

COMMUNITY COUNSELING SERVICES, MS

Overview

Community Counseling Services, a comprehensive community mental health center that operates in seven Mississippi counties, transports hundreds of clients each week. The company has 29 Ford E-350 vans dedicated to client transportation in operation five hours a day, five days a week.

“Transporting our clients is an essential part of what we do; we’re talking extremely high mileage on these vans and fuel costs for gasoline that are through the roof,” says Lin Newell, facilities and maintenance supervisor at Community Counseling Services. “We were looking for ways to reduce our fuel costs, and when we came across propane autogas, our search was over. Autogas fit the bill, literally and figuratively, saving us more than \$1 per gallon on fuel.”

Making the Switch

Newell says his interest in propane autogas was first sparked when he learned of two nearby fleets, Oktibbeha County Sheriff’s Office and West Point Police Department, running on the fuel. “When I spoke to representatives at those fleets, I couldn’t believe how much they were saving on fuel costs. My second thought was that if these law enforcement vehicles were running great on propane autogas in such a demanding environment, then this was the fuel for my fleet.”

Shortly after being introduced to autogas in fall 2011, Newell learned about a funding opportunity to convert vehicles through the Southeast Propane Autogas Development Program (SPADP). Newell applied, and Community Counseling Services was awarded funding assistance to convert 17 of its vans to propane autogas. Conversions began in February 2012 and were completed by May 2012. Recently, the company’s remaining 12 vehicles were confirmed for program funding, and are slated for conversion by the end of the year.

Access to autogas fueling was a logistical concern for Community Counseling Services, given the large, seven-county territory the company’s services span. To meet their fueling needs, arrangements were made to provide them access to existing autogas fueling stations used by Oktibbeha County and Mississippi State University in Starkville, as well as by the West Point Police Department in West Point. SPADP partner Alliance AutoGas installed a 1,000-gallon autogas fueling station for Community Counseling Services’ private use at its Columbus, Miss., location.

Working With Vendor Partners

Alliance AutoGas is a national network of conversion centers and fuel suppliers that provides a complete alternative fuel solution to fleets, and they provide the installations, fuel supply and support for SPADP.

Alliance AutoGas conversion center Force 911 in Ocean Springs, Miss., performed Community Counseling Services’ van conversions. “We have really enjoyed working with Force 911 on these conversions,” said Newell. “Everything has happened according to the schedule we came up with, and they have been responsive if we have had any questions.”

Fleet Facts

Fleet Organization:
Community Counseling Services

Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor:
Lin Newell

Industry Type:
Community Mental Health

Began Running on Autogas:
February 2012

Autogas Vehicles in Fleet:
17 Ford E-350 Vans

Estimated Annual Autogas Usage:
24,000 Gallons

Est. Annual Fuel Cost Savings:
\$35,000

Autogas Fueling Infrastructure:
Three 1,000-gallon Autogas Tanks



COMMUNITY COUNSELING SERVICES, MS

Blossman Gas, an Alliance AutoGas founding partner, provides Community Counseling's autogas fuel. Newell says fuel shipments have been on time, and he virtually doesn't have to think about his fuel supply since they set up automatic delivery with Blossman Gas.

Alliance AutoGas taught technicians and drivers how to properly maintain and fuel the autogas vehicles. Force 911 trained the vehicle technicians on how to service the Prins bi-fuel system used on the vehicles, while Blossman Gas provided autogas fueling safety training. Newell says their technicians have enjoyed learning about the new technology, and their drivers haven't had any issues with fueling the autogas vehicles since it is essentially the same process as it is for gasoline vehicles.

Results

With Community Counseling Services' 17 autogas vans, the company will save approximately \$35,000 in fuel costs annually, while displacing more than 22 tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year. When all of the fleet's 29 vans are operating on autogas, the company expects to save more than \$60,000 in fuel costs and displace approximately 40 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually. "I really couldn't be happier with our fleet's transition to propane autogas," says Newell. "Our fuel savings are enormous, and our employees are proud to be a part of something that will help cut down on our carbon footprint and keep the earth cleaner."

Since North America's propane autogas supply is 98 percent domestically produced, Community Counseling Services is also helping reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil. The company will displace around 30,000 gallons of gasoline each year running all of its vans on autogas.

"This funding assistance has been a great opportunity to jumpstart our autogas fleet," says Newell. "Once the final van conversions are completed, we're going to look into converting our company's other vehicles, as well. Last quarter we saved \$1.63 on autogas versus gasoline, so the fuel savings merit the investment into additional conversions."

In sum, Newell says converting the company's vehicles to autogas has been a success and he would recommend the fuel to other fleets. "I did the research and took the test drives. No other fuel could compare to autogas – it met all of our needs and we didn't have to sacrifice anything."

About This Program

The Southeast Propane Autogas Development Program is comprised of public and private partnerships throughout 10 southeastern states, Denver and Pittsburgh. Over its four-year span, the Program will work with over 35 public and private fleets to put more than 1,200 clean autogas vehicles on the road and implement more than 30 autogas fueling stations (funded by the project and partner Alliance AutoGas). Supported by funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Cities Program, it is managed and administered by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy and Virginia Clean Cities at James Madison University. To learn more, visit www.usepropaneautogas.com or email info@usepropaneautogas.com.

Mississippi fleets interested in learning more about propane autogas should contact Charlie Stafford with Alliance AutoGas at 251-978-1063 or crstafford@allianceautogas.com.

