

Passenger Stories of Gratitude

Stories About Volunteer Driver Programs and Their Drivers



Passengers tell it like it is!

PASSENGER STORIES OF GRATITUDE

Stories About Volunteer Driver Programs and Their Drivers



*National Volunteer Transportation Center
Albuquerque, New Mexico and Washington, D.C.
A Division of Community Transportation Association of America*

*This book was developed in partnership
with Toyota*



Editor:

Helen K. Kerschner

Coeditors:

Karen Abraham, Karen Polan,
LaDonna Hopkins, Alexis Tappan,
Cheryl Svensson

Format and Design:


Toyota

Cover Photo:

Winners' Stories of Excellence

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Although volunteer driver programs and people who volunteer to drive for them are sometimes viewed as a recent invention, in fact, the first known volunteer transportation service was organized in 1905 when volunteers used sleighs and wagons to take older adults to the train depot and to church. Today, there are 850 volunteer driver programs in the data set of the National Volunteer Transportation Center and, undoubtedly, there are hundreds of others in communities across the country. Volunteer driver programs and their volunteer drivers get the passengers who contributed their stories for this book, and thousands of other passengers, from here to there and also provide a host of value-added services.

Many of the passengers who submitted their stories used a volunteer driver program because they were no longer able to drive. They are like many older adults because research tells us that there is a mismatch between driving expectancy and life expectancy. For people ages 70–76, on average men stop driving six years and women 10 years before the end of their lives. Those who decide to stop driving or are required to stop driving often describe the experience as the loss of freedom, independence and control. One reason is that the physical and cognitive limitations that made it difficult or impossible for many of these passengers to drive also made it difficult or impossible for them to access transportation options in their communities. As you will see in these stories, many volunteer driver programs and, their volunteer drivers provide valuable services that meet the transportation needs of passengers. Thus, they also serve as important members of what is sometimes referred to as the family of community-based transportation services.

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PREFACE

PASSENGERS TELL THEIR STORIES (and express their gratitude)

The stories in this book were written by passengers who receive transportation from volunteer driver programs. The book resulted from 147 applications to the National Volunteer Transportation Center's 2016 STAR Awards Program. It is a successor to an earlier book, *Stories from the Road: Stories from the Heart*, published by the Beverly Foundation in 2006. The book is available on the NVTC website.

The decision to request the stories of passengers and organize them into a book was not simply a "nice to do" initiative. Considerable information is available about volunteer driver programs: the people who manage them and the volunteers who drive for them; how they are organized and the vehicles they use; how they are funded and where they go. However, very little information is available about their passengers. This book offers a glimpse of the lives of people who receive transportation services from volunteer driver programs: who they are and why they need rides; where they live and where they go; when they need assistance and support and why they need it; how they discover programs and what they think about the volunteers who drive them! And, most of all, it tells the story of how passengers appreciate the efforts of volunteer driver programs and the volunteer drivers who provide them with rides!

Storytelling is a gift to oneself and to others, and the passengers are excellent storytellers. Their stories offer a glimpse of their lives as well as their gratitude for something seemingly so simple as getting where they need to go. In many stories, they say what they receive is more than a ride. Some describe their volunteer driver program as offering an avenue for kindness and caring support. Others tell of staff who "went the extra mile." Still others describe the service method as innovative and even brilliant. Many of them simply suggest the volunteer driver program is the best thing that ever happened to them. A few who live in villages commented that "it takes a village." Others who live in rural areas say the rides they receive make it possible to stay in their communities. Many passengers describe the assistance, socialization and friendship provided by their volunteer drivers. Several comment that their driver said they were "paying it forward." When discussing their transportation experience, some even describe their volunteer driver's contribution as providing the highpoint of their day, their week or their month.

A group of very special people reviewed almost 150 stories and selected each of the stories included in this book. As part of the selection process, we discussed how the stories described the lives of the passengers and their needs for transportation, and how and why volunteer driver programs and volunteer drivers were able to meet those needs. Our selection committee also chose 10 Stories of Excellence, each of which resulted in a small cash award to the passenger who wrote it.

As you will see in Parts 1, 2, and 3, every passenger expressed his or her gratitude for a life anecdote, a volunteer driver, or a volunteer driver program. It will be clear to you when reading this book why the recurring theme that presents itself is that of gratitude...

...gratitude for an accessible and affordable service;

...gratitude for the caring people who drive them;

...gratitude for the kindness and support;

...gratitude for being able to stay in the community;

...gratitude for an improved quality of life;

...gratitude for the friendship of the drivers;

...gratitude for the pioneers who invented the volunteer driver programs.

Thanks to our partnership with Toyota, we were able not only to collect these stories but to ensure that they are available in electronic form. I am confident that this book will give you the opportunity to realize why many older adults need volunteer transportation and to appreciate the experience of passengers who receive transportation from a volunteer driver program. At the same time, it will allow you to discover why volunteer transportation is often about “more than a ride.”

I hope you enjoy the journey.

Helen Kerschner, Director
National Volunteer Transportation Center

FOREWORD

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Helen Kerschner and her life's work dedicated to health, aging, transportation and volunteerism; and for shining a light on what mobility means to an aging population and those with disabilities.

As personal mobility becomes a challenge, it becomes more difficult to stay connected to the places we want and need to go and to the people we want to see. It's because of dedicated volunteers that many people in need can continue to lead the life they choose. That is why at Toyota, mobility beyond our vehicles has been a passionate focus for us for decades. And that is why we have partnered with the National Volunteer Transportation Center.

The stories told in this edition are from the grateful passengers who have received rides from volunteer transportation programs and their volunteer drivers. I hope these stories warm your heart and leave you with a smile. As you will see in this book, you never know what bonds might be made and what worlds might be opened when you open up your car door to someone in need.

Enjoy,

Simon Nagata, Toyota

TMC Executive Vice President & Chief Financial Officer

Part 1

MY LIFE AS A PASSENGER (Passengers Tell Their Stories)

As you will see in Part 1, as well as Parts 2 and 3, every passenger expressed his or her gratitude for a life anecdote, a volunteer driver or a volunteer driver program.

Passengers who wrote the following stories tend to be older adults, many in their 80s and 90s and a few 100+. Some are in their 90s caring for a family member in their 70s; others are in their 70s caring for a family member in their 90s. Quite a few find it necessary to stop driving, or their family or physician has “encouraged” them to do so. They often cannot use traditional transportation services because they cannot access them, afford them or both. Many need assistance and support in order to travel because of physical or cognitive limitations. Their primary destination needs tend to be health-related appointments; but most also have transportation wants related to quality-of-life destinations. What you may find surprising is that while passengers agree that getting where they need to go is important, their most cherished destination is often the beauty shop.

Story of Excellence Winner

Rita Fontana (97)

Gratitude for even stopping at the package store

I reside at Crossways Village in Lee, Mass. I am a passenger every week through the Council on Aging transportation program. It's fun. I have to depend on the program's transportation because I don't have a car and do not drive anymore, and my daughter lives out of town. I enjoy the transportation because the drivers are so considerate and helpful. They help you get in the car and out of the car. They carry your bundles, open the door for you and put your bundles on the counter. They are always helpful. They take me shopping and to the pharmacy. They wait if I have to go to the bank and even take me to Main Street, where I like to stop at the Starving Artists Café, where they sell Housatonic bread. Oh, yes, they will even stop at the package store so I can get my bottle of wine. I am 96 years old.

Rita Fontana (97)

Lee Council on Aging and Senior Center — Lee, MA

“Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.”

William Arthur Ward (American Writer)

Gratitude for giving me my life back

As if turning 65, going blind and moving to a strange city wasn't enough, I gave up my driver's license. I feared my independence would be lost. Not driving affects my relationship with family and friends. I can't meet them anywhere. They always have to come to me. If I'm baking and I need one ingredient, to take the bus to the store it's 1½ hours. Driving was 20 minutes. Looking around I saw there was hope. A bus stopped by my building, but I didn't know how to use it yet. The cab was only a phone call away, but expensive. Then I found out about Interfaith. The next time I needed to go to the doctor, I called Interfaith, and wow, what a surprise. At first, I was nervous about who was going to drive. Would Interfaith drivers have good eyesight, mobility and know directions? The Interfaith drivers are fun and know the streets. They all have a great story to tell. Generally, they take me to Pewaukee for doctors' appointments, which is unattainable due to the bus not going there and the cab being \$50 round-trip. It would be really difficult for me if there wasn't a volunteer driver. But this life change has given me a chance to meet Interfaith volunteers and personnel. It's a challenge that I wouldn't have otherwise tried if I had 20/20 vision. Interfaith drivers and learning to use the bus has given me my life back.

Older Adult Population

Most developed-world countries have accepted the chronological age of 65 years as a definition of "elderly" or older person. In 2010, there were almost 35,000,000 people in the U.S. age 65 and over.

(Resource #1)

Patricia Victory (67)

Faith in Action within Interfaith Senior Programs — Waukesha, WI

Gratitude for volunteer visits and rides

I have never driven. I always depended on my husband. After my husband died, I did not leave my house for over a year. I felt alone and very depressed. A friend who visited me regularly encouraged me to call Faith in Action. I called and asked about getting a ride and about someone who would come and talk to me. Someone from Faith in Action came a few days later, explained the program and spent some time just talking to me. I now get a ride to go shopping every two weeks. I also have a volunteer who visits with me once a week. When I had cataract surgery, the volunteer picked me up at 5:30 in the morning. She took me back for the follow-up appointments. The same volunteer drove me for the surgery on both eyes. A few years ago, I became very sick and the drivers took me for every test and appointment. I also have made a couple of good friends through the program. I really love the program and my drivers.

Rosemarie Chaney (85)

Faith in Action — Massillon, OH

Gratitude for being able to get out in the community

Several years ago, I suffered from a heart attack. I was forced to give up driving due to the safety concerns. I had to learn to rely on others for my transportation needs. I was familiar with the volunteer driver program at Pepin County because I attend the local meal site. I immediately reached out to them to see if I could get help getting around. Since I live in the small community of Arkansaw, I needed transportation to get everywhere, including medical appointments, therapy, pharmacy and grocery shopping. My first driver was Marie. We immediately clicked. She still drives for me today, and I am so thankful for the rides I get. I can get out in the community and get to my medical and social needs. I don't know what I would do without them!

Jane Keeler (86)

Pepin County — Arkansaw, WI

*“God gave you a gift of 84,600 seconds today.
Have you used one of them to say thank you?”*

William Arthur Ward (American Writer)

Gratitude for getting me to my “mystery lunches”

Three times a week I receive four-hour-long kidney dialysis treatments and yet I am “blessed” for what I have. Because of Interfaith Caregivers volunteers, I am able to continue to live in my home of over 60 years. Interfaith Caregivers has helped my well-being and outlook. “It is nice to have

someone to talk with and to catch up on what is happening.” I became ill in 2014, which is what led to my need for dialysis. My attitude has helped me recover and continue to live in my beloved home and live life to its fullest. Once a month I go out to a mystery lunch with friends of varying ages. It is a mystery because only I know

Driving Expectancy

Of the population age 70 to age 74, driving expectancy for men is 6 years and for women 10 years.

