

Since initiating the first demand response transit system in Spearfish, SD in 1989 with that “old green van in the back parking lot”, Barb Cline has managed Prairie Hills Transit as the founding Director for the last thirty-five years. The system began serving one community part-time with one van, and today provides service in fifteen communities within nine counties with its fleet of sixty vehicles. Prairie Hills Transit was one of the first “pilot” programs in South Dakota to initiate coordination of transit services between four major Departments of State Government. Prairie Hills Transit also manages Prairie Hills Child Care Center, a licensed childcare center for 41 children ages 6 weeks to 12 years of age and another childcare for students preparing for kindergarten.

Cline is a Certified Community Transit Manager, Certified Safety and Security Manager, a Master Trainer for the Passenger Service and Safety certification course. She serves as a National Board representative of the Community Transportation Association of American Board. She is a past Chair of the FTA National Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) review board. She serves on various panel and synthesis projects and was named by CTAA as the 2007 Community Transportation Manager of the year. Cline considers herself one of the lucky ones who is passionate about enhancing the lives of citizens in every community through her commitment to public transportation.

In 2020 Barb was selected by the South Dakota Department of Transportation to be inducted into the South Dakota Transportation Hall of Honor for her commitment, passion, and vision for rural transportation. She remains one of two women inductees.

Cline values the continuing growth of medical transportation that Prairie Hills Transit provides in their service area and the veteran transportation they are able to provide in several states through the Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG) intended for counties with less than 7 people per square mile.

They say “it takes a village” but it also takes a great team, and Barb is the first to say her team makes the dream succeed.

A native of western South Dakota, Barb is a fourth generation Lawrence County native and has lived on a ranch outside of Spearfish, SD her entire life. She attended Black Hills State University in Spearfish. Cline and her family raise cattle, horses and sheep. She loves gardening, sewing, canning and spending time with her three children and her grandchildren. She never knows if the next ride will be on the bus or on the back of a horse.