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# **VOLUNTEER DRIVER RECRUITMENT and RETENTION EXPERIENCE and PRACTICE**

**A Handbook Prepared by  
The National Volunteer Transportation Center**

**Presented by Toyota**



## OVERVIEW

*Volunteer drivers are the heart and soul of a volunteer driver program, and although they are said to be hardest volunteers to recruit, once you've got them...you've got them.*

Volunteer driver program managers face a variety of recruitment challenges, use a variety of recruitment methods, target a variety of people, recruit through a variety of organizations, create a variety of messages, use a variety of strategies, and communicate their “ask” in a variety of ways. Many of these same managers also indicate that volunteer drivers are the hardest volunteers to recruit. However, thousands of volunteers are recruited to drive passengers and in many instances they drive them in their own vehicles. At the same time, managers also indicate that volunteer drivers are not difficult to retain and once you've got them, you've got them.

Who is targeted for recruitment? What organizations are involved? How do organizations package their message? What kinds of methods and strategies are developed? How and why do volunteer drivers continue to drive? These and other volunteer recruitment and retention issues are addressed by volunteer driver programs across the country. Each volunteer driver program should pick and choose the ideas that will be most helpful in recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers.

The theme of this handbook is that volunteers are the key to the success of volunteer driver programs, and thus their recruitment and retention is an essential management activity of any volunteer driver program. Because of their diversity, there is no one best way to recruit and retain them. However, their diversity in organization and operation is taken into consideration as the contents of the handbook were generated from information provided by driver programs that have flourished over time. One of the primary reasons for their survival is that they have successfully recruited and retained volunteer drivers.

As you read this handbook, you will see that it not only addresses concepts and practices of volunteer driver recruitment and retention, it also presents successful methods and practice opportunities for the reader to develop recruitment and retention strategies.

*This handbook was inspired by volunteer driver programs across the country that contributed practical, experiential information related to volunteer driver recruitment and retention. Its contents were developed from their experiences and recommendations. The National Volunteer Transportation Center (NVTC) is especially indebted to the many volunteer driver programs that submitted applications for a 2015 STAR Award. The 2015 STAR Awards program, an annual program that celebrates volunteer driver program excellence, was undertaken by the NVTC and presented by Toyota. Dr. Helen Kerschner, Director of the NVTC prepared its contents.*



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## Part 1

# VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

## (Who They Are, Why They Drive, What They Do)

*Volunteer drivers often are referred to as “the heart and soul” of a volunteer driver program; and are identified by many program managers as the key to its success.*

What sometimes begins with driving a family member, neighbor, or friend often segues into driving as a volunteer activity for a formal volunteer driver program. In other words, what might begin as an act of altruism can become a volunteer service for the neighborhood or community. Many people who volunteer to drive for a formal transportation program have characteristics similar to volunteers in general.

### 1-A. Who They Are

In a 2006 Beverly Foundation survey of more than seven hundred volunteer drivers, respondents indicated they volunteered to help others, to do something meaningful and to give back. They indicated the reasons they volunteered for long periods of time were related to satisfaction from helping people, feeling needed, and getting to know the passengers. Some mentioned they were happy to be able to give back, donate time rather than money and receive appreciation and recognition. The results of a 2006 Beverly Foundation survey of seven hundred volunteer drivers indicate that the respondents were well-educated older adults, who had high levels of education and income.\*

- 64% of them had driven 50+ years.
- the majority were age 65+
- a majority had graduated from college
- a high percentage had annual household incomes of more than \$60,000
- 60% had incomes over \$30,000 and 19% had incomes of more than \$75,000

These volunteer drivers came from all walks of life (homemakers, empty nesters, students, retirees, drivers of expensive cars and utility vans, CEOs, hourly employees, people who are mobile and people who have physical limitations). They also included people who go to church every Sunday and people who drive someone else to church every Sunday.

