

SWITA Taxi Service Brings Community Access to Those in Need

Getting around town to everyday tasks is something most people take for granted. Many of us own personal vehicles and unless we have a mechanical issue, we just hop in and go where we want, when we want. For some individuals, that's not really an option for one reason or another.

Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) operates a taxi service in six communities in the region. This service can connect those that don't have a personal vehicle to a fulfilling community experience. They can call and schedule a SWITA taxi ride to get to the grocery store, to work, to a medical appointment, enjoy a community activity, visit a friend or family member, or many other activities.

I recently spent a morning riding along with the SWITA taxi in Atlantic and it quickly became clear that the service is useful for a wide variety of people. Amongst the first few riders of the morning were someone in a mobility scooter, a partially blind individual, someone heading to the grocery store, and someone returning from a visit with a friend at the nursing home. For some it can be a real lifeline, for others a convenient alternative.

On the other side of the service is an opportunity for a rewarding job. SWITA Driver Jon Parsons spent a long career with the Atlantic Police Department before joining SWITA as a driver and immediately stepping into the taxi role. "It's nice to be able to help people and talk to different people each day. I still wanted something to do, and I enjoy not just sitting behind a desk," Parsons said.

For someone like Parsons it was a natural fit. He had spent a lot of time patrolling the streets of the community and became very familiar with the layout of the town. He knows in an instant where to head when someone tells him a destination. Many riders develop a rapport with drivers and it's easy to see their appreciation.

SWITA's taxi service operates in Atlantic, Glenwood, Harlan, Missouri Valley, Red Oak, and Shenandoah. A couple of volunteer organizations partner with SWITA to provide similar transportation in Clarinda and Fremont County. Affordability also keeps the service accessible. Rides are just \$2.50 one way or \$2.00 for riders over 60 that apply for a discount through Connections Area Agency on Aging.

Find out more about SWITA taxi service and other public transportation services online at www.swita.com or call 1-800-842-8065.