

DARTS VMS: How's it Going?

2005 was a first for DARTS Vehicle Maintenance Services (VMS) – the first full year of operations.

This tax-paying subsidiary of DARTS provides one-stop vehicle repair and maintenance services for Twin Cities nonprofits that operate specialized vehicles for transit-dependent riders. In 2005, DARTS VMS repaired 638 vehicles for 101 customers.

Nonprofits using DARTS VMS see less vehicle downtime and improved vehicle safety for their riders, many of whom are frail or have a disability. In a recent study by a graduate student of the Humphrey Institute (University of Minnesota), VMS clients had vehicle maintenance cost savings exceeding \$250,000. A way to describe these savings is “social return on investment” because every dollar saved helps the nonprofit agencies put more of their resources into serving their clients and keeping them mobile in times of high fuel costs. DARTS VMS also helps customers reduce staff time for vehicle maintenance. One nonprofit estimated savings of \$31,000 in staff-related costs from using the DARTS VMS vehicle pick-up and delivery service.

Given the positive reception of DARTS VMS by nonprofits and the community, 2006 should be another successful year. By 2007, DARTS VMS should see net profits, after taxes, that can help support other DARTS programs and help launch new opportunities.



What's New at DARTS?

Mark Hoisser, DARTS President

Last year was exciting for DARTS. We experienced some amazing things that culminated in a wonderful tribute to the work of my friend and colleague, Dick Graham, and a celebration of DARTS' 31 years. 2006 will be exciting too, so stay tuned!



What's Dick up to?

Since retiring January 1, Dick is staying active in his commitment to community and the aging population through his work with the Minnesota Leadership Coalition on Aging. Through the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging, he is facilitating the “listening to leaders” networking project, connecting with various constituencies and listening to what they think are the upcoming issues and policy needs of an aging Minnesota. Community-based providers like DARTS won't be the only ones affected by the age wave – other sectors will need to prepare for the “boomers” too. By mid-year, Dick hopes to see foundation support to extend this research and policy development. We will stay tuned to his efforts and the exciting possibilities they may bring DARTS.

Responding to older, more diverse communities.

The DARTS board of directors and I are energized about community opportunities before us, such as:

- Responding to areas of new growth and firming our presence in southern Dakota County areas such as Burnsville, Farmington, Lakeville, and Rosemount
- Engaging baby boomer volunteers who have skills and experiences to share and a drive to make a difference after they retire

– over –

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT

DARTS VMS has saved our organization a great deal of money. We have an older fleet of buses, and the money we've saved through preventive maintenance has allowed us to reinvest that money into programs and services.

(This nonprofit supports adults with disabilities in pursuing vocational education, employment, and community access)

DARTS VMS fills a void in the community; there should be more [nonprofits servicing other nonprofits] like them.

(This nonprofit provides senior housing and services)

DARTS VMS is one of the only service providers for specialized lifts. As a transit provider themselves, they [DARTS] understand the importance of what we do.

(This nonprofit provides adult day training and habilitation)



– continued from front –

- Supporting seniors wherever they choose to live by developing new partnerships that meet their interests and needs
- Developing new ways to secure the revenue needed to sustain the services DARTS offers now, as well as those in our future

Staying in touch with donors. A brief survey was enclosed in a January letter to over 750 donors who have supported DARTS for 10 years or more. To date, I've received 75 responses – all very positive in tone. Most reiterate that DARTS

was there for their parents, spouse, or themselves and that their donations are investments to keep DARTS here for the future. Trust in our work and our stewardship of gifts is what has kept us going all these years. When the springtime appeal letter lands in your mailbox in the coming days, I hope you'll consider DARTS in your giving plans.



DARTS ▶ 1645 Marthaler Lane • West St. Paul, MN 55118

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 4665
MPLS, MN

College Students Practice at DARTS

DARTS has a reputation as a great place for students to learn from professionals. Currently, five graduate students are fulfilling academic requirements through involvement at DARTS. Lori Campbell is pursuing a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from Augsburg College. Throughout the 2006 school year she will be doing Community Services outreach and client reassessments to learn both program development and social work practice skills. Lori is the ninth MSW student DARTS has hosted in the past 12 years. Kim Borton, a graduate student at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, is finishing an analysis of the social return on investment occurring through DARTS VMS. And Kelly Forney-Kenley, Bridget Murphy, and Johanna Olson, also students at the Humphrey Institute, are beginning their work with the Minnesota Partnership for Safe Mobility, an interdisciplinary group convened by DARTS to address the complex issues of driving and mobility. In addition, 5-6 nursing students from Inver Hills Community College are matched with DARTS clients each semester to hone assessment and communication skills out in the field.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT DARTS?

It's easy to "learn about DARTS" because we have a free presentation called just that! You'll learn about DARTS from A to Z!

- Service areas
- Volunteer activities
- How to get information from our easy-to-use websites
- And more!



Learn about DARTS is a half-hour presentation that is perfect for

- Civic groups
- Faith-based organizations
- Senior residences and activity sites
- Other community groups

DARTS ▶ Serving Seniors, Families, Community
651-455-1560 • www.darts1.org • www.caregiverMN.org

To schedule a presentation for your group,
call Marilyn Andersen, 651-234-2231.