center around 9 a.m. to pick up any passengers going to Wenatchee for medical treatment.

The Health Shuttle started a few years ago when GTA, the Moses Lake branch of the Wenatchee Valley clinic, Moses Lake Cancer Foundation and People for People came together to discuss the need to partner to provide transportation for Grant County cancer patients to radiation services in Wenatchee, said transit operations supervisor Brandy Heston.

The Health Shuttle now runs Monday through Friday, stopping at 8 a.m. at the Moses Lake clinic, 8:30 a.m. at the Ephrata Medical Center, 9 a.m. in Quincy, arriving at the Wenatchee Valley Clinic around 10 a.m. The bus also goes to Central Washington Hospital, the VA, and other medical offices in East Wenatchee and Wenatchee, as well as Columbia Station, where passengers can transfer to Link Transit, said driver Mary Davey. The Wenatchee Valley clinic blocks out some time for patients riding the health shuttle to do their radiation or other appointments.

"They are really good working with those on the shuttle," said Heston, who added that most of the health shuttle appointments are scheduled between 10:30 and 11:30 a.m.

After their appointments, the bus picks up the passengers around 12:30 p.m. for the return trip. The cost for the round trip is \$1.50 per person, but the Moses Lake Clinic picks up the fee for cancer patients they refer to the service. A monthly GTA pass also works, said Heston.

While cancer patients have first priority, anyone else with medical appointments is also welcome to ride, said Heston. Riders are asked to call at least the day before their appointment so GTA can size the bus accordingly. Others just wanting to go to Wenatchee can make arrangements to ride also, but will be bumped if patients need the seats.

"It takes the stress of them having to provide their own transportation. After the treatment, they are pretty worn out and it saves them from having to find a ride back home," said Heston. She added that couples or caregivers are welcome to go along for moral support.

"I absolutely love my job. I get to interact with some really nifty people," said Davey, who has driven the shuttle for almost three years now.

Quincy resident JoAnn McDonald said she and her husband recently took the Health Shuttle to a doctor's appointment. They didn't want to drive to Wenatchee themselves in the bad weather.

"It was really convenient and everyone was very friendly. They did everything they could to make the experience pleasant," said McDonald, who said she wishes more Quincy residents knew about and took advantage of the service.

"There was a real camaraderie there. They bend over backwards to accommodate us and make sure we are taken care of," said McDonald.

They plan to ride the shuttle again the end of this month, when they have another doctor's appointment.

To schedule a ride or for more information on the GTA Health Shuttle, call 1-800-406-9177 or 1-800-851-4204.

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