(Resource #2)

where we are going. I find restaurants through various means, including while watching *Wheel of Fortune*. There is only one rule for friends who attend: “no complaining.” Interfaith Caregivers helps me receive my life-saving treatments, and I credit Interfaith Caregivers for helping me “get on with it.”

Joan Elfreth (85)

Interfaith Caregivers Haddonfield — Haddon Heights, NJ

Gratitude for helping me be part of our community

I moved to Orchard Park a few years ago and immediately began using the Rural Transit Service van. I mainly use the van to go to the Senior Center, where I regularly take a “Stretch and Tone” exercise class and meet with friends. I have had different volunteer drivers and cannot say enough about how kind and courteous they are. They have become like family. I love socializing with the other passengers and my wonderful drivers. The dispatchers are so helpful and friendly and eager to accommodate me. I was always terrified to be driven in the winter months, but I find that the RTS drivers are so careful, I never worry anymore! I am so grateful for the transportation provided by RTS as I feel like my health, both mentally and physically, has improved since I can get out with friends! I always recommend the service to my friends and neighbors and will continue to use the van for years to come. Thank you all for providing those of us without transportation the means to get out into and become part of our community!

Joyce Wohlfeil (65)

Rural Transit Service — Orchard Park, NY

Gratitude for giving me back my spirit

From lonely to lively, from alone to alive is how my life has been changed by Y OPAS. Arriving at a luncheon in a classic Rolls-Royce, escorted by a gentleman in a jaunty chauffeur's cap, and cruising to the grocery store in a convertible with the top down are just two of the fun perks. While all the different cars are fun, the most fun is meeting and talking to all the volunteers. I am disabled so my traveling days are behind me, and I love hearing about all their adventures as they travel the world. Also, some of the volunteers share my enjoyment of sewing, crocheting and quilting, and we have fun at the fabric store. Fellow readers help me find current fiction and movies at the library. Even grocery shopping is fun when you are with a friendly person who is happy to assist. I like hearing about where the volunteers are from, especially when they are from my home state of Texas and we can compare memories. And the monthly luncheons and dominoes are fun and provide social interactions I wouldn't have otherwise. I was completely alone when my brother, who was my roommate and who helped me, suddenly passed away four years ago. Belonging to this group has made a remarkable difference in my life. Their friendship, compassion and caring gave me back my spirit, my joy, my zest and the gift of laughter.

Patricia Chacon (61)
Y OPAS – Phoenix, AZ

“We learned about gratitude and humility — that so many people had a hand in our success, from the teachers who inspired us to the janitors who kept our school clean... and we were taught to value everyone's contribution and treat everyone with respect.”

Michelle Obama (Former First Lady)

Gratitude for the rides to dialysis treatments

Eight years ago, I was diagnosed with renal failure due to diabetes. My only option was to enter the kidney dialysis program, approximately 18 miles from my residence. I could no longer drive as the diabetes claimed the vision in one eye. Family members worked and I was caring for my elderly mother. All of this had a sudden and devastating effect on me. I needed help but really had

Transitions from Driving

A major challenge identified by passengers in the 2016 survey was the difficult transition from driving to becoming a passenger. Other transitions included the loss of a spouse or friend, of a job or career, of a home or way of life, of vision or physical mobility and of social interaction.

(Resource #3)

nowhere to turn for transportation options. My community does not have public transportation and the taxi service was way too expensive. Then a caseworker at the Stoughton Senior Center told me about the RSVP Volunteer Driver Escort Program. If I qualified, there would be no cost for this service. I qualified, the program set up a schedule so my dialysis treatment could begin immediately, and the coordinator who was a volunteer began transporting me to dialysis. Now eight years later, my diabetes is under control, my health has improved, I still care for my elderly mother, I am still on dialysis, and my transportation is still provided by the Driver Escort Program. Oh, and as my health began to improve, I found a way to make small monthly contributions to RSVP as my way of helping this program continue for others. The program had a very positive impact on my life.

Carol Coughlin (68)
RSVP of Dane County, Inc. Volunteer Driver Escort Program – Stoughton, WI

Gratitude for taking me to the “shooting range”

In addition to medical appointments, I get rides to the beauty shop and to run other errands. Just a few months ago, I went to LensCrafters to get my glasses repaired, only to find out they do not repair glasses. They gave me the name and number for a different business, and the volunteer was nice enough to take me there, too. It was in a shopping plaza that also had a shooting range. The volunteer took a picture of me in front of the shooting range’s door and sent it to the director of VC as a joke and told her we went shooting! That was a fun day, and I really enjoy the social aspect of getting rides from volunteers as well.

Karen Peters (74)

Village Connections – Columbus, OH

Gratitude for enabling me to continue my volunteer work

I happen to be legally blind. I am also a very active person who thrives as a volunteer in my community. One of the problems that blind and visually impaired people have is fear of going out where they’ve never frequented. Maneuvering around chairs and finding restrooms can be challenging. Many low-vision people become depressed and homebound. One of the organizations that I volunteer for is the Visually Impaired Support Group of Cumberland County. There are several in our group who use Way to Go transportation to get to our monthly support meetings. Besides shopping and doctors’ visits, the Way to Go drivers help their passengers amble around obstacles and help find shopping items. This is a priceless service! I’ve had the pleasure of always having a pleasant trip with the Way to Go service. They are prompt, helpful and friendly volunteer drivers with a safe and comfortable ride. Being blind has taught me to persevere. Having Way to Go transportation helps me to get out and about and keep an active lifestyle, and it makes it possible for me to continue my volunteer work outside of my home.

Margie DeMars (68)

FGRS Way to Go – Fairfield Glade, TN

“I am happy because I’m grateful. I choose to be grateful. That gratitude allows me to be happy.”

Will Arnett (Actor)

Gratitude for ending my need to throw myself on the mercy of others

I am a 76-year-old woman who retired on disability at age 58. My 95-year-old mother lives with me. I have never driven, and my mother stopped driving over a year ago. This created a real hardship

Age 90+ Population

In 2010, 1.9 million or 2% of the population in the U.S. were age 90+ — a number and % that had tripled in the previous three decades.

(Resource #1)

on both of us. It became difficult to continuously find friends who could provide transportation. I have no family in the immediate area. The cost of a taxi would be prohibitive. My mother is not capable of getting in and out of a bus. I must accompany her to all medical appointments. Now that I have the services of a volunteer driver, my life has improved. I no longer need to worry about

how to get to those appointments or to throw myself on the mercy of others. This has improved my self-esteem for which I am indebted to Life Path/Rides for Health.

Donna Gates (76)

Life Path/Rides for Health – Turners Falls, MA

Gratitude for the means to enter the world

Transportation in Orange County, NY, is virtually nonexistent! I haven't driven since May of 2004 because of a neurological disorder. After several brain surgeries in 2005, the disorder was corrected. Unfortunately, it left me visually impaired. After an extremely long recovery I was ready to return to the workforce; however, getting a job was frustrating and traveling to and from was worse. It took months before I connected with Jewish Family Service (JFS). I was a prisoner in my own home, residing four miles to the nearest bus stop. It was a losing situation as I desperately searched for rides to work. I was desperate for help. The one-way \$20 cab ride inspired me to contact my congressman, but it was my email to the Lion's Club where I found resolve. This was the beginning of stability in my life! I tip my hat to JFS for making it possible. The volunteer drivers soon were transformed into friends. I am a lucky man to connect with this organization! I can travel to work and any medical appointments without my wife losing a day's pay. Here I am one decade later. They continue providing the means to enter the world.

Louis Ciccone (56)

Jewish Family Service (JFS) of Orange County, Friendly Visitor Program — Middletown, NY

Story of Excellence Winner

Nancy King (73)

Gratitude for being able to contribute

I came to Washington state in 1982. Please believe that I don't want to be forced to leave the peace of the Key Peninsula because of my age or my physical condition or limitations. Several years ago, my van died and I found myself in a very rural area without public transportation. I faced leaving my haven because I couldn't get around. On my extremely low income, I can't afford the costs of another vehicle. I don't remember where I heard of The Mustard Seed Project, but when I called to ask about transportation services, I was welcomed with open arms, and I found that my problems were solved. To thank TMSP for all they do for me, I volunteered and ride on the shuttle bus to the office once a week! Without a car, I couldn't be a driver, other work was beyond my ability, but I can offer the clerical knowledge I have accumulated. Now I'm entering data into a new computer program. I'm always assured that my work is helpful and the staff can concentrate on doing more important tasks to keep TMSP running smoothly. What TMSP means to me is a life of calm and peace and new friends; a sense of meaning and accomplishment as I grow older; and a feeling of ease, knowing someone cares and is doing whatever can be done to help seniors remain in this rural garden. I thank all TMSP staff and volunteers for their efforts.

Nancy King (73)

The Mustard Seed Project — Lakebay, WA

"Thank you is the best prayer that anyone could say. I say that one a lot. Thank you expresses extreme gratitude, humility, understanding."

Alice Walker (Author)

Gratitude for no longer having to worry

When I need to go to a doctor's appointment, it relieves me that I don't have to worry about getting to the doctor on time and I feel great. Northwest Neighbors Connecting (NNC) was something that I really needed, because I'm a senior and I don't drive. I needed the help and I saw that they were the ones that I wanted to work with. The independent drivers take us to the shoemaker, the

Passengers Served

In the 2016 survey, 54,338 passengers were served by 146 volunteer driver programs.

(Resource #3)

dressmaker, the beauty parlor. I do not choose to go into assisted living or to a nursing home yet, and I just want to be who I am. I love my little apartment. I love being able to cook for myself and NNC makes this possible. There are people in my building who are able to drive, but there will be a time when they won't be able to drive, and then they'll have NNC in place to help them.

Ruth Saperstein (92)

Northwest Neighbors Connecting (NNC) – Baltimore, MD

Gratitude for being able to live independently

After I moved into my apartment, I had a bad fall, and it was my friend Sylvia who told me about ElderNet. It was a wonderful thing she did, because ElderNet has been so helpful to me. They've provided transportation and wonderful escorts. They take me to places I couldn't get to on my own. As a result, I am able to stay in my apartment and live independently, and I don't think I could do it without the help from them. I want you to know that I am eternally grateful to Sylvia for telling me about them, and I am eternally grateful to ElderNet for all they do for me.

Sylvia Backhaut (97)

ElderNet of Lower Merion and Narberth – Wynnewood, PA

Gratitude for making me feel like I have family

I am unable to drive where I need to go due to health issues. I was trying to be as independent as possible. I had spinal surgery which failed and now I have to use a walker. I have to get to doctors' appointments and physical therapy. I called and was referred to Care Links by the Office for Aging. After I called Care Links for information, I received a lovely letter in the mail that made me feel like a person, not just a number. The volunteers are wonderful. They help me in any way that they can. They are very concerned for my safety and comfort. They are willing to listen to my problems (when I'm sure they have problems of their own!!). My stress level has dropped tremendously; I'm a nervous person and used to worry and be upset when I had to go someplace. Until I learned of Care Links, I had to struggle on my own, but now I have the help I need. I so appreciate the hope and caring I have received. I never realized how many wonderful people there are out there. It makes me feel I have family out there.

