



Wheels of Success: Program Overview

What is the Wheels of Success Mission?

Wheels of Success is dedicated to providing personal transportation solutions by partnering with the community in a circle of support to keep people working and sustain their independence.

The Tampa Bay area is home to a category of “working poor” that is ineligible for government-assisted transportation programs. These families earn wages that put them over the qualifying limits for such programs, and yet their financial reality leaves them without resources to buy and/or maintain a vehicle. This creates a downward spiral for these workers, as a lack of transportation interferes with their ability to retain employment and take care of family needs.

Wheels of Success is here to help. Our program supplies these families with reliable vehicles and/or car-care services so they can arrive at work dependably, take their children to school, shop for groceries and participate in community activities. We offer resources to prevent their lives from skidding out of control.

What services does Wheels of Success offer to the community?

Wheels of Success provides its clients with:

- Dependable transportation in the form of a car, truck or van
- Assistance with automotive repairs, preventative maintenance and car-care classes for families who have transportation but cannot afford repairs and maintenance
- Ancillary services, including assistance with automobile insurance, tag and title, car payments and down payments

Wheels of Success obtains vehicles through purchase or donation, and restores them to good running condition through the support of partners in the automotive industry. Families approved for a vehicle receive:

- A car, truck or van from the Wheels of Success fleet, or
- A car, truck or van donated specifically for their use by a supporting organization, such as the recipient’s church



What is the Wheels of Success “pay-it-forward” philosophy?

Wheels of Success operates with a pay-it-forward philosophy. Clients receiving a fleet vehicle “buy” it from the program by making monthly payments based on ability to pay or by contributing time to advance Wheels of Success programs. These payments are for monies invested in vehicles or for ancillary services provided. There is no charge for the actual vehicle if it is donated. The title is in the recipient’s name with Wheels of Success as the lienholder. Clients receiving an earmarked vehicle contribute services and/or money to the program, depending on their financial reality. These donations help Wheels of Success to serve other families.

Who does Wheels of Success Serve?

Families in the Wheels of Success target market share the following characteristics:

- Reside in Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco Counties in Central Florida. Expansion into Manatee and Sarasota Counties is expected in 2007.
- Earn low- to-moderate incomes
- Are employed full time, or recently lost employment due to transportation issues
- Are ineligible for government assistance with the exception of:
 - Unemployment Compensation
 - Medicaid
 - Food Stamps
 - Subsidized housing
- At least 51% have children and are either single-parent or underemployed two-parent families.

Are there eligibility requirements to participate in the program?

The following are required of families receiving assistance from Wheels of Success:

- At least 21 years of age.
- Legal US residents.
- In danger of losing a job due to unreliable personal transportation, or considering a verifiable job prospect that requires reliable personal transportation that they lack.
- Receiving no government assistance, with the following exceptions:
 - Unemployment Compensation with verifiable offer of employment
 - Disability Compensation with verifiable offer of employment
- Stable work histories including no *consistent* loss of employment due to poor performance.
- Demonstrated ability to sustain employment with no significant gaps in employment by choice.



Eligibility Requirements (continued)

- Willingness and ability to adhere to the organization's 'Pay it forward' philosophy.
- Proof of sufficient personal stability through a consistent track-record in the following three key areas (determined on a case-by-case basis):
 - Financial: Ability to handle personal finances consistently in order to keep up regular car/insurance/maintenance costs
 - Employment: As stated above
 - Driving record: Clean record (certain minor traffic violations are acceptable)
- Referral from one of the following sources:
 - Social Service Agencies
 - Religious Organizations
 - Employers

Priority is given to candidates with children and/or dependents (elderly or disabled family members for whom the candidate is solely responsible).

How was Wheels of Success founded?

Wheels of Success was established by Susan Jacobs in 2003. Ms. Jacobs' personal experience gave her insight into how critical reliable transportation is to low-income workers and their families.

Before starting WOS, Ms. Jacobs ran a staffing agency that specialized in the hospitality industry. She often placed employees who were referred to her through organizations such as the Salvation Army and The Spring of Tampa Bay. This experience gave her an understanding of the working poor and their special needs.

