



Cramerton gets a Gator

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Cramerton police can adequately patrol a portion of the Carolina Thread Trail thanks to a donation from CaroMont Health.

Representatives from CaroMont handed over the keys to a Gator Utility Vehicle recently to Cramerton Police.

The all-terrain vehicle has been outfitted with medical equipment that would allow first-responders to help people in distress along the trail, according to Cramerton Police Chief Greg Ratchford.

"They sent us away making sure that we would have everything we would need in an emergency," said Ratchford who estimated the equipment's worth at \$23,000.

Ratchford credited Pharr Yarns with getting the wheels in motion for the donation.

The Carstarphen family and Pharr Yarns donated the piece of land, which runs 3.45 miles in a narrow strip along the South Fork of the Catawba River. It includes 69 acres of wetlands and 18,000 feet of riparian corridor known as the Pharr Yarns Preserve.

Once the land was added to the Thread Trail, Pharr approached Ratchford about how the property would be patrolled.

Pharr Yarns then brought up the idea to CaroMont and a beneficial partnership was formed.

"The donation of this vehicle is an example of collaboration where a number of diverse groups come together to build a wellness and fitness infrastructure to benefit area residents," said Mel Collins with Pharr Yarns.

Much of the trail is secluded and not wide enough for a car to fit, said Ratchford, so having a Gator is ideal for the terrain.

Officers got a feel for the new vehicle over the Easter weekend and will put it into action immediately.

Not only will the Gator make emergency response easier, but it will allow officers to have a visible presence, said Ratchford.

The Gator will also be used for special events like the 5K race in Cramerton and the Christmas lights in McAdenville.

The Carstarphens have been actively involved in the Carolina Thread Trail since the project's launch in 2007.

Gaston County was one of the first two counties to receive a \$50,000 Thread planning grant in December 2007.

In March 2009, Gaston County adopted its Carolina Thread Trail master plan. The plan outlines the long-term course for greenway and trail development within the county and integrates local trails with regionally significant trail segments and conservation corridors.

Read more: <http://www.gastongazette.com/news/cramerton-57312-police-caromont.html#slComments>