Phyllis Elliott (78)

Care Links of Southern Saratoga County – Ballston Spa, NY

"At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."

Albert Schweitzer (Theologian)

Gratitude for 7,000 miles, 290 trips

I grew up in central Virginia and I'm now in my mid-60s.. A few years back, I suffered kidney failure and so I need dialysis treatments three times a week. Each session is four hours long, so many LVC volunteers split the trips there and back. In 2015, 23 volunteers took me to and from dialysis 290 times; I don't even know how many hours they gave me or how many miles they drove, but it has to be over 7,000 miles! All the volunteers who help me are the nicest people and I so appreciate what they do!

Anna Davis (69)

Loudoun Volunteer Caregivers — Leesburg, VA

Gratitude for nourishing my creative spirit

Both my husband and I are totally blind. The Shepherd's Center Program fills a need in a way that enhances well-being and literally prolongs lives. It is difficult to reach out for help, but all of the respectful, competent personnel of the Shepherd's Center bolster confidence and the ability to accept desperately needed transportation. Each of my drivers has been friendly and accommodating, with a positive attitude, offering support and relieving anxiety. It can be stressful and frustrating to navigate complicated settings without sight. One driver became an exceptional friend. After months of hesitation, I asked for a driver to take me to an art school in Winston-Salem. I felt that this

Why Passengers Use Volunteer Driver Programs

(reported by program managers)

58% because service provides assistance and support

46% because transportation service is free

44% because they could not access other services

37% because passengers get where they need to go

34% because drivers provide socialization

(Resource #3)

request was unusual, but I wanted to sculpt a figure in clay for my sister's 80th birthday. The school was the resource to implement this goal. Once again, a can-do approach defined the Shepherd's Center response to my plea. Reliable transportation and this new friend's assistance restored my self-esteem and nourished my creative spirit. The entire experience, made possible by the Shepherd's Center,

enriched my life. The way that the Shepherd's Center staff communicates reinforces personal dignity and sanctions the idea that seeking help is a right. As a social worker for many years, I referred numerous people and all of them expressed their gratitude for the transportation. Frequent comment: it is the best gift ever and a blessing!

Alysia Wells (68)

The Shepherd's Center of Kernersville Transportation Program — Kernersville, NC

Gratitude for "paying it forward"

As a person who has spent the majority of her life helping others, working in third-world countries and teaching, when I discovered I was in need of help it was difficult. Asking for assistance was something that was foreign (except for directions in other countries) to me. There I was, in my mid-70s, needing help getting places and doing simple things. Asking for that aid was something I did not learn easily. Drive a Senior Northwest volunteers and staff have made me feel a part of a community. They have never made me feel obligated, condescended to or uncomfortable. One lady told me she was "paying it forward" for the day when she would need the same help. I have kept my dignity, learned to ask for help, and met a wonderful group of people who have treated me with respect and courtesy.

Caryl Abrahams (79)

Drive a Senior Northwest — Austin, TX

Story of Excellence Winner

Larry Feinfeild (59)

Gratitude for my good days

It all started when I came home from work. I was going to the basement and fell going down the stairs. A short time later my daughter found me and called 911. Four days later I woke up to very little movement on my right side. I had a stroke and bleeding on the brain from the fall. Now I have to learn to do everything all over, even the little things like eating, drinking, buttoning my shirt and learning how to walk again. My wife and kids spent many days getting me to and from doctor appointments. As time went on, my wife couldn't take off more time from work without risking her job, so we had to look at other options. She found the Seniors Volunteering for Seniors volunteer driver program through the Aging and Disability Resource Center. The drivers and staff are all angels. My favorite driver is a retired physician who is very knowledgeable, always has a good story to tell, and we share many interests. We have been together for about eight months and have become good friends. Two things I live by daily are: "Every day is a good day" and "Slow down to see everything around you because things can change very quickly."

Larry Feinfield (59)

Seniors Volunteering for Seniors — Janesville, WI

"Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."

Oprah Winfrey (Television Celebrity)

Part 2

MY VOLUNTEER DRIVER(S) (Passengers Tell Their Stories)

Many stories submitted by passengers cite the important role played by their volunteer driver or drivers. They describe drivers as helpful and kind, as caring and considerate, like angels and friends, going above and beyond, having hearts of gold, contributing random acts of kindness and “paying it forward.” More than one passenger describes volunteer drivers as “the best people on earth.” Several express their appreciation for their driver being on time or providing needed assistance. Some have a special driver and others describe their drivers as friends and “like family.” However, quite often they convey their gratitude for all the volunteers who drive for their program. What you may find surprising is that several passengers say their volunteer drivers are every bit as important as the rides they provide.

Story of Excellence Winner

Val Larson (103)

Gratitude for providing a lifeline

A few years ago, due to age (I turned 100), I gave up driving. My world got really small at that point. I had driven my entire life ... I didn't even have to take a test to get a license back at the time! Even though my daughter lives below me, she is gone at work all day; I was used to socializing. With the long cold winter, the days can stretch forever. I cannot take our local transit because of back issues. I have to take an expensive cab — so I am very careful on how often I go out. My volunteer driver suggested that she could take another Volunteer Caregiver client (whose sister had passed away) and me to lunch every other week to see if we could put a bright spot into her life. She was so sad. While this may seem frivolous to some, it was a lifeline to my dear friend. She has come out of her shell and has even started to laugh again! I do take advantage of these trips. I am taken to the grocery store to shop for as long as I need. I think I read every label in the store!

Val Larson (103)

Volunteer Caregivers for the Elderly — Bismarck ND

“Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.”

Zig Ziglar (Author)

Gratitude for all the giving friends

I am writing you to thank you and all of the wonderful volunteers. You cannot know what a help and comfort they all are to me. I am 80 years of age; I have no relatives in the near area; and the only times I am able to venture out and about is to the grocery store or to my doctor's office. I am unable to drive;

Volunteer Drivers

Volunteer drivers are said to be the "heart and soul" of volunteer driver programs and the reasons for their success.

I am on a fixed income and cannot afford taxi cabs. I have tried to make use of Sun Van Transportation. However, due to my arthritis and osteoarthritis in my spine, I was almost in tears from the pain of being jostled around on my bus rides. I so enjoy all of your drivers. They have become like dear

friends, and it brightens my day when I am in their company. I carry angel pins and gift these "Angels of Mine" to them when I am privileged to be driven by them. You have no idea how very grateful I am. I do not know what I would do without all you loving and giving people. I am so blessed.

Eileen Stevens (80)

Eastside Neighbors Volunteer Program — Tucson, AZ

Gratitude for my lucky stars

When you have to retire from driving it makes you feel isolated. It is difficult enough to ask for help for necessary rides like to a doctor or dental appointment and impossible to just window shop, watch a sunset or lunch in a park. Na Hoaloha has given me wheels again, and I am very thankful. I now have a driver, a friend and someone who cares. JB, "my limo lady," visits me once or twice a week and calls me every day to say hello. She helps me schedule my medical appointments and makes sure to get me there on time. She takes me to buy groceries, pick up medications or just something fun. A drive along the ocean can be the best medicine. With 20 years difference in age, we never run out of things to talk about. I thank my lucky stars for Na Hoaloha!

Phyllis Esclito (81)

Na Hoaloha Senior Escort Transportation — Kihei, HI

"Gratitude not only is the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others."

Marcus Tullius Cicero (Statesman)

Gratitude for feeling connected

I was unable to drive because of blood pressure medications. I moved from Ohio to be near my daughter, who lives 45 minutes away and works full time (with four children). Within two weeks of my move, it became obvious she couldn't help me with my transportation needs. I was so despondent. I didn't know what I was going to do. The SCHC's Community Caring Director assigned two volunteers to alternate driving me where I need to go. They have become dear friends, and it is a joy to have these beautiful giving ladies in my life. They take me grocery shopping, to the pharmacy and to my doctor appointments. They also take me to lunch from time to time, or perhaps an outing to a museum or the library. Among other things, they even see that I get to the hairdresser. The Shepherd's Center Community Caring Program and these women have made an extremely positive impact on my life. I now feel connected and am deeply grateful for this volunteer program.

Drivers and Miles

In the 2016 study, 11,477 volunteer drivers drove 8,913,627 miles in providing rides.

(Resource #3)

Sharon Lowe (68)

The Shepherd's Center Community Caring Program — Fishers, IN

Gratitude of my grateful family

I am a widow and all of my siblings and personal friends have passed away. One day a miracle occurred. A phone call led me to visit SRC, where they reconnected me with life outside my home by providing volunteer drivers. Volunteer drivers are the most amazing and greatest of all gifts. They provide transportation and comfort and reassurance in knowing I am not confined to my home. My volunteer driver is an angel in disguise. I am now able to go to my hairdresser once a week and to church on Sunday mornings. Consequently, I have begun to make new friends. Conversation and laughter occur while driving to and from destinations, which has led to new friendships. Recently my doctor prescribed an exercise class needed to increase my strength and stability. Steve stepped up and said he would support me and take me to the class. He is reliable and generous with his time and gives of himself willingly. His support provides me with happiness and joy. We have developed a very special friendship, and I can always depend on him to be there for me each week: rain or snow, he is there. Because of Steve, I can continue to be independent, healthy, and happy. My family is so grateful.

Dorothy Gillete (95)

Seniors' Resource Center Volunteer Driver Program — Littleton, CO

Gratitude from Veronica and Rose

My Elder Network driver Bill picked me up last Monday morning, so that I could take my walker into a shop to be fixed. The “mechanic” called me into the garage to tell me what was wrong with “Veronica.” When he was finished, he stated that the cost of repairing “Veronica” would be the cost of a new walker. I asked my driver Bill to give me his opinion. Bill stated that he knew that he and the “mechanic” were not as emotionally attached to Veronica as I was. Bill thought it was best to look at the new walkers. Bill represents the caliber of the volunteer drivers for Elder Network. He was the cool voice of reason. He gave me the time to think and make my own decision. I appreciated his help and opinion. After thinking while we looked, I picked out a new walker. Her name is “Rose.” The following text went out to my three adult children: “Took my walker in to be fixed. The four tires are bald and the brake system needs to be replaced. Handles need to be replaced. All this equals cost of a new walker. It was hard to say goodbye. I loved Veronica. Her memorial services will be announced later.”

Nancy Kane (69)

Elder Network Transportation Program — Rochester, MN

“Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul.”

Henry Ward Beecher (Clergyman)

Gratitude for that angel over there

I called Ready Rides to see if I could get a ride for same-day surgery. The coordinator helped me fill out the application and I was immediately set up in the system. I did not know the time of the appointment because the hospital does not know the time you need to be there until the night before. Meri assured me that this happens all the time and not to worry. Sure enough, when I called her back and told her the time, she said my driver was going to be Carol and “you are in good hands because she is a sweetheart,” and she was just wonderful, arriving at my house exactly on time and providing pleasant conversation during our ride to Dover and back. The people at the hospital got a kick out of my response when they asked me who was driving me home and I pointed to Carol and said, “That angel over there.” I don’t know what I would have done if not for Ready Rides. I hope that someday I will be well enough to become a Ready Rides Driver and pay it forward for this wonderful organization.

