

Town will help seniors to get around for free

New taxi service starting in April will give elderly a lift at no cost

BY KATHY PARKER Gazette Reporter

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Beginning next month, senior citizens in the town will have a free taxi service to take them to doctor's appointments, shopping and other destinations.

Supervisor Tom Wood said the Town Board has been researching the program for about six months, and members have determined that there are enough seniors in town in need of a ride to warrant participation.

"A lot of our older folks have to rely on friends or family to get to doctor's appointments, and they'd like more independence," he said. "The Saratoga County Office for the Aging oversees the program, and there will be a minimal cost to the town and no cost for the seniors." Saratoga residents who are at least 60 years old will be able to travel to Saratoga Springs and **Wilton** on Mondays if they call ahead for a taxi reservation.

Saratoga County Office for the Aging Director Sandra Cross said the program is funded through a federal grant and county money as well as through the contracted amount received from towns.

"Participating towns pay \$1 for every senior based on the last census," she said. "It's not much money, and the price won't change until the next census."

Wood said Saratoga will pay about \$1,300 this year for the taxi service.

"From time to time, I have had calls from seniors needing rides, and it was a sad thing to tell them we didn't have anything," Wood said.

Cross said the county now has contracts with the city of Saratoga Springs and the towns of Ballston, Milton, Malta, Northumberland, **Wilton**, Greenfield, Saratoga, Edinburg, Charlton, Providence and Galway.

"This is a long-running program; it was started before I came here, and I don't really know why the contracts were set up the way they were," she said.

Capitaland Taxi will provide the transportation beginning April 2.

"The taxi hours are between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., and senior citizens must make reservations through the Office of the Aging," Wood said.

The county OFA number is 884-4100. Reservations must be made by noon on the Friday preceding the Monday of the service.

Riders will be required to wear seat belts and must be able to get in and out of the cab without assistance.

"The vehicles are not wheelchair accessible, and passengers are limited to two packages per person," Wood said.