### 1-B. What They Do

While it often is assumed that the primary role of volunteer drivers is to take people to their destinations, one of the more important services many of them provide is assistance to passengers. The data from the 2015 STAR Awards application\* indicate that they provide considerable assistance in the form of:

1. stay at the destination (84%);
2. door-to-door (83%);
3. door-through-door (79%); and
4. curb-to-curb (68%).

These types of assistance often are the very reason for the existence of volunteer driver programs. Why? Because public, paratransit, and taxi services generally cannot provide such labor-intensive and time-consuming supportive service to passengers.

In addition to providing assistance they often “go the extra mile” with the socialization they offer passengers during and sometimes after the ride. This socialization might include listening to the passenger’s stories, sharing information about current interests and past experiences,

\* The 2015 STAR Awards Program was an initiative of the NVTC and presented by Toyota. The NVTC and Toyota also will partner to organize and present the 2016 STAR Awards.

enjoying a meal, making special visits to the home, and sometimes extending their extra mile to include distant family members. It is the assistance provided by volunteer drivers and the socialization that many volunteer drivers provide that make volunteer drivers an attractive option for many older adults. The volunteer driver program also can benefit because drivers often become advocates for the passengers by serving as an extra set of eyes and ears to recognize declining health or other areas of need.

Many volunteer driver programs provide services in addition to volunteer transportation. Thus, their volunteer drivers often provide non-transportation services such as volunteer activities in the office; handy person service; caregiver respite; food delivery; and home repair.

### 1-C. Why They Drive

The Beverly Foundation survey results referenced earlier indicated that volunteer drivers tend to volunteer for long periods of time because of the satisfaction they receive from helping people, doing something meaningful, feeling needed, giving back, getting to know the passengers, receiving appreciation and recognition and being able to donate time rather than money.

Their least frequently mentioned satisfiers were related to personal habits and logistics such as having a regular schedule, being able to drive their personal vehicle, getting out of the house, passengers being on time, and learning new driving skills. Only a very small number of respondents associated their volunteer driving "with a sense of duty."\*

Volunteer drivers surveyed also indicated they contributed considerable time. For example, 10% of the survey respondents reported that they drove less than one hour a week, 55% 1–5 hours, 19% 6–10 hours, 10% 11–20 hours, 6% more than 20 hours and 10% less than one hour. Only 13% had volunteered to drive for less than 1 year, 33% had volunteered for 1–3 years, 24% had volunteered for 4–6 years, and 30% had volunteered for 7 or more years. The people who volunteer, the activities they undertake, the satisfaction they receive and time and years they contribute as volunteer drivers provide some general guidance into the recruitment and retention of volunteer drivers.

*\* The 2015 STAR Awards Program was an initiative of the NVTC and presented by Toyota. The NVTC and Toyota also will partner to organize and present the 2016 STAR Awards.*

*\*\* In 2004 and 2005, the Beverly Foundation of Pasadena, California surveyed 714 volunteer drivers, all of whom provided transportation to older adults. Their responses provided considerable information on the background, experience, and attitude of volunteer drivers in America. The report was prepared in 2006.*



## Part 2

# VOLUNTEER DRIVER RECRUITMENT

*The maxim that “volunteer drivers are the hardest volunteers to recruit, but once you’ve got them, you’ve got them,” was mentioned earlier. Validation of the second part of the maxim is supported by many of the points made in this section of the handbook.*

*But why would volunteer drivers be the hardest volunteers to recruit?*

### The Hardest Volunteers to Recruit

The literature tells us that many people volunteer in response to a request from a friend, an advertisement in the newspaper, a message in the church bulletin, an announcement on the radio or TV, or a presentation at a meeting. Volunteer driver programs across the country use some or all of these recruitment methods. However, recruiting someone to drive a passenger is not always simple. People who are asked to be volunteer drivers are known to offer a variety of excuses for not volunteering (a reluctance to use their own car; unwillingness to drive people they don’t know; concern about the cost for gas, time requirements for driving people, fear of not knowing what to do in an emergency; fear of the possibility of a crash, or of cancellation of insurance or premium increases). These and other concerns must be addressed when recruiting volunteer drivers. However, addressing concerns is only one of the recruitment challenges.