Volunteer Hours and Dollars

The 800,720 volunteer hours contributed by volunteer drivers in the 2016 study had a dollar value of \$18,864,963.

(Resources #3 and #4)

William Murphy (65)

Ready Rides — Stafford, NH

Gratitude for my dedicated and brave driver

When I called for my first ride with SMiles and readied myself to go down and meet my driver, I felt about as shy as many kindergartners are on their first day of school. But there my driver was, talking with some of my friends, a big smile on his face. I assured him my test would probably only take about a half-hour. He assured me that he loves to read and would be all right waiting. When I got back into the treatment room, the pacemaker equipment was all set up. The CNA casually glanced at it, looked somewhat quizzical and left the room. When she came back, she said, “We aren’t going to be able to let you go home. We have called an ambulance, and they are preparing for you at the emergency room. The ambulance is on its way.” My driver assured me he would stay with me until the ambulance came and tell the nurse at the facility what had happened and where I was. I was in the hospital for three days and in a healthcare facility for two weeks. The next time I requested a ride, he called. He said he had been watching for my name because he was worried about what had happened to me. He was brave and obviously dedicated and risked taking me for my second SMiles ride!

Janice Campbell (84)

SMiles — Maryville, TN

Story of Excellence Winner

Joan Hoover (87)

Gratitude for a glorious winter vacation

Have you a medal for exquisite service? Do please polish and present it to your exceptional volunteer, Pamela. Faced with the “Big Blizzard” predictions, my distant family feared that I might suffer loss of heat and light and urged me to go to a hotel. Delightful Pam, a neighbor I had not yet met, drove me to the hotel. She parked, came and helped with registration, approved my room and helped me settle in. She checked all safety and convenience amenities, gave me her phone number and even called later to see if I needed anything. How very gracious. Above and beyond? Not yet. Later that day, Pamela hiked to my hotel to install an iPad so I could chat and play Scrabble with friends. On Sunday morning, Pamela called again. She and her (delightful) husband, David, would come and take me to dinner in the hotel’s fine restaurant. We had a wonderful evening. Later they “walked” to my house to see which roads had been plowed. On Monday, the route home appeared to be clear and I was delivered, through the drifts, to my door, but only after my benefactors ensured that I had power, heat and food. I had only requested a short ride to the safety of a hotel. I received a glorious “Winter Vacation” from the kindest and most generous young couple. My joy and gratitude will last for years. Thank you, Pamela and David, and thank you, Chevy Chase At Home.

Joan Hoover (87)

Chevy Chase At Home — Chevy Chase, MD

“We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives.”

John F. Kennedy (Former President)

Gratitude for a driver who arrived early

At the time I first heard about the Village of Takoma Park, I was primarily using Metro Access. It serves a wonderful purpose, but it’s not always on time. And, not only that, I am blind, and it just drops you off. Especially if it’s a new place that you haven’t been before, it’s tough. Sandy happened to be my first driver and everything went well. She was even a little bit early, which I LOVE. That way I’m relaxed, and I don’t have to worry. She also waited for me, and that was comforting too. In addition, Sandy and I found that we had some things in common and shared some interesting stories. It was just a very pleasant experience. With me living alone, it really is nice to be able to chat with people. Another example of a ride that the Village provided for me was a ride to a one-year-old-baby’s birthday party. It would have been very difficult to have gotten there if it hadn’t been for the Village. I was surprised and happy to find out that the Village would provide a ride like that. And, again, another social visit that was made so easy. It was just a wonderful time, thanks to the Village!

Volunteer Vehicles

A majority of all volunteer drivers use their personal vehicles to drive passengers.

John Wilkinson (65)

Village of Takoma Park — Takoma Park, MD

Gratitude for the driver who goes above and beyond

I am a homebound disabled widow with no way to get to my medical appointments as I cannot drive. I have no family or friends to help. I have no idea how I would get around without Area 1. Most volunteer drivers are wonderful. They take me with my wheelchair and are always on time. There is one driver, David, who is exceptional with helping me. There is always a smile for me, and he goes above and beyond his volunteer duties. He actually wheels me into the exam rooms and holds my hands in elevators since I am an acute agoraphobic. He knows instinctively how to calm me. We have good talks about his activities and his family. I am so lucky to have found them.

Linda Wells (65)

A1AA Volunteer Driver Program — Eureka, CA

Story of Excellence Winner

Linda Dusendschon (67)

Gratitude for random acts of kindness from strangers

In November, I received a diagnosis that would require me to travel to medical services 40 miles away. Being in a wheelchair and not driving, I knew this journey would be interesting. I called Door-Tran and received a pickup time. Since then, I have had transportation every week, minus a couple of snowstorms and my flu bug. My volunteer driver has removed the back seat from his minivan to accommodate my handicapped scooter so I could get new batteries. Now I have freedom every day. I have received a warm apple cranberry pie, Easter dinner complete with an Easter basket that included two toy rainbow mice for my cat and an invitation to a family gathering, water balloon fight included. I went to visit his son, who lives across the state. I was greeted by three cats and a Reuben sandwich, homemade chocolate cake and lemonade. I wanted to be adopted. As we were coming home, I could see fireworks over Green Bay. We were leaving a restaurant and stopped by a group of people offering to help my driver lift the mobility device into his vehicle. My volunteer had volunteers. One rainy day my driver was having difficulty getting my wheelchair to unfold. A family, who was celebrating their grandfather's birthday, stopped to assist us. Because of Door-Tran providing weekly trips, my volunteer driver and his wife donating their time, and random acts of kindness and Christian love from strangers, I know that I will be successful in my healing. One of my favorite sayings is the only disability is a crushed spirit. My spirit is in the stratosphere, intact.

Linda Dusendschon (67)

Door-Tran — Sturgeon Bay, WI

“Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude.”

Denis Waitley (Writer)

Gratitude for getting to see the Christmas lights

My “Diamond in the Rough,” Ron, takes me to the bank, grocery shopping, doctor appointments and also on special trips. Recently he took me to get my tubes out after my double mastectomy. It was a day I will always remember. He was my lifeline that day. I had to hold on to him as I was very unsteady. He is a strong man and I got home safely. Ron took me to the mountains to see the fall leaves. We shopped and ate and he even carried my packages. He also took me to see the Christmas lights. He is always on time. He is thoughtful and has a very nice smile along with a great sense of humor. Ron is very special to me.

Years of Driving

Of 714 volunteer drivers surveyed in 2006, the majority said they had been driving 50 or more years.

(Resource #5)

Marjorie Faust (85)

ShareCare Faith in Action Transportation Program — Bethlehem, PA

Gratitude for the very best people on earth

“I have severe spinal stenosis; it is a very painful disease. It keeps me from driving, but even if I were able to drive, I could not afford to own and insure a car. Without access to proper medical care, this disease would keep me homebound and alone. When I found Interfaith, it was a godsend. Their kind and caring drivers get me to places where I need to go: to doctor visits and to the grocery store with those beautiful wheelchair vans. I am able to get to my eye appointments in the city of Milwaukee. There is no other transportation service in Washington County that will cross county lines, especially for those of us in wheelchairs, except with a medical transport service, which costs hundreds per ride. They are wonderful volunteers who drive for Interfaith. What kind of people do this? The kind this world needs more of, the very best people on earth. I do not have enough money to pay for the services they help me with. I am just so grateful for all the people involved with this beautiful organization.

Pat Kassun

*Interfaith Caregivers of Washington County —
West Bend, WI*

Gratitude for providing mom with such pleasurable moments

My mother and I would like to express our profound appreciation for the work you all do. This service has been a literal lifesaver for us, especially for my mother and father. My mother, who is 88, has been deeply grieving not being able to live with my father because he requires 24-hour skilled nursing care. They will be married 54 years in a few months. Between your service and family, we can get her there more than just once a week. However, it isn't just the rides that prompted us to write. It is the kindness and warmth of the drivers who provide such lovely, pleasurable moments for my mom. You really cheer her up. You have ALL been a gift to her in your own unique ways — such blessings! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Gloria Mancini (88)

Neighbor Ride — Elkridge, MD

Gratitude for my on-time driver

The reason I needed transportation was because I had major surgery and was unable to drive for a month. I had to have an incision dressing changed every other day and needed to go to a wound clinic for the changes. I can drive my car now, but when this happened, I needed someone to drive me to my appointments in Green Bay. The driver was very helpful and was always on time for the pickup. The driver waited for me until I was finished with my appointment and always made sure I was safely in my home before leaving.

Gloria (69)

Volunteer Escort Program — Oconto, WI

Story of Excellence Winner

Randy Dominguez (66)

Gratitude for a driver named Bill

I am a senior citizen who is visually handicapped. I had tried all services that are available in the city, but they did not meet my needs. About three years ago, I called Catholic Charities for transportation services and a driver who would help me shop for groceries. The program sent me a driver named Bill. He was relaxed and soft-spoken, and did not treat me as a person with a disability. He took his cues from me and walked beside me like an old friend. I was hungry for an intelligent conversation, which he provided. I didn't realize how much I missed talking to someone who listened. By the time we were done shopping, we had become pals and agreed that he should become my regular driver. Bill is the kindest, gentlest and most patient fellow you would ever want to meet. Twice a month he comes and off we go on our shopping spree. I carry a braille shopping list, but he knows my needs so well, I hardly refer to my list. We are a smooth-running shopping machine. When we are done, he loads my groceries into his car. When we get home, we carry the bags to my condo. He helps me put all the groceries away, a plus for me as he tells me what the items are as he hands them to me and I can put them away in a specific order. He also reads my mail to me and always asks if there is anything else I need. I could dictate a book about the difference Bill has made in my life.

Randy Dominguez (66)

Catholic Charities — Albuquerque, NM

“Reflect on your present blessings — of which everybody has plenty — not on your past misfortunes which all men have some.”

Charles Dickens (Author)

Part 3

MY VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM (Passengers Tell Their Stories)

In addition to introducing themselves and their drivers, the passengers also convey their appreciation for their volunteer driver programs. They describe them as a lifeline, as offering kindness and warmth, as providing friendship and caring, as contributing to the end of worry (about being able to get where they need to go), and as reinforcing their confidence and tranquility. Some are pleased that their rides are free, while others are relieved that the programs provide needed physical assistance. Some passengers are enthusiastic about the special volunteer driver programs organized by villages. Others cite programs that enable the drivers to help passengers meet with their doctors. You will find that most passengers are in awe of the contributions of their volunteer program to them and to their community.

