

Turn in clunker and get a new car with rebate program

Written by Chris Lee

Cash for clunkers. A phrase used and heard by many the past few weeks. A program through the government, cash for clunkers is another attempt to help stimulate the economy as well as helping people purchase new environmental friendly vehicles.

Also known as CARS or Car Allowance Rebate System, the program offers owners of old cars and trucks \$3,500 or \$4,500 toward a new, more fuel-efficient vehicle, in exchange for scrapping their old vehicle. Congress approved the plan to boost auto sales and remove some inefficient cars and trucks from the roads.

Linda Statz of Holyoke said good-bye to an old friend last week. "Old Blue," her 1986 Dodge van, was put to rest and traded in for a brand new Dodge Journey through the program.

Statz first heard about the program while watching television with her husband Ralph on Friday, July 24. They saw a news program talking about it and thought, "why not?"

Statz went to Wolf Auto Sales where she said they hadn't even heard of the program so a little research needed to be done.

Anything but a red car. That's what Statz wanted. Old Blue got around 13 mpg and the new blue Journey dubbed "New Surfer Blue" gets around 25 mpg.

After 25 years with her beloved blue and silver Old Blue, it was time to say good-bye. Statz said she cried.

Either 140,000 or 240,000 miles, Statz didn't know for sure. The number of miles on Old Blue was unknown. The odometer rolled over multiple times, she said.

She wrote up a small story about her Old Blue.

"For nearly 25 years Statz had driven her Dodge blue and silver van to work, driving one mile

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each morning and night. Short drives like that are very hard on a vehicle so even though she had a van 10 years newer sitting in the garage, she continued to drive Old Blue which had faded to silver gray with a rusty red top.

“Since she doesn’t care for the color red, she taped drop cloths to the rain gutter and sprayed the top with aluminum rust paint and continued her love affair with Old Blue.

“Even though it sat outside in the weather all year long, the van served her well, always starting on the first try, even on the coldest of days. Of course parts wore out and were replaced with new and then with used from the salvage yards. The electric windows saw replacement of five motors and when they failed again, she was unable to find another. The exhaust system tooted the ‘Lifetime Walker Muffler Guarantee’ which she used 14 times.

“Old Blue served as a camper when Statz took her kids on vacations to California, Texas and Missouri to visit relatives. It pulled the boat to local lakes on summer weekends, hauled groups of people to meetings and served as a hotel room one week for a treasurers’ conference.

“In honor of Old Blue, Statz had planned a birthday party in September but when the chance to upgrade came, her coworkers helped her celebrate its life by wearing blue, decorating the van with crepe paper streamers and balloons and gathered for a group picture.

“After Statz spent a day cleaning out a collection of junk and “important” stuff, the local dealer drove Old Blue to Sterling where they were required to pour liquid glass into the crankcase to seize the engine and leave it at the salvage yard to be scrapped.

“Good-bye, Old Blue, a faithful friend.”

Statz said she didn’t uncover any treasures while cleaning out the van, but she did find a wedding photo of her brother from 1962. She has no clue how it got in there.

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She now drives her other van and has since parked New Surfer Blue in the garage.

On Friday, July 31 the U.S. House of Representatives voted to pour \$2 billion into the program on top of the initial \$1 billion set aside. The program became so popular, more money was needed after just the first week to keep it alive. As of Aug. 4, the Senate had yet to act but the White House said weekend deals would count no matter what.

In an article from the Associated Press, a photo showing an old car with the back window broken out sitting nose down in a large commercial trash can advertises the cash for clunkers rebate program.