The following comment says a lot about the challenge of recruiting volunteer drivers. As one manager commented: “Volunteering with children, puppies and ‘pretty’ causes is an easy recruiting process because who doesn’t love children and puppies? But, ask someone to drive, and in many cases the hackles come up — questions like ‘what about the liability?’ and ‘You mean I have to put a stranger in my car.’” Such comments are not uncommon and indeed there is a big difference in driving people and driving puppies. So who are the most difficult volunteers to recruit? Below is a list of people who are difficult to recruit because they are...

- *concerned about liability*
- *overcommitted to other volunteer activities*
- *reluctant to submit to background checks*
- *unaware of what “we” do*
- *not members of organizations or groups*
- *younger retirees who are working full time*
- *“snow birds”*
- *wary of making a commitment to volunteer*
- *caring for small children*
- *afraid to put a stranger in their car*

Several additional noteworthy comments about the challenges of recruiting people to volunteer to drive are listed below.

- “It is especially tough to find people who are available to drive during weekdays, which are peak demand times for drivers.”
- “We are in competition with all agencies in this county that serve seniors in some way.”
- “It can be very difficult to recruit people who have full-time jobs and also have children.”
- “The real hurdle is getting prospective volunteers to complete and turn in all our forms.”
- “There is a lack of awareness about our program and what we do.”
- “It is especially difficult when approaching individuals or groups we don’t know or who aren’t aware of our reputation.”

- “Many younger people we used to rely on to volunteer are now working.”
- “People who are recently retired are often unsure what they want to do in their retirement.”
- “The extensive background checking and credentialing make it really difficult.”
- “Some who plan to volunteer quit when we start the training activities.”

## 2-A. Volunteer Recruitment Challenges

There are volunteer driver program managers who say the size of the program and the number of rides it can provide depends on the number of available drivers, not the size of the program’s budget. Some also say that the driver/passenger ratio is one driver for every two passengers.

Although some volunteer driver programs indicate they have no difficulty recruiting volunteer drivers, the majority indicate numerous challenges. What follows are volunteer driver recruitment challenges identified by the 2015 STAR Awards Applicants. Examples include an increased demand for transportation services, increased competition for volunteers, personal schedules and workforce issues, a general lack of information available in the community and preferences for driving food versus driving people.

### The Top Ten Volunteer Driver Recruitment Challenges

- *reluctance to use personal vehicle*
- *unwillingness to drive a stranger*
- *concern about the cost of fuel*
- *preference for less frequent commitment*
- *preference not to drive in an urban area*
- *time requirement for providing assistance*
- *fear of what to do in an emergency*
- *worry about the possibility of a crash*
- *alarm about insurance being canceled*
- *potential liability for injury or death*

## Two Descriptions of Challenges

### The Real Problem Can Be Multiple Obstacles

A frequently cited challenge is that the needs of passengers and demand for rides surpass the number of people willing to volunteer to drive. People often cannot afford to retire today or they feel they have to retire at a later age. Young families need two incomes and often both parents are working. Areas with extremely high taxes and high gas prices can be a burden to volunteers who drive their own vehicles. Some volunteers are concerned about the risks of using their own vehicles, despite supplemental insurance and other risk management strategies. Some families focus on their own caregiver needs, and don’t see the potential of being a part of a community-wide solution. At times, the problem appears bigger than the solution.

### The Seasonal Recruitment Challenge

According to one applicant: “Recruitment is a problem in that we lose about 50% of our volunteers in the summer months. It is also a problem because we could do so much more and expand our programs if we had more volunteers.”

*See Appendix #1 [2-A – Pages 20 & 21]*

*Narratives: Volunteer Driver Recruitment Challenges*

## 2-B. Volunteer Recruitment Venues

Applicants to the 2015 STAR Awards program were asked to identify their three most important volunteer recruitment venues. Some identified the “go to” organizations they targeted in exceptionally general terms (the general public, people reached by personal contact, and no particular organizations). However, the group as a whole identified a wide range of venues from which they recruited (or at least tried to recruit) volunteer drivers.