GRAND WINNER

Story of Excellence

David Norris (73)

Gratitude for realizing what it means to receive

After retirement around 1997, Jettie and I weren't sure how we wanted to spend our time, but we told ourselves to always remain active. We attended Senior Day at Ballard Park and met Roberta Doughty with Shepherd's Center who told us about the organization's monthly meetings and programs. We began attending the meetings and enjoyed programs like the current events meeting where members tossed out news items for discussion. At that time I was still able to drive, so I became a volunteer driver. I really enjoyed meeting folks from different walks of life, and I really liked being helpful. I had been a pastor in rural areas; this allowed me to continue to give back to our community. Jettie lost her sight many years ago, but I was still able to drive us wherever was necessary. But a few years ago I came down with pneumonia and could no longer drive. Jettie and I both had to transition from my being a volunteer driver to a passenger. Jettie says, "Now, as we are on the other end and receiving transportation instead of giving it, it's a good feeling to know that we've done this in the past because now we realize what it really means to receive." We are just so grateful for the Shepherd's Center for taking both of us to doctors' appointments and even taking Jettie to get her hair done. I hope this helps Shepherd's Center in the future so others can be helped.

David Norris (73)

The Shepherd's Center of Greater Tupelo – Tupelo, MS

"In ordinary life, we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Theologian)

Gratitude for opening the door to independence

My life changed dramatically on January 5, 2011, when I was suddenly diagnosed as being legally blind. Unable to drive, I was left confused and frightened trying to make sense of how I would take care of my personal and medical needs. After much searching with doctors and other healthcare professionals, I turned to the ACC Senior Services, where I learned about their volunteer rides program (VRP). This offered me my first glimmer of hope! During this initial time of

Rides Provided by Programs

In 2016, the volunteer driver programs in the study provided 633,767 one-way rides.

(Resource #3)

vulnerability, the personal care and concern of the drivers in providing me with safe and secure transportation allowed me to begin to rebuild my life. Initially, looking forward to a life of depression, isolation and dependency on family and society, their drivers opened the door for me

to a brighter and a more independent future. The VRP allows me to plan and perform my daily activities, such as weekly medical treatments, doctors' appointments, medical tests, pharmacy runs, grocery shopping, banking, etc. Perhaps the most fulfilling benefit of the VRP is how it allows me to maintain my social contacts with family and friends and to participate in community activities, such as classes at the Society for the Blind. There I am able to gain personal satisfaction and contribute back to society by volunteering as a mentor for the newly blind and visually impaired seniors. So, you can see why the VRP at ACC is essential in allowing me to continue to be a fully functioning and contributing member of society.

Dorothy Kumasaki (73)

ACC Senior Services, Inc. (ACC Rides) – Sacramento, CA

Gratitude for my village of neighbors

My village volunteer drivers help to keep me out of harm's way while keeping our city streets and byways safe from my unintentionally errant driving. As we age and it takes longer to perform even the most routine tasks, getting to appointments on time can be a significant challenge. A series of appointments on the same day can be a formidable task for us octogenarians. Driving has become a challenge for many as well. Some of us wisely decide not to drive at all, fearing that an arthritic joint, tricky knee, cramping foot or compromised vision or hearing might suddenly disable our ability to slam on the brakes in an emergency. I am fortunate to have a spouse. But I can't rely on him for transportation as his moderate dyslexia seems to be more acute in his 80s. Trying to coordinate our separate medical appointments is difficult as well. Our community has no Metro; buses are hard to climb onto and don't stick to their schedules, and many require several changes to reach a destination. I thank heavens for the Georgetown Village volunteer driver program. Nothing soothes this ruffled senior more than a friendly familiar neighborhood contact. The volunteers seem to find it gratifying too. After all, "It takes a village."

Joan Dowd (88)

Georgetown Village – Washington, D.C.

Gratitude for being able to resume my former lifestyle

My life changed for the worse a few years ago due to macular degeneration, and I had to give up my driver's license. I did not know how I was going to cope because I do not have family nearby. Then I learned about SPRYE and suddenly I could count on getting to my many doctor appointments or to grocery shopping and to social events. My quality of life improved immensely. I know help is just a phone call away. All the volunteers go out of their way to be polite, kind and patient and are a pleasure to talk to. It becomes much more than just a ride. The volunteers are always ready to listen and go the extra mile if I need help getting into and out of a building because of my eyesight. I know they will be there when I am ready to return home, unlike a taxi. It takes away a lot of my anxiety knowing that I can resume my former lifestyle despite not being able to drive. Some people I know think they are losing their independence if they have to rely on a program like SPRYE. I feel the opposite. SPRYE has given me my freedom back.

Josephine Delmonte (91)
SPRYE — Rye, NY

“Got no checkbooks, got no banks. Still I'd like to express my thanks — I've got the sun in the mornin' and the moon at night.”

Irving Berlin (Composer)

Gratitude for the service we need

As a person who has experienced Surrey Services both as a provider and as a client, I would like to express my appreciation for everything Surrey does to benefit the community. After serving as

Program Operations

The volunteer driver programs in the study averaged 17 years of operations. Seventy percent of them operated on budgets of less than \$100,000.

(Resource #3)

a volunteer driver for many years, I became a member of Surrey's board of directors and then was in a position to understand the full extent of the organization's work. I also was active in fundraising efforts until two years ago when I unexpectedly found myself in need of Surrey's community outreach. Because of a back injury, I was no longer able to drive and instead came

to rely on Surrey's corps of volunteer drivers to reach my appointments with doctors and therapists. This is one example of the kind of support that Surrey offers to older residents who continue to live in their own homes. I feel truly blessed that Surrey people are there when I — and so many others — need them.

Mary Tatnall (88)
Surrey Services for Seniors — Wayne, PA

Gratitude for being able to do what I do

A few years ago, I had some health issues that limited my ability to drive. Having been an active driver, it became difficult for me to adjust to having to call on friends for something as simple as getting me to the train station or to get to a doctor's appointment in NYC. A friend told me about Rides for Ridgefield. And what appeared to be a problem with an impossible solution suddenly became a group to turn to. I no longer feel isolated to get to necessary medical appointments at a distance. The staff on the phones, in the office and the driver volunteers are the nicest and most accommodating people I have ever met and are both reassuring and comforting at a time when I need it the most. Rides for Ridgefield made it possible for me to continue to do the things I always did on any day, and in any type of weather, and all year long. There are no words to express the impact that Rides for Ridgefield has made on my life, and I will always be grateful for their service to me.

Lorraine R. Duryea (67)

Rides for Ridgefield — Ridgefield, CT

Gratitude for giving me peace of mind

I use the volunteer driver program offered by the Brandywine Village Network (BVN) because they are dependable, safe and attentive to a person's disabilities. I had a stroke, have residual balance and visual issues, and use a walker. When I voluntarily surrendered my license, I relied on my wife for transportation. She recently passed on and I suddenly found myself with many transportation issues. BVN has filled my needs admirably. I now have peace of mind knowing that the BVN volunteer drivers will be on time and deliver me to my destination. I also know that the drivers are not people with a dubious past, and the help I receive related to my disabilities is very courteous and helpful.

Socialization

A major contribution of volunteer driver programs is the social interactions that occur between passengers and their volunteer drivers.

Gordon Gee (65)

Brandywine Village Network — Newark, DE

Gratitude for my smooth road to recovery

I was diagnosed with a breast tumor in 2015 and was given a treatment regimen of six weeks, five days a week. My first reaction was: how I am going to manage the daily drive? Will I be able to drive myself safely? My sister took time off from work to help me during and after my surgery and drove me to my appointments and sometimes ran errands. Fortunately, she happened to catch the evening news one night when a piece was aired about a nonprofit program that provided free transportation to cancer patients. She sent me the information right away and I called the program the following morning. Lack of transportation sometimes leaves patients like me with few options for completing our treatment schedules. It certainly made my treatment stress-free and convenient. I bonded with the volunteer drivers and now consider them lifelong friends. This organization helped set me up for the smoothest possible road to recovery. I am so grateful to find an organization that provided this much-needed service. I hope to one day return the favor.

Cora Concepcion (56)

Drivers for Survivors — Newark, CA

Story of Excellence Winner

David Bubser (85)

Gratitude for the big red bow that ties everything together

I became a RideConnect client in 2014 after serious vision problems required me to stop driving. I had just lost my wife to Alzheimer's disease and these two major life events made me feel like my life was coming undone. A future without my wife, without my vision and without transportation was terrifying. I became severely depressed. At that point, I had a few options — do nothing, take antidepressants or volunteer to help lift my depression. I decided to take my life back and volunteer, but without transportation, I was trapped. Once I found RideConnect, my life was transformed for the better! In memory of my wife, I now volunteer at a local Alzheimer's program and a cardiopulmonary rehabilitation center. This has not only given me back my independence, but I am now able to "pay it forward" to others in need. RideConnect has completely changed my life, my thinking and my attitude. I have far less stress because I can now get to my medical appointments without hassle, but more important, I have been lifted from a terrible depression. In fact, now I have a spring in my step, and I planted my beloved garden for the first time in four years! Not long ago, I was at the end of my rope and RideConnect became my lifeline. They are the big red bow that ties everything together, and I am grateful every day for this wonderful program.

David Bubser (85)

RideConnect — Bedford Hills, NY

"None is more impoverished than the one who has no gratitude. Gratitude is a currency that we can mint for ourselves, and spend without fear of bankruptcy."

Fred De Witt Van Amburgh (Author)

Gratitude for no longer having to walk everywhere

I was born in 1932 in Portage Lake, Maine, and as children we were able to walk to most of the places we needed to go. When I was in high school, I took a driver's education course, but decided at 18 that driving was not for me. When I was younger if I couldn't walk somewhere, my father would

drive me. I joined the Air Force when I was in my twenties and didn't need to worry about having a driver's license there either. When I got married, I continued to walk or take the bus whenever I could. If I really needed to get somewhere, my husband would drive me. I retired about 16 years ago, and I have continued to walk or get rides from friends whenever possible, but it's gotten harder to walk long distances as I've gotten older. I also have to get to the Veteran's Administration

Hospital more often, which is a long drive from my house. Since I retired and started volunteering at the Natick Senior Center, I've been using the volunteer driver program to get me to my appointments. The drivers are all really good, and I don't know what I'd do without them.

Wilberta Davis (84)

Natick Council on Aging, Volunteer Transportation Program — Natick, MA

Independence
Volunteer driver programs frequently assist older adults in maintaining their independence by helping them retain friendships and social networks; by supporting their ability to participate in social, volunteer and work-related activities; and by enabling them to continue living in their homes.

Gratitude for such an amazing organization

Dear Molly's Angels, I'm writing to let you know how much it has meant to me for your staff and volunteers to assist in getting me to my dialysis treatments. All the volunteers have been on time and friendly, and it has been nice to get to know them. The staff have all been wonderful. With me not being able to drive, my wife was having difficulty with her work allowing her to take time off to get me to my treatments and picking me up. My wife and I then learned about the service you provide. I am so grateful for Molly's Angels and feel truly blessed that our community has such an amazing organization.

Darrell Opperman (58)

Molly's Angels Transportation Program — Napa, CA

“Everyone enjoys being acknowledged and appreciated. Sometimes even the simplest act of gratitude can change someone's entire day. Take the time to recognize and value the people around you and appreciate those who make a difference in your lives.”

