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NEWS RELEASE

CORE partnership introduces new vehicle to help with mental health services

Durango, CO: Axis Health Systems and the Durango Police department celebrated the addition of a new unmarked vehicle on Friday, that will aid in how the two organization's co-responder program (CORE) responds to people experiencing a mental health crisis.

CORE was started in 2021 as a partnership that pairs a DPD Crisis Intervention officer with an AHS Behavioral Health Specialist to co-responds to emergency calls that pertain to mental health.

"The relationship with DPD has been huge. We're really seeing each other as partners in the community," said Axis Health System Clinical Director Molly Rodriguez. "By working side by side we're able to assist law enforcement and provide our community members with greater access to professionals who specialize in mental health."

Durango Police Chief Bob Brammer said the idea behind this new vehicle is to break down some stigmas associated with police vehicles. Before the addition of the new vehicle, CORE was utilizing an unmarked police vehicle to respond to mental health emergencies.

"We didn't want a traditional looking police car, and that's what we've been using for the past year," Brammer said. "We tried to purposely build this vehicle, so it didn't look like a police vehicle. When people are in a mental health crisis, they don't want to see a police vehicle because there is a stigma. If a police car is parked in front of your house and you're in crisis your neighbors are going to talk, and you're probably going to be less receptive."

The vehicle was paid for in part by a \$15,000 donation from High Noon Rotary, and around a \$5,000 donation from and Summit Church. The vehicle cost roughly \$35,000 to purchase, with an additional \$23,000 spent to equip it for service.

Brammer said the CORE vehicle is a hybrid and will serve as a trial vehicle for updating the DPD fleet to all hybrid vehicles.

"As we were exploring different vehicles, we paid attention to what City Council was saying, and they really want to focus on environmental sustainability as a goal," Brammer said.

“Unfortunately, the technology isn’t quite there yet to be able to sustain police operations in a fully electric vehicle, but with this hybrid vehicle we’re starting to cross that bridge a little bit.

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