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Help for CSP: Community Service Patrol needs more than a new van

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Editorial

Finding the money to buy a new van might not seem like such a big deal, but it is if you're in a program that continually struggles for financial support.

The Community Service Patrol received a much-needed new van thanks to a grant from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. The van replaces one that was spending too much time in the shop after having hauled so many chronic public inebriates to treatment locations or, in some cases, jail or home.

The new van is one bright spot for the CSP program and its supporters, but the program needs to have a string of them. It would be best, of course, if the program weren't needed. But it is false hope to think the problem of chronic public inebriation is going to end. Efforts might someday succeed in reducing the prevalence of the problem, but Fairbanks likely always will have a population of public inebriates.

Organizations that have helped pay the cost of operating the CSP deserve much thanks. These groups include Doyon Ltd., Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, downtown businesses, the Downtown Association, the Downtown Rotary and the city of Fairbanks.

The program needs a stable source of funding, however.

The preservation of Fairbanks' image as a tourist destination requires the program have a more permanent feel. And so does the general health and safety of the public.

Let's hope that in the months ahead leaders of the Fairbanks city government and others involved in trying to reduce the problem of chronic public inebriation can come up with a long-term plan to sustain the Community Service Patrol.

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