## The Top Ten "Go To" Recruitment Venues

- *the faith community*
- *retirees and retiree groups*
- *community service and civic groups*
- *education programs and institutions*
- *community events*
- *senior and community services*
- *neighborhood and community groups*
- *volunteer and information centers*
- *chambers of commerce*
- *job boards at senior centers and colleges*

## The Most Successful Venues

The venues that appeared to produce the most successful results were:

- churches and faith communities
- RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program)
- health and senior fairs
- civic organizations
- public events
- senior centers
- local volunteer centers

See Appendix #1 (2-B – Pages 21 & 22)

Narratives: Volunteer Driver Recruitment Venues

## 2-C. Favorite Recruitment "Tag Lines"

Quite often it is the "tag line," slogan, catchphrase or group of words that seem to get the most attention. Almost all corporations have catchphrases, slogans or tag lines such as "The Happiest Place on Earth," (Disneyland); "Just do it," (Nike); "The pause that refreshes," (Coca Cola); "Reach out and touch someone," (AT&T); and "Let's go places," (Toyota).

### Frequently Mentioned Volunteer Recruitment Tag Lines

- *it's more than just a ride*
- *neighbors helping neighbors*
- *it's the journey, not just the destination*
- *it's a ride...but much more*
- *we drive Ms. Daisy*
- *we help seniors thrive*
- *give the gift of a lift*
- *got an hour, give an hour*
- *give the gift of you*
- *drive-give-serve*

### Tips for Creating Successful Tag Lines

- *keep it simple*
- *speak directly to the benefit*
- *tell a story*
- *explain your service*
- *focus the message*
- *paint a "picture" of what you do*
- *leverage a play on words*
- *keep it short and sweet*
- *say enough, but not too much*
- *get some outside help*

See Appendix #1 (2-C - Page 23)

Additional Volunteer Driver Recruitment Tag Lines



## 2-D. Successful Recruitment Methods

Many applicants indicated the demands for their services had increased and they needed to be innovative in their recruitment methods.

### Ten Successful Volunteer Driver Recruitment Methods

- *board involvement in recruitment*
- *emphasis on "pay it forward"*
- *driver involvement in "the sell"*
- *reimbursement for mileage*
- *meeting with community influencers*
- *scheduling flexibility*
- *software support*
- *comprehensive orientation*
- *ensuring maintenance of reputation*
- *the personal sell*

### Admirable Volunteer Driver Recruitment Methods

Below are examples of volunteer driver programs that emphasize volunteer drivers as recruiters of other volunteer drivers.

- **Example of Volunteers as Recruiters**

"We find that volunteer drivers often have had a personal experience with an older adult who was very special to them and want to give back to another older person. These volunteers have a deep understanding and appreciation of the inherent value and importance of the service they are providing, and tend to stay committed to the program for years. They, like other volunteer drivers, are clearly the best spokespersons for the organization and for inspiring members of our community."

- **Example of Existing Volunteer Drivers**  
**"Stepping Up to the Plate "**

This year we experienced a 41% increase in the number of rides we provided over last year. As a result of the increased demand for our services, in addition to the lack of funding for additional staff, we are not able to devote the time needed to successfully develop and implement a recruitment plan. Much to our amazement and delight, this past year, we have managed to nearly double our monthly ridership with the same 21 volunteer drivers. This can only be attributed to the dedication and commitment of our volunteer drivers and the diligence of our office staff in efficiently scheduling the trip requests."

*See Appendix #1 (2-D - Page 24)*

*Ten Volunteer Driver Recruitment Methods*



## Part 3

# VOLUNTEER DRIVER RETENTION

Part 3 is about the second part of maxim mentioned earlier: *“once you’ve got them, you’ve got them.”* It begins with an introduction of the concept and practice of volunteer retention. The discussion emphasizes information provided by the 2015 STAR Awards applicants and includes: how long volunteer drivers continue to drive; the reasons they continue to drive; the reasons they do not continue to drive; what programs do to support volunteer driver retention; and other factors related to retention.

