

By Car Program Opens Third Round

Finance Fund announced the third round of the “wildly successful” By Car Program this month.

Also known as Cars for Jobs and Diplomas, the program was a joint creation of the Finance Fund, the Community Action network and the Ohio Department of Development in 2009. To date, the program has helped 102 clients purchase used cars to get to work or school.

“We have a couple of agencies that have learned to really use the program,” said Kim Coleman, Program Loan Officer for Finance Fund.

The program matches funds saved by the client toward a used vehicle purchase. For every \$1 the client saves, Finance Fund contributes \$2. Clients have two years to reach the goal of \$3,999 and buy a car. Coleman says many people struggle to save.

“When you live paycheck to paycheck – whether you make \$20,000 or \$200,000 – it’s really hard to save,” she said.

And living without a car can make keeping a job or taking care of family extraordinarily daunting tasks. Desiree in Urbana bought her car with the help of the program through Tri-County Community Action.

Without a car, she and her three children depended on family, friends and their own feet to get places.

“At times my three kids and I would have to walk in the rain or snow,” she said. “At one time my daughter was so sick my parents had to drive all the way from Columbus so I could take her to the emergency room.”

Since purchasing her vehicle, Desiree has been able to take all three children for medical checkups, keep her pantry stocked and enjoy some leisure trips in addition to getting to work and school on time and dry.

“I am very grateful to finally have a vehicle to get to the places that I need to go,” she said.

In Columbiana County, Martha had used the CAA-run public transportation to get to her job as a Senior Aide at the Salem Library. Requirements of the Senior Aide program however meant she would be transferring outside the bus service area.

To keep her job, she enrolled in the By Car program and saved enough to purchase a car. Now, Martha uses the car to get to work during the day and her teenage son uses it to get to work in the evenings.

Coleman said the program also includes financial literacy education and “automobile literacy” which teaches participants about the ongoing costs of owning a vehicle and its basic maintenance.

Participating agencies also develop relationships with local dealerships to ensure the vehicles are sound, she added.

Round 3 totals approximately \$300,000 which will purchase approximately 97 cars.

