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VOUCHERS HELP OLDER ADULTS GET WHERE THEY NEED TO GO

Ann Arbor, MI – For seniors who don't drive, getting to the doctor or getting out of the house can be a real challenge. Transportation options may be unavailable, unknown or too expensive. Many seniors rely on adult children who work during the day and perhaps it seems like too much to ask for a favor—a ride from a friend or neighbor.

The Blueprint for Aging is conducting a pilot project to help seniors get to senior centers and medical clinics in the county. The project provides vouchers for cab paratransit, or community transportation program rides and gift cards for seniors to give to friends, neighbors or relatives to offset the cost of gas.

Clinic social workers and senior center directors are using the program to help older adults reach needed appointments as well as to increase attendance at congregate meals and other health enhancing programs at senior centers. "I would hate to see any senior miss an opportunity to attend the activities and programs offered due to lack of transportation or finances to pay for transportation," said Kim Martini, Director of Dexter Senior Center. "This program offers a wonderful solution to a problem facing many seniors." Staff at Saline Senior Center is also finding the program to be beneficial in enabling seniors to get out of the house and socialize with others. "It brightens their day and changes their outlook on life by giving them a positive attitude," said Rina Chemin.

Participating sites are Ypsilanti Senior Center, Ypsilanti Township 50 & Beyond, Saline Senior Center, Dexter Senior Center, Packard Clinic, the Haab Medical Building in Ypsilanti, Chelsea Family Practice, and Turner Geriatric Clinic. People 60 years and older having transportation difficulties and needing help getting to medical appointments at these sites or wanting to attend one of the

senior centers listed here, may contact Blueprint Pilot Project Coordinator, Rachel Dewees, at 734.712.2586 (rdewees@csswashtenaw.org) for more information.

The Blueprint for Aging (www.BlueprintForAging.org) is a collaborative of seniors, family members and government, non-profit, and for-profit organizations working together to build community and improve the quality of life for older adults in Washtenaw County. The Blueprint is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through its Community Partnerships for Older Adults national initiative. The CPFOA program helps communities develop leadership, innovative solutions and options to meet the long term care needs of older adults.

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