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## Woman wants to help people through transportation

Adrian Stanley is painfully aware of how difficult it can be to go without a car.



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Adrian Stanley is the President of Getting Ahead Transport, Inc.

PANAMA CITY — Adrian Stanley is painfully aware of how difficult it can be to go without a car.

She's been there.

“It’s a struggle,” she said. “People take it for granted. I used to be like that and then I hit my rough spot. It changed my perception. It’s traumatizing.”

Now the local woman is working with community leaders to launch a free to low-cost transportation service, called Getting Ahead Transport Inc. While the charity is still in its infancy — Stanley still is waiting to hear back on whether its nonprofit status has been approved — she hopes to have it up and running by the end of the year.

“When I couldn’t afford to fix my car, I prayed to God,” Stanley said. “He said he was putting me in a position so I would be able to help people. This is it.”

Stanley’s car broke down in 2012, and it was about a year before she could afford a new one. At the time, money was so tight — sometimes as little as \$20 to stretch through the week — even the trolley fares seemed unaffordable.

“My day to day was walking,” she said, “I had a 2- and a 3-year-old. I bought a double stroller for \$50 and I walked.”

Stanley knew a lot of people in her position. She estimates 80 percent of people in a support group she attended for people in poverty didn’t have transportation, and she knew of people who didn’t go to the support group because they didn’t have a ride.

In the middle of her “rough patch,” she decided to start attending classes at Gulf Coast State College to learn how to start a ride service. Three years later, she has graduated with a degree in entrepreneurship and is focused on launching Getting Ahead Transport.

Within the next three months, she hopes to receive nonprofit status, and within the next six to eight months, she hopes to be able to offer rides. Eventually, she envisions the service as a full fleet of vehicles, with both paid employees and volunteers.

To make it happen, Stanley plans on soliciting people for donations, asking car dealerships to donate and potentially partnering with local businesses that have employees in need of a lift. Stanley said the service likely would be free for the first 30 days, and then those that could pay would be charged a nominal fee.

William Swift, a member of the charity's board of directors and chairman of the Glenwood Working Partnership, said startup costs would likely be high, but he thinks the group will be able to serve 30 to 50 people in its first year.

The big hope, Stanley said, is that the service will be able to fill some of the gaps in the current system — for example, workers who work the night shift after the Bay Town Trolley stops running or need a ride home after the last class of the day offered at Gulf Coast.

“The trolley isn't a terrible system,” she said. “It has a group of people it works for. Cabs have a group of people they work for. Then there are those that can't afford trolleys and cabs. We don't want to come in and step on their toes. You will always find people in need of services.”