Roy T. Bennett (Author)

Gratitude for a very special service

I am 97. It's very important for someone to be with me when I go to the doctor. I don't always remember what to ask the doctor. JFS Patient Navigators always makes sure I get the care I need. I call the office and they get a volunteer to take me to the doctor's office. They come right to my home. Before they come, they call me and ask me the questions I need to ask the doctor. Then they come in with me to make sure the doctor answers all my questions. I feel my doctor gives me better attention when they are there. My son says it is brilliant, and that even he has trouble remembering what the doctor says. He says that it is a blessing this program is available.

No-Cost Rides

Eighty-four percent of the volunteer driver programs in the 2016 survey did not charge for rides.

(Resource #3)

call the office and they get a volunteer to take me to the doctor's office. They come right to my home. Before they come, they call me and ask me the questions I need to ask the doctor. Then they come in with me to make sure the doctor answers all

Ethel Sugarberg (97)

JFS Patient Navigators Program — Framingham, MA

Gratitude for giving us a lifeline to independence

Discovering Heart of the Valley was golden for me. I had just lost my husband in a tragic accident a few months earlier when I was told I needed major surgery. After the operation, I was unable to drive, had no close relatives I could call on, and did not want to impose on my friends. Then someone told me about Heart of the Valley. From my first contact with the volunteer who took my phone call, through the years that I have used its services, they not only have provided transportation to medical appointments, but also to meetings and even memorials for good friends. I shall not forget dedicated volunteers like Helen, now herself confined to a nursing home, and Tony, a Pearl Harbor survivor who helped ease my anxiousness over medical appointments, sharing stories with a spark of humor on the way. Heart of the Valley is a unique lifeline. Its volunteers are exceptional, taking you to and from your appointments, staying with you until your visit is over. I am truly grateful that seniors, like myself, have this wonderful organization to help us with vital transportation needs, allowing us to continue to live independently. Now in my eighties with doctors' visits more frequent, I feel a sense of security knowing that I can turn to Heart of the Valley.

Shirley Odou (86)

Heart of the Valley — Santa Clara, CA

Story of Excellence Winner

Joanne McNamara (69)

Gratitude for the gift of freedom and control

I can't say enough positive comments regarding this transportation system provided by Care-A-Van. Veterans, as well as others in need, have found their freedom within the services provided. It was Care-A-Van service that helped give my husband, Gary, a better quality of life in his last couple of years. These vans and cars are driven by very capable, courteous, compassionate people. Some were our friends, while others quickly became our new friends. Gary was able to coordinate times for pickups and drop-offs as needed for his complex schedule of appointments from hemodialysis and hyperbaric sessions to his multitude of doctor and lab appointments. It gave him some independence and control of his life. This in turn gave him a boost of confidence and tranquility that the causes of his disease and immobility took from him. It also affected us in ways we hadn't thought about in the beginning, such as the drivers becoming good listeners for Gary and his Upper Peninsula stories about family and deer camp adventures. I believe he called them "therapists." I also received breaks from sitting in numerous doctors' office lobbies waiting for his procedures, lab data, reviews, surgery follow-ups, etc. Obviously, I did need to be present for some, but yet at times, this gave Gary more control of his life too. We were very happy with all aspects of the Care-A-Van system and considered it a blessing to be available to us.

Joanne McNamara (69)

Care-A-Van — Maple Rapids, Michigan

"Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude."

A. A. Milne (Author)

Gratitude for the added benefit of free rides

Until last December when I had a ministroke, I used to happily hop on a bus wherever I needed to go. Now, with a walker, that's not too easy. With the Senior Connection's Senior Rides, I have felt relaxed knowing that my volunteer driver will get me to a destination safely and in comfort. He or

she actually stays in the waiting room, so when I am ready to leave there is no delay. All my drivers have been courteous and understanding, and I have felt so well cared for. It has been so stimulating meeting new people, as I don't get out much. I have enjoyed delightful conversations both to and from, so it has really seemed like traveling with a friend. Another wonderful benefit of this program is that it is free! Despite

Additional Services

Fifty-one percent of the 147 volunteer driver programs provided other services, such as friendly visiting, caregiver respite, home repair, food delivery, handy person and financial management.

(Resource #3)

insurance, medical care can be costly. The service has been a great relief to me. I am so grateful for all those generous volunteers who are willing to offer their precious time to seniors like me. It's really nice that I could even be taken to social events, the library, etc. In these days of turbulence, I look forward to a continuing association with the Senior Connection.

Fiona Holland (81)

The Senior Connection's Senior Rides — Gaithersburg, MD

Gratitude for friends who are as important as the rides

I have been actively involved, working with many different kinds of groups all my life. However, the last few years brought striking changes to my life when I couldn't drive my car because of sight problems, combined with a husband suddenly needing 24-hour care in an assisted living facility. I tried using public transportation, but found it too difficult. I have been a member of the NEST volunteer driver program for just over a year. NEST was a godsend to me. I could visit my husband living 30 minutes away, get help with grocery shopping and meet many interesting people my age through the NEST activities. Many volunteers are so dependable and willing to help. It's really amazing how much you can learn about a person you had never seen or talked with before in just a 15-minute drive to an appointment! We have even shared gardeners for our yards and discovered things in common. The rides are how I can get out and enjoy our community and world, and not feel all alone. In fact, I have found these friends even more important than rides. I'm always raving about NEST to my friends, and I am so very grateful to this great organization!

Janet Wright (85)

NEST (North East Seattle Together) — Seattle, WA

Gratitude for freeing us from worry

As a senior and being disabled, the service that Helping Hands of Henderson provides is a blessing to both my husband and me. Without it, we would not be able to maintain a somewhat normal life. Helping Hands has taken us to doctors' appointments, shopping, pharmacies and other places. All of the drivers have been very polite and pleasant. They are aware of how to get to the destinations and are very safe. The driver that carries us most of the time is a joy to be around, a very pleasant and extremely smart man. Both my husband and I enjoy the time we spend with him. He is very helpful to me when I have to go to the doctor. He patiently waits until I have finished with my tasks and walks with me to the door and then he gets the car, loads my walker (which is no easy thing because it is so heavy), and away we go. My husband also enjoys the time he spends with Paul. Sometimes those two seem to be thick as thieves. I do believe that between the two of them, they could solve the problems of the world. He is just a wonderful man to know. Helping Hands has given us freedom from worries about how to get from here to there and enabled us to have a freer life. I hope the people at Helping Hands understand how much they mean to us.

Betty J. Downey (68)

Helping Hands of Henderson — Henderson, NV

"He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has."

Epictetus (Greek Philosopher)

Gratitude for the village lifesaver

My relationship with Capital City Village began several months ago when I was sharing my transportation woes with a friend. She described the Capital City Village volunteer driving program to me and gave a glowing recommendation about the entire organization. I made the decision to

Assistance

The programs provided high levels of assistance to passengers: 81% door-through-door and 81% stay-at-destination assistance and 77% door-to-door assistance.

(Resource #3)

contact CCV. The staff members and volunteer drivers have been absolutely amazing in their compassionate attitudes and accommodating abilities to deal with my compromised physical situation. Each trip requires that the volunteer driver load and unload my wheelchair and walker in and out of their own cars/SUVs, in addition to monitoring my transfer in and out of

their vehicles. Their attention to the task is highly commendable and extremely appreciated. I have formed a friendship with my most frequent drivers and thoroughly enjoy our conversations throughout our travels. I value my membership with Capital City Village and have shared my wonderful involvement in the organization with many friends and family members who might benefit from their services. The Capital City Village volunteer driving program is a lifesaver for me, so that I can continue to participate in my physical therapy programs, go to scheduled appointments and attend community events with positive, trustworthy and professional volunteer drivers. Thank you, Capital City Village, for assisting me in my goal toward mobility independence!

Helen Whitcraft (67)

Capital City Village — Austin, TX

Gratitude for no longer being a stranger in paradise

I've lived in Groveland since 1993. I played golf and tennis, but I can't do that anymore. I lost my wife three years ago. Everything started then, the big jug of wine on the table all day, every day, while I read. I didn't have close friends here. They had all been my wife's friends. I was having a medical issue and the doctor said I was in bad shape, dying of cancer. I figured why worry about dying. But chemo and radiation were ordered and the hospital told me to contact Wheels for rides to/from treatments. I didn't want to, but I did. The Client Advisor came over and got me lined up. I started getting rides to Sonora and I met friends. I'd offer to pay them and they all refused. I started coming out of my shell. One day I invited one of the drivers who had taken me to Sonora in for coffee and we got to talking. I told her my father was born in Venice. She said, "You're going to get better and you're going to go to Venice!" My cancer appears to be in remission. I still use Wheels to get around. Before Wheels I was a stranger living in paradise. I'm not a stranger anymore.

Richard Parisi (83)

Wheels — Groveland, CA

Gratitude for life beyond the walls

I owe my life beyond the walls of my apartment to the volunteer drivers of the Pasadena Village. That may sound dramatic, but since an accident three years ago caused me to give up the independence of driving a car, I have been limited in my ability to participate in social or community activities. That is how it seemed to me. Also, now that I am nearly 85, my doctor tells me that I have “something called a-g-e” and have those things called appointments. Thanks to the wonderful volunteers, I have no trouble getting where I need to go. I am able to participate in the many activities of the Pasadena Village and to continue to volunteer in ways other than driving. My social life is actually better than ever. I have made many new friends who are thoughtful and seem to be happy to stop by, pick me up and take me along. And my “carbon footprint” has improved!

Kitty Hall (85)

Pasadena Village — Pasadena, CA

“Gratitude is the sign of noble souls.”

Aesop (Author)

Gratitude for the blessing of having friends

I called to inquire about Drive a Senior services because I no longer was able to drive, and I care for my mentally disabled son who is 75. We are able to walk to some places when the weather is not bad, but the cost of a cab has become prohibitive. The area where I live does not have a bus or transit system. My other son lives nearby, but he works most of the time and is unable to take off except in emergencies. Drive a Senior has been a blessing. I have been a regular user of the Van program and have made wonderful friends.

I also attend Grand Adults Day and teach painting to other seniors sporadically. I look forward to this outing each month. Who knew I would live this long? But I am so blessed to have found the volunteers and friends at Drive a Senior.

Lera Lumbley (95)

Drive a Senior-Senior Access — Round Rock, TX

Aging in Place
A 2012 survey found that nearly 90% of people over age 65 want to stay in their homes for as long as possible, and 80% believe that their current residence is where they will always live.

(Resource #6)

Gratitude for your “hearts of gold”

I have very great gratitude to you and your marvelous staff and your irreplaceable volunteers. Rides & Smiles saved my husband's life. When he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, surgery was not a possibility, and radiation was the only treatment available. Five days a week for 2 1/2 months was the prescription. I was terrified because I could not drive him, and only one person we know offered to drive him on Sundays — when the radiation center is closed. I was desperate beyond belief. Then the social worker told us of Rides & Smiles and said, “They have volunteer drivers who are extremely dependable. You'll always have a ride.” They faithfully drove my husband daily. It was incredible. The volunteers are totally lovable and have hearts of gold. We always look forward to seeing them. And you and the staff members are lovely people. Besides saving my husband's life, your organization and its volunteers are helping to maintain our health. I cannot express the extent of our gratitude. There will be a special place in heaven for all of you; of that I'm sure.

