EAGLE TIMES

WEDNESDAY
APRIL 30, 2008

Main Street program offers to donate van to county jail

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For several years, inmates at the Sullivan County House of Corrections have worked throughout the county providing community services such as trash cleanup, but due to a lack of available transportation, the inmates have not been used to their full potential.

When the Claremont Main Street Association heard of the dilemma, it offered to donate a van to the jail.

"The Main Street program is looking to provide a van for transportation," CMSA vice president Bob Weaver told the county commissioners Tuesday. "The inmates could be used to clean downtown Claremont."

House of Corrections superintendent Ross Cunningham said inmates are available to do manual labor such as raking, sweeping and painting, but because of transportation issues, there is no way to move the inmates to particular job sites.

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"This is a beautiful opportunity to provide community service," Cunningham said. "We just bring the offenders and the supervision."

The jail currently has a van for transporting inmates to hearings and medical appointments. But Cunningham said he could not commit the van to community service should an emergency arise when the van would be needed.

Commissioner Jeff Barrette said the van would be available for communities throughout the county.

"It would be available for use countywide," Barrette said. "I think we need to utilize the jail more."

The association is scheduled to hold a board meeting May 7 where Cunningham will give a presentation regarding the use of the van. If the association approves the donation, the commissioners said they would accept it.

"I think this is a win-win for everybody," commissioner Ben Nelson said.

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