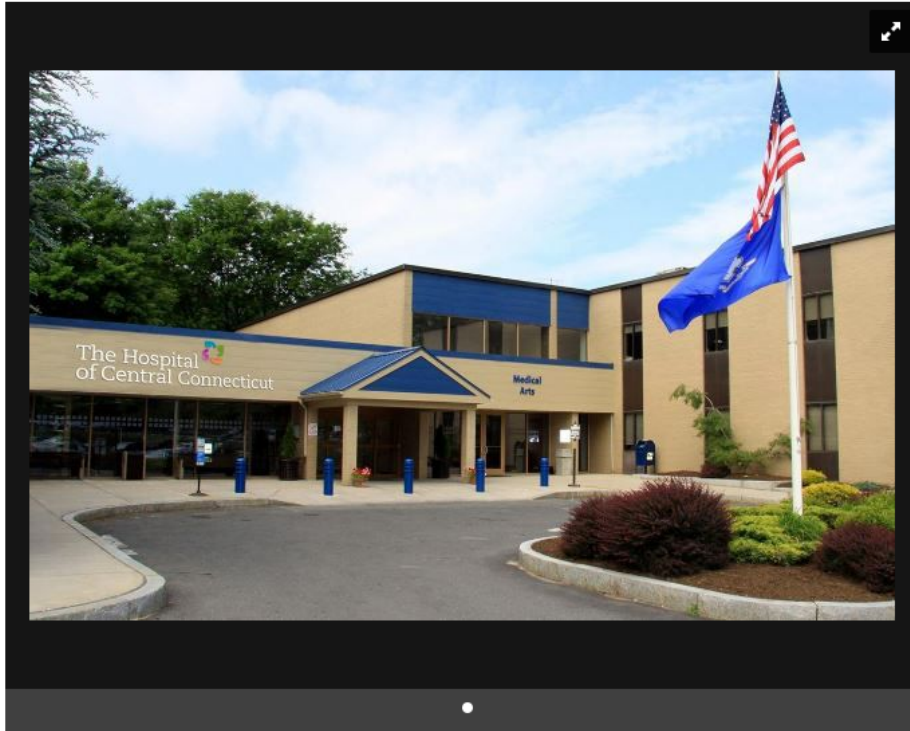


## Grant to help fund senior transportation in Southington



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By Jesse Buchanan, Record-Journal staff



SOUTHINGTON — The United Way of Southington plans to expand rides for local seniors after a \$40,000 grant from the Main Street Community Foundation.

The money will help offset federal funding for senior rides that was lost two years ago. Jack Eisenmann, executive director of the United Way, said there's a big need for transportation.

The money was awarded from the Bradley Barnes and Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust, which is administered by the foundation.

A portion of the grant will be spent on marketing. In addition to letting seniors know about the service, the United Way also wants to help recruit volunteer drivers for Senior Transportation Services Inc.

Nancy Morrissey, executive director of the group, said drivers in their personal vehicles take seniors to and from doctors' appointments, hair appointments, shopping trips and other errands. She was hoping to recruit at least 15 more drivers to bring their trips per month from 30 to more than 100.

Volunteers can choose when to give rides, Morrissey said.

"They basically make their own schedule," she said.

Those interested in providing senior rides can call 860-224-7117 or email [seniortransitationservices@yahoo.com](mailto:seniortransitationservices@yahoo.com)

In 2015, the group lost a \$50,000 federal grant. Part of the Barnes trust grant will help pay for a full-time ride coordinator with the company.

Despite the loss of funding, Eisenmann said the transportation provider restructured and kept providing the services they could.

"They didn't flinch one bit when they told us they were losing this grant," he said.

Eisenmann said the challenge of senior transportation is one that's felt region-wide. In Southington, he said the Calendar House ride services and the Senior Transportation Services are strained additionally with the shifting of medical services from Bradley Hospital to The Hospital of Central Connecticut in New Britain or other area hospitals.

The grant was among several that went to Southington non-profit organizations to further the wellbeing of residents.

"That has been something that the community has been talking about for a long time," said Susan Sadecki, Main Street president and CEO. "There's just not enough transportation services for seniors."

Other grants went to the Southington Neighbor Brigade, LISA Inc. and the Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington.

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