Program Passenger (65)

On the Go's Rides & Smiles Service — Rancho Penasquitos, CA

“No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude.”

Alfred North Whitehead (Mathematician)

Gratitude for the freedom to get where I want to go

As a SAINT passenger for 17 years, I can attest to the fact that my life would be much different without this program. I have a visual impairment and am unable to drive. Most people probably don't think about driving as a big deal or might take it for granted that they are able to hop in their car at any time and head to the store or to meet up with friends. Those of us without that ability are essentially homebound, having to rely on others for transportation. Friends and family

2016 Volunteer Driver Program Destinations

Top 4 healthcare destinations: doctors, physical therapy, dialysis, pharmacies. Top 4 non-health-related destinations: grocery shopping, personal errands, social activities, beauty shops.

(Resource #3)

can be a great resource, but they aren't always available; they have their own schedules and plans and can't always drop me off on Tuesday at 4 p.m. for a doctor's appointment or pick me up from the grocery store at 11 a.m. on Saturday. The volunteer drivers at SAINT enable me to set my own schedule and allow me the

freedom to get from place to place when I want and need to. SAINT drivers are selfless, caring individuals who use their time to make sure other people who can't drive are able to get out and about. Being at home during the day means that the SAINT drivers might be the first people I see or talk to for a couple of days, and they always greet me with a smile, have something nice to say and start my day out on a positive note. For me and others who are unable to drive, SAINT provides an invaluable service.

Deborah West (55)

SAINT Volunteer Transportation — Fort Collins, CO

Story of Excellence Winner

Michael VanGelder (94)

Gratitude for the answer to my prayers

I lost my ability to drive because of a progressive loss of eyesight. My children and doctors agreed that I could no longer drive safely and arranged to take away my license and automobile. I had close friends living nearby who helped me for a while, but they either died or moved away. I was faced with few alternatives to safely get to my doctor appointments across the northern Virginia region. Public transportation is not a viable option because I cannot read the schedules, and the route changes are too complicated and taxis are very expensive. I was facing an uncertain and depressing future. Then I found the Shepherd's Center of Western Fairfax County, and it was the answer to my prayers! I have been a client with them for over a year. I have a number of appointments and they have consistently found volunteer driver(s) to take me where I need to go when I need them. I have never had to delay or reschedule any appointment due to any lack of a driver. Their service is free, but I have tried to help them out with donations to help them expand their service. The SCWFC has been a godsend, allowing me to keep some independence and feel like a valued member of the community. It reaffirms my faith in my neighbors!

Michael VanGelder (94)

Shepherd's Center of Western Fairfax County — Centreville, VA

"The roots of all goodness lie in the soil of appreciation for goodness."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

CONCLUSION

It is extraordinary that a large corporation would not only recognize the financial and mobility limitations experienced by many older adults, but would also identify the type of service that meets the transportation challenges they face. In the winter of 2015, Toyota determined that volunteer driver programs could meet many personal mobility needs of older adults. The participation of Toyota in the National Volunteer Transportation agenda contributes to the support of volunteer driver programs as an accessible, affordable and reliable transportation option. It also supports Toyota's commitment to contribute its financial as well as its human resources in keeping with its corporate responsibility in communities across our country

Getting where you need to go is the stated purpose of transportation. However, for the passengers who contributed their stories it was more than that. I hope this book conveyed a glimpse of transportation through their eyes and allowed them to...“tell it like it is”...

- ...to have ended a life of driving;
- ...to experience a mobility and vision limitation;
- ...to need assistance before, during and after the ride;
- ...to be faced with a life-threatening illness;
- ...to be a caregiver at an advanced age;
- ...to be unable to access or afford many transportation options;
- ...to be isolated, lonely and without family or friends;
- ...to need to get to medical destinations;
- ...to be able to continue volunteering;
- ...to have a comforting word after a doctor's appointment;
- ...to know that someone cares;
- ...to want desperately to age in place.

What I found surprising is that most of their stories conveyed their gratitude for everything related to volunteer transportation. I am confident that this book provided you with the opportunity to appreciate why many older adults need transportation, especially volunteer transportation. As you saw in the stories, volunteer driver programs provide transportation services, and the volunteer drivers generally use their own vehicles to provide rides to passengers. However, I hope you discovered why passengers of volunteer driver programs view them as offering “more than a ride.”

I hope you enjoyed their ride.

Helen Kerschner

Appendix I

AUTHORS OF STORIES OF EXCELLENCE (Plus Page Number in Book)



David Norris (73) (Photo includes Jettie)

GRAND WINNER

Story of Excellence

Gratitude for realizing what it means to receive

(Part 3, Page 26)

The Shepherd's Center of Greater Tupelo — Tupelo, MS
David lives in Tupelo, Mississippi, with Jettie, his wife of 62 years. David pastored Southern Baptist churches for 33 years. Their experiences as volunteer drivers and now as passengers give them a unique perspective on the mission of Shepherd's Center of Greater Tupelo (MS) and similar nonprofit transportation providers.

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for stopping at the package store

(Part 1, Page 9)

Lee Council on Aging and Senior Center — Lee, MA

I was born and raised in Adams, Massachusetts. I attended the former Bliss Business School and worked in textile mill offices and for the navy in Pearl Harbor during WWII. After 10 years in California, my family and I moved to Lee, Massachusetts, where I now live, independently, at the age of 97.



Rita Fontana (97)

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for being able to contribute

(Part 1, Page 14)

The Mustard Seed Project — Lakebay, WA

I was born in Boston, raised in Connecticut. I retired from a clerical career. Today, I entertain myself by painting on terracotta, crocheting my own original designs and making intricate beaded jewelry, when not volunteering in the offices of The Mustard Seed Project of Key Peninsula.

P.S. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the "powers that be" for selecting my story for your publication.

I am greatly honored and thrilled to pieces!!!



Nancy King (73)



Val Larson (103)

Story of Excellence Winner
Gratitude for providing a lifeline

(Part 2, Page 18)

Volunteer Caregivers for the Elderly — Bismarck, ND
A couple of years ago due to age (I turned 100!), I gave up driving. My world got really small at that point. I cannot take our local transit and have to take an expensive cab — so I am very careful on how often I go out. I take advantage of my trips and am taken to the grocery store to shop for as long as I need. I think I read every label in the store!

Story of Excellence Winner
Gratitude for a glorious winter vacation

(Part 2, Page 22)

Chevy Chase at Home — Chevy Chase, MD

I was born in Detroit, Michigan, educated at the University of California, Berkeley, was married to Dr. Linn Hoover, a geologist, and have two children. After one child developed diabetes, I became Executive Director of the American Diabetes Association, served on the National Diabetes Research Council and lectured on Diabetes Research worldwide. Through my work with the National Cathedral, I became the Executive Director of Hospice of the District of Columbia. Now in my later years, I occasionally write for Chevy Chase at Home and enjoy its exceptional care.



Joan Hoover (87)

Story of Excellence Winner
Gratitude for random acts of kindness from strangers

(Part 2, Page 23)

Door-Tran — Sturgeon Bay, WI

I have been a resident of Door County for over 50 years. I earned my degrees as a Certified Medical Assistant and a Certified Health Unit Coordinator. My hobbies include cross-stitch, crochet, needle point and card making.

I share my home with one cat and am a true cat lover.



Linda Dusendschon (67)



Randy Dominguez (66)
(Photo includes Bill the driver)

Story of Excellence Winner
Gratitude for a driver named Bill

(Part 2, Page 25)

Catholic Charities — Albuquerque, NM

Two Guys Just Hanging Out

Randy Dominguez was a very dignified, confident, happy and charming gentleman. Randy began losing his sight in his early teens and his parents never knew why. In the 1940s, resources and medical technology were limited, and Randy eventually became totally blind. This did not deter him from getting an education. He was enrolled in a school for the blind, where he graduated from and later went on to become a professor and retired as a teacher from the School for the Blind in Alamogordo, New Mexico.

Randy died in late 2016.

Story of Excellence Winner
Gratitude for the big red bow that ties everything together

(Part 3, Page 30)

RideConnect — Bedford Hills, NY

I was born in Pottsville, PA, married for 59 years, the father of five children and a graduate of Lafayette College. I worked on Wall Street for 49 years and finally mellowed in 2011, learning about deep breathing, meditation and stress management. In six months, I developed a knack for quality-of-life improvement. I then became a volunteer to lower my depression by helping others.



David Bubser (85)

No Photo or Bio

Joanne McNamara (69)

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for the gift of freedom and control

(Part 3, Page 32)

Care-A-Van — Maple Rapids, MI

Michael VanGelder (94)

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for the answer to my prayers

(Part 3, Page 37)

Shepherd's Center of Western Fairfax County —
Centreville, VA

Larry Feinfeild (59)

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for my good days

(Part 1, Page 17)

Seniors Volunteering for Seniors — Janesville, WI

Appendix II
INDEX: PASSENGER STORIES AND THEIR AUTHORS
Part 1
(My Life as a Passenger)

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for stopping at the package store

Rita Fontana (97)

Lee Council on Aging and Senior Center
Lee, MA

Gratitude for giving me my life back

Patricia Victory (67)

Faith in Action within Interfaith Senior Programs
Waukesha, WI

Gratitude for volunteer visits and rides

Rosemarie Chaney (85)

Faith in Action
Massillon, OH

**Gratitude for being able to get out
in the community**

Jane Keeler (86)

Pepin County
Arkansaw, WI

**Gratitude for getting me to my
“mystery lunches”**

Joan Elfreth (85)

Interfaith Caregivers Haddonfield
Haddon Heights, NJ

**Gratitude for helping me be part
of our community**

Joyce Wohlfeil (65)

Rural Transit Service
Orchard Park, NY

**Gratitude for giving me back the
gift of laughter**

Patricia Chacon (61)

Y OPAS
Phoenix, AZ

**Gratitude for the rides to dialysis
treatments**

Carol Coughlin (68)

RSVP of Dane County, Inc.
Driver Escort Program
Stoughton, WI

Gratitude for taking me to the “shooting range”

Karen Peters (74)

Village Connections
Columbus, OH

**Gratitude for enabling me to continue
my volunteer work**

Margie DeMars (68)

FGRS Way to Go
Fairfield Glade, TN

**Gratitude for ending my need to throw myself
on the mercy of others**

Donna Gates (76)

Life Path/Rides for Health
Turners Falls, MA

Gratitude for the means to enter the world

Louis Ciccone (56)

Jewish Family Service (JFS) of Orange County,
Friendly Visitor Program
Middletown, NY

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for being able to contribute

Nancy King (73)