### 3-A. Volunteer Driver Retention

In the literature, retention of volunteers often is associated with personal issues or program management practices. For example, one important reason for poor retention is said to be because of changing personal or family needs. However, management practices also can impact negatively on volunteer retention. Examples are poor use of a volunteer’s time or talents; poorly defined volunteer tasks; lack of infrastructure support or administrative practices; and/or poor supervision and communication. Organizations that have a large percentage of volunteers under age 24 are also said to have low rates of retention.

Alternately, high volunteer retention rates appear to be related to activities that focus on the volunteer or what programs do for their volunteers to have a good experience. Such activities include recognition, training and professional development, screening and matching. In other words, a climate that welcomes and encourages volunteers. Programs that use volunteers to recruit other volunteers and enlist volunteers as “spokespersons” also appear to be better able to retain volunteers.

Many respondents to the STAR Awards application appeared to have fairly high rates of volunteer retention and thus may be in agreement with the volunteer retention maxim *“once you’ve got them, you’ve got them.”* Perhaps one of the important reasons is satisfaction with volunteering to drive (helping people, feeling needed, getting to know the riders, and donating time rather than money) all of which were mentioned earlier.

Below are comments made by 2015 STAR Awards applicants about why they said they were able to retain their volunteer drivers.

*“Our volunteer driver retention is extraordinary and it is not monetary rewards that motivate them to stay. Due to funding restrictions, we cannot provide tangible rewards so we have learned to be creative in showing our appreciation for all that they do.”*

*“I have found the primary reasons that they [volunteer drivers] stay are the opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others, and the relationships that are built with their fellow neighbors.”*

*“For the past five years, we have maintained over a ninety-five percent [95%] success rate in filling requests. Rather than simply providing services, we like to think of our organization as promoting a ‘neighbor helping neighbor’ model of care, keeping our community as healthy as possible while also supporting relationships among volunteers and clients. These relationships and dedication to the mission have led to a sturdy retention rate of volunteers.”*

The number of years volunteer drivers continue to drive varies. However, in the Beverly Foundation survey of volunteer drivers mentioned earlier, not only did volunteers drive for many years, they also contributed considerable time. For example only 13% had volunteered to drive for less than 1 year, 33% had volunteered for 1–3 years, 24% had volunteered for 4–6 years, and 30% had volunteered for 7 or more years.

### 3-B. Volunteer Driver Longevity

The STAR Awards applicants indicated that volunteer drivers are the heart and soul of a volunteer driver program. This is illustrated by the following comment. "The commitment level of our volunteers is the reason for our success." At the same time, their accounts of volunteer driver retention varied greatly.

#### 10 Examples of Volunteer Driver Longevity

- *5–12 years*
- *average of 10 years*
- *54% for 5 years*
- *12% 10+ years*
- *1 volunteer 25 years*
- *only lost 2 drivers in past 5 years*
- *retained 80% of drivers 4 years*
- *80% 7+ years*
- *minimal turnover*
- *we had 1 volunteer for 15 years*

*See Appendix #2 [3-B – Page 25]  
How Long Volunteers Continue to Drive*

### 3-C. Reasons Volunteer Drivers Continue to Drive

Although there is considerable evidence that volunteer recruitment can be challenging, the satisfaction that volunteers receive suggests one of the most important reasons they continue to drive for long periods of time. Previously documented reasons given by volunteer drivers include: helping people, feeling needed, getting to know the passengers, donating time rather than money, and appreciation and recognition. Below are reasons the STAR Awards applicants said their volunteers continued to drive.