Ms. Jacobs served on the Dress for Success Board of Directors for four years, using her fundraising skills to contribute significantly to its success. She graduated from the University of Florida with a double major in Psychology and Sociology. She was a member of the University of Florida Hall of Fame, Who's Who in American Colleges, and Universities and Phi Beta Kappa.

How does Wheels of Success support its programs?

Wheels of Success relies on the following sources for donations and financial support:

- Pre-identified grant sources
- Automobile donations/reduced-price sales
- Donations of automotive parts and services
- Corporate and individual donations
- Fundraising
- Board of Director support for administrative staff



How do potential clients find out about Wheels of Success?

WOS has developed relationships with many Central Florida agencies and employers that interact with its target client base, and as a result, word of the availability of WOS services has spread quickly. WOS has established referral relationships with women's groups, schools, churches, employers, and other social services agencies. Organizations referring clients to WOS to date include:

- Bay Area Legal Services
- CASA
- The Centre for Women
- The Children's Home
- Community churches
- The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay
- Family Services of Pinellas County
- The Haven
- Head Start
- Hillsborough County School Social Workers
- MacDonald Training Center
- Metropolitan Ministries
- Northside Community Mental Health
- Pinellas Village
- Professional Women Empower
- The Resource Center for Women
- The Salvation Army Family Services
- S.E.W. - Sisters Empowering Women
- The Spring of Tampa Bay
- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- Sunrise of Pasco County
- WorkNet Pinellas

Does Wheels of Success have partners in the community?

In addition to its partnerships with referring agencies, WOS has established collaborative relationships with a number of Tampa Bay businesses, individuals and associations.

Program Partnerships

- **American Automobile Association (AAA):** AAA provides a one-year membership to WOS clients and offers towing service for donated vehicles. Clients can pay \$30 to upgrade their AAA membership to a Plus membership which is recommended by WOS. AAA also supplies conference space for WOS board meetings. A member of the local AAA management team sits on the WOS board.
- **Bill Currie Ford, Automotive Financial Services:** Bill Currie AFS works with people who would otherwise be turned down for automobile loans due to poor credit/minimal funds.
- **Children's Board of Hillsborough County:** The Children's Board supports WOS through technical assistance grants.
- **CSEweb:** CSEweb provides free web hosting services.



Program Partnerships (continued)

- **Family Justice Center:** The Family Justice Center provides strategically located office space for WOS that includes furniture and computer equipment.
- **Sears Automotive:** Sears Automotive provides space and qualified instructors for WOS car care classes.
- **South Island Design:** South Island provides free/low cost web design support
- **Spheris:** Spheris had made Wheels of Success its official local charity. It supports WOS financially and through the volunteer work of its employees.

Automotive Partnerships

- **A-1 Auto:** Offers discounted repair services for WOS cars.
- **Bayway Auto:** Offers discounted auto services for WOS cars.
- **Carsmetics:** Assists with body work that affects vehicle operation.
- **DLT Wholesale:** Provides discounted repair and vehicle trafficking assistance.
- **Herman's Auto Clinic:** Offers discounted repair services for WOS cars.
- **Keller's Automotive Service:** Offers discounted repair for WOS cars.
- **Master Collision:** Donates land for vehicle distribution building donated by Bill Currie Ford.
- **Mutual Scrap Processing:** Offers WOS direct salvage services (no middleman) and a location to store vehicles when necessary.
- **R & S Imports:** Offers discounted repair services for WOS cars and location to store overflow vehicles.



Employer Partnerships

WOS has established a pilot program with Casper/McDonalds to help advance entry-level management employees. Casper makes a grant to WOS that is earmarked to repair vehicles designated to its employees. One vehicle is designated each month (when available) until the funds are depleted, at which point Casper revisits the program and its success to determine continuation. In the first six months of the program, six employees have been helped. Four of the six have been promoted, and one has left the program due to termination.

Pilot Programs

WOS has established pilot programs with The Spring of Tampa Bay and Metropolitan Ministries' transitional housing programs to provide qualified families receiving employment training/education with reliable transportation. The pilot program is being expanded to include Sunrise of Pasco County and Pinellas Village of Pinellas County. WOS hopes to replicate this transitional housing model as it expands.