The Mustard Seed Project
Lakebay, WA

Gratitude for no longer having to worry

Ruth Saperstein (92)

Northwest Neighbors Connecting (NNC)
Baltimore, MD

Gratitude for being able to live independently

Sylvia Backhaut (97)

ElderNet of Lower Merion and Narberth
Wynnewood, PA

Gratitude for making me feel like

I have family

Phyllis Elliott (78)

Care Links of Southern Saratoga County
Ballston Spa, NY

Gratitude for 7,000 miles, 290 trips

Anna Davis (69)

Loudoun Volunteer Caregivers
Leesburg, VA

Gratitude for nourishing my creative spirit

Alysia Wells (68)

The Shepherd's Center of Kernersville
Transportation Program
Kernersville, NC

Gratitude for "paying it forward"

Caryl Abrahams (79)

Drive a Senior Northwest
Austin, TX

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for my good days

Larry Feinfield (59)

Seniors Volunteering for Seniors
Janesville, WI

Appendix II
INDEX: PASSENGER STORIES AND THEIR AUTHORS
Part 2
[My Volunteer Driver(s)]

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for providing a lifeline

Val Larson (103)

Volunteer Caregivers for the Elderly
Bismarck, ND

Gratitude for all the giving friends

Eileen Stevens (80)

Eastside Neighbors Volunteer Program
Tucson, AZ

Gratitude for my lucky stars

Phyllis Esclito (81)

Na Hoaloha Senior Escort Transportation
Kihei, HI

Gratitude for feeling connected

Sharon Lowe (68)

The Shepherd's Center Community
Caring Program
Fishers, IN

Gratitude of my grateful family

Dorothy Gillete (95)

Seniors' Resource Center Volunteer
Driver Program
Littleton, CO

Gratitude from Veronica and Rose

Nancy Kane (69)

Elder Network Transportation Program
Rochester, MN

Gratitude for that angel over there

William Murphy (65)

Ready Rides
Stafford, NH

Gratitude for my dedicated and brave driver

Janice Campbell (84)

SMiles
Maryville, TN

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for a glorious winter vacation

Joan Hoover (87)

Chevy Chase At Home
Chevy Chase, MD

Gratitude for a driver who arrived early

John Wilkinson (65)

Village of Takoma Park
Takoma Park, MD

**Gratitude for the driver who goes above
and beyond**

Linda Wells (65)

A1AA Volunteer Driver Program
Eureka, CA

Story of Excellence Winner

**Gratitude for random acts of kindness
from strangers**

Linda Dusendschon (67)

Door-Tran
Sturgeon Bay, WI

**Gratitude for getting to see the
Christmas lights**

Marjorie Faust (85)

ShareCare Faith in Action Transportation Program
Bethlehem, PA

Gratitude for the very best people on earth

Pat Kassun

Interfaith Caregivers of Washington County
West Bend, WI

**Gratitude for providing mom with such
pleasurable moments**

Gloria Mancini (88)

Neighbor Ride
Elkridge, MD

Gratitude for my on-time driver

Gloria (69)

Volunteer Escort Program
Oconto, WI

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for a driver named Bill

Randy Dominguez (66)

Catholic Charities
Albuquerque, NM

Appendix II
INDEX: PASSENGER STORIES AND THEIR AUTHORS
Part 3
(My Volunteer Driver Program)

Story of Excellence Grand Winner

**Gratitude for realizing what it means
to receive**

David Norris (73)

Shepherd's Center of Greater Tupelo
Tupelo, MS

**Gratitude for opening the door to
independence**

Dorothy Kumasaki (73)

ACC Senior Services, Inc. (ACC Rides)
Sacramento, CA

Gratitude for my village of neighbors

Joan Dowd (88)

Georgetown Village
Washington, DC

**Gratitude for being able to resume
my former lifestyle**

Josephine Delmonte (91)

SPRYE
Rye, NY

Gratitude for the service we need

Mary Tatnall (88)

Surrey Services for Seniors
Wayne, PA

Gratitude for being able to do what I do

Lorraine R. Duryea (67)

Rides for Ridgefield
Ridgefield, CT

Gratitude for giving me peace of mind

Gordon Gee (65)

Brandywine Village Network
Newark, DE

Gratitude for my smooth road to recovery

Cora Concepcion (56)

Drivers for Survivors
Newark, CA

Story of Excellence Winner

**Gratitude for the big red bow that ties
everything together**

David Bubser (85)

RideConnect
Bedford Hills, NY

**Gratitude for no longer having to
walk everywhere**

Wilberta Davis (84)

Natick Council on Aging, Volunteer
Transportation Program
Natick, MA

Gratitude for such an amazing organization

Darrell Opperman (58)

Molly's Angels Transportation Program
Napa, CA

Gratitude for a very special service

Ethel Sugarberg (97)

JFS Patient Navigators Program
Framingham, MA

**Gratitude for giving us a lifeline
to independence**

Shirley Odou (86)

Heart of the Valley
Santa Clara, CA

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for the gift of freedom and control

Joanne McNamara (69)

Care-A-Van
Maple Rapids, MI

**Gratitude for the added benefit of
free rides**

Fiona Holland (81)

The Senior Connection's Senior Rides
Gaithersburg, MD

**Gratitude for friends who are as important
as the rides**

Janet Wright (85)

NEST (North East Seattle Together)
Seattle, WA

Gratitude for freeing us from worry

Betty J. Downey (68)

Helping Hands of Henderson
Henderson, NV

Gratitude for the village lifesaver

Helen Whitcraft (67)

Capital City Village
Austin, TX

**Gratitude for no longer being
a stranger in paradise**

Richard Parisi (83)

Wheels
Groveland, CA

Gratitude for life beyond the walls

Kitty Hall (85)

Pasadena Village
Pasadena, CA

Gratitude for the blessing of having friends

Lera Lumbley (95)

Drive a Senior-Senior Access
Round Rock, TX

Gratitude for your "hearts of gold"

Program Passenger (65)

On the Go's Rides & Smiles Service
Rancho Penasquitos, CA

Gratitude for the freedom to get where

I want to go

Deborah West (55)

SAINT Volunteer Transportation
Fort Collins, CO

Story of Excellence Winner

Gratitude for the answer to my prayers

Michael VanGelder (94)

Shepherd's Center of Western Fairfax County
Centreville, VA

Appendix III

INDEX: ORGANIZATIONS SERVING THESE PASSENGERS (Organized by State)

Arizona

Eastside Neighbors Volunteer Program
Tucson, AZ
Y OPAS
Phoenix, AZ

California

A1AA Volunteer Driver Program
Eureka, CA
ACC Senior Services, Inc. (ACC Rides)
Sacramento, CA
Drivers for Survivors
Newark, CA
Heart of the Valley
Santa Clara, CA
Molly's Angels Transportation Program
Napa, CA
On the Go's Rides & Smiles Service
Rancho Penasquitos, CA
Pasadena Village
Pasadena, CA
Wheels
Groveland, CA

Colorado

Seniors' Resource Center Volunteer
Driver Program
Littleton, CO
SAINT Volunteer Transportation
Fort Collins, CO

Connecticut

Rides for Ridgefield
Ridgefield, CT

Delaware

Brandywine Village Network
Newark, DE

Hawaii

Na Hoaloaha Senior Escort Transportation
Kihei, HI

Indiana

The Shepherd's Center Community
Caring Program
Fishers, IN

Maryland

Northwest Neighbors Connecting (NNC)
Baltimore, MD
Chevy Chase At Home
Chevy Chase, MD
Village of Takoma Park
Takoma Park, MD
Neighbor Ride
Elkridge, MD
The Senior Connection's Senior Rides
Gaithersburg, MD

Massachusetts

Lee Council on Aging and Senior Center
Lee, MA
Newton at Home
Newton, MA
Natick Council on Aging —
Volunteer Transportation Program
Natick, MA
JFS Patient Navigators Program
Framingham, MA
Life Path/Rides for Health
Turners Falls, MA

Michigan

Care-A-Van
Maple Rapids, MI

Minnesota

Elder Network Transportation Program
Rochester, MN

Mississippi

Shepherd's Center of Greater Tupelo
Tupelo, MS

New Jersey

Interfaith Caregivers Haddonfield
Haddon Heights, NJ

New Mexico

Catholic Charities
Albuquerque, NM

New York

RideConnect
Bedford Hills, NY
Rural Transit Service
Orchard Park, NY
Jewish Family Service (JFS) of Orange County,
Friendly Visitor Program
Middletown, NY

Care Links of Southern Saratoga County
Ballston Spa, NY

SPRYE
Rye, NY

Nevada

Helping Hands of Henderson
Henderson, NV

North Carolina

The Shepherd's Center of Kernersville
Transportation Program
Kernersville, NC

North Dakota

Volunteer Caregivers for the Elderly
Bismarck, ND

Ohio

Faith in Action
Massillon, OH
Village Connections
Columbus, OH

Pennsylvania

ElderNet of Lower Merion and Narberth
Wynnewood, PA
ShareCare Faith in Action Transportation Program
Bethlehem, PA
Surrey Services for Seniors
Wayne, PA

Tennessee

FGRS Way to Go
Fairfield Glade, TN
SMiles
Maryville, TN

Texas

Drive a Senior Northwest
Austin, TX
Capital City Village
Austin, TX
Drive a Senior-Senior Access
Round Rock, TX

Virginia

Loudoun Volunteer Caregivers
Leesburg, VA
Shepherd's Center of Western Fairfax County
Centreville, VA

Washington

The Mustard Seed Project
Lakebay, WA
NEST (North East Seattle Together)
Seattle, WA

Washington, D.C.

Georgetown Village
Washington, D.C.

Wisconsin

Faith in Action within Interfaith
Senior Programs
Waukesha, WI
Pepin County
Arkansaw, WI
Volunteer Escort Program
Oconto, WI
RSVP of Dane County, Inc.
Driver Services Program
Stoughton, WI
Seniors Volunteering for Seniors
Janesville, WI
Door-Tran
Sturgeon Bay, WI
Interfaith Caregivers of Washington County
West Bend, WI

Appendix IV

RESOURCES

- (1) The Older Population. (November 11, 2011) 2010 Census Bureau Briefs. U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.
- (2) Foley, Heimovitz, Guralnik, and Brock. Driving Life Expectancy of Persons Aged 70 Years and Older in the United States. (*American Journal of Public Health*, 2002) August, 92 (8) 1284-1289.
- (3) National Volunteer Transportation Center and Toyota Supported 2016 STAR Awards (146 volunteer driver programs applied for a STAR Award. Each application included a story written by a passenger. Additionally, each application included considerable data about the program, its passengers, and its volunteer drivers).
- (4) Independent Sector. (\$23.56 value of a volunteer hour in 2015). Data reported by STAR Award applicants was data from their operations in 2015.
- (5) 2006 national survey of 714 volunteer drivers. The Beverly Foundation, Pasadena, CA.
- (6) Aging in Place: A State Survey of Livability Policies and Practices. National Conference of State Legislatures and AARP Public Policy Institute. February 2, 2012.



NVTC



CTAA

TOYOTA

