

CarePool lowers rural transit barriers for elderly, disabled

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As a young entrepreneur, Josh Massey witnessed the agony his grandmother experienced riding the Medicare vans to medical appointments and other visits from her rural Wisconsin home.

His grandmother was a frequent customer of this “old-school” van program, he said.

“She would spend upwards of three hours each way from her home to visit the medical facility where my grandpa resided,” said Massey, a UW-Madison alumnus and self-described “transportation geek.”

Unfortunately, he continued, this remains the reality for many elderly people who live in rural settings and cannot drive themselves. Massey started CarePool to provide a scheduled ride-share service that can help solve the problem.

“The mission of our company is to provide a new profound independence in the form of mobility for elderly people,” Massey said. “CarePool wants to close rural transportation gaps in order to ensure every individual is able to travel anywhere they want no matter their age or disability status.”

With a Transportation Network Company license in each of the states where it operates, CarePool is capable of turning any licensed vehicle and insured taxi into a ride-share option that can be compensated through government-run programs such as Medicare.

Massey self-funded the company at first. Once he was able to establish a business model and show his concept would solve a problem, he then turned to business investors to raise capital in order to expand the company. Within the first round of raising capital, CarePool attracted \$500,000. The company is requesting more capital in order to expand into other rural areas that would otherwise be relying on the “old-school” van services.

Madison-based CarePool is the first profitable ride-share company in the United States, according to Massey, despite Uber and Lyft dominating the market for the past decade.

He explained rideshare companies are centered around an on-demand system. This means that the rides are not scheduled and dependent on the number of drivers online at that specific time. CarePool, on the other hand, works on a specialized software system that acts to pre-schedule rides at a specific time.

CarePool also has solid support from health-care organizations that work with both the business and its customers to take care of the cost, he said.

Because of its strong connection to multiple health-care systems, the company was able to establish a network of drivers to service thousands of customers throughout the rural Midwest. It also has a web-based system for hiring drivers at CarePool.us, where applicants may click on the “Driver’s Tab” and then click “Become a Driver.”

“Eventually, our overall goal is to expand this service across the entire nation,” Massey said, adding that faster transportation, increased inclusion and decreased isolation would enhance health care — bringing the U.S. closer to equal access to health care for everyone.

CarePool was among the presenters at the virtual 2020 Wisconsin Early Stage Symposium.

-By Mitchell Moadlo

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