### Top Ten Reasons Volunteers Continue To Drive

- *dedication and contribution*
- *know they are making a difference*
- *formed bonds with passengers*
- *socialization and friendship*
- *meeting new people*
- *opportunity to serve seniors*
- *relationships with passengers*
- *get more than they give*
- *enjoyment of driving someone*
- *sense of worth*

*See Appendix #2 [3-C – Pages 25 & 26]  
Reasons Volunteers Continue to Drive*

### 3-D. Reasons Volunteer Drivers Stop Driving

We know from information provided earlier in this section that poor retention can be related to poor use of a volunteer's time or talents, lack of clarity in defining volunteer tasks, lack of infrastructure support or administrative practices, poor supervision and/or communication.

#### 10 Reasons Volunteer Drivers Stop Driving

- *older drivers age out of driving*
- *move away from community*
- *not used as a driver very often*
- *change in the work schedule*
- *burn out because too few drivers*
- *become ill or die*
- *poor match with a passenger*
- *volunteer somewhere else*
- *sell the car*
- *feel unappreciated*

Other reasons volunteer driver programs indicated their volunteer drivers stopped driving were:

1. fear of the liability of driving seniors in their personal cars;
2. received a point on their driving record and were not eligible to continue as a volunteer driver;
3. wanted something temporary;
4. were over-committed in other aspects of their life; and
5. seasonal changes.

Some program managers also mentioned that they tended to have lower retention rates of younger volunteers.

*See Appendix #2 (3-D – Pages 26 & 27)  
Reasons Volunteers Stop Driving*

### 3-E. Volunteer Driver Retention Methods

Applicants who were successful in retaining volunteer drivers generally attributed it to their ability to organize them well and recognize them for their contributions.

#### 10 Successful Retention Methods

- *matching and pairing*
- *managing the volunteer load*
- *offering praise*
- *keeping them busy, but not too busy*
- *protecting them as neighbors*
- *good rapport with staff*
- *offering several volunteer opportunities*
- *involving them in recruitment*
- *knowing and meeting their expectations*
- *recognizing that they are stakeholders*

#### Admirable Volunteer Driver Retention Methods

Below are two examples of volunteer driver programs that have admirable volunteer driver retention rates by emphasizing the dedication to neighbors, scheduling flexibility, and volunteer driver/passenger matching.

*“We have built a cadre of approximately 107 volunteers, of whom 40 volunteers began with us in 2010. Most of those original volunteers are still actively involved with our program, as both members and volunteers. Another 67 neighbors have been recruited along the way through vigorous outreach activities. The value of professional staff administration of the process cannot be underestimated. We protect our volunteers and our members by maintaining both a general liability insurance policy and an additional policy for drivers. The village model allows volunteers (many of whom are members) to get to know their neighbors on a friendly level. We encourage the development of this connection through care teams. Our volunteer drivers become dedicated to members and dedicated to one another. This is a significant factor in volunteer retention and evidence for why the Village model works, particularly for meeting transportation needs with Village volunteers.”*

*“Once people realize the need in our area and if they have the time, we sign them up. Most of our volunteers are retirees and we don’t overload them. They tell us what days and hours they are available, how many trips they are comfortable making in a week and the distance they are willing to drive. All medical appointments and shopping trips are local. Most of the time we will assign the same driver to the client. We also recognize them for their contributions. This way they form a bond with the clients and with us.”*

*See Appendix #2 (3-E – Page 27)  
Methods for Promoting Volunteer Driver Retention*

## Part 4

# VOLUNTEER DRIVER RECRUITMENT and RETENTION STRATEGIES

### 4-A. Volunteer Driver Recruitment Strategies

Volunteer driver recruitment strategies include plans or campaigns for recruiting volunteer drivers. Such efforts may or may not be carefully planned, but their purpose is to achieve a specific end. Below are the top ten tactics identified by Star Award applicants.

#### 10 Volunteer Recruitment Strategies

- *word of mouth*
- *media communication*
- *community presentations*
- *one-on-one community outreach*
- *direct appeals to congregations*
- *cause-related recruitment*
- *brief and positive presentations*
- *use volunteer driver as a story teller*
- *our two-step recruitment method*
- *holiday recruitment*

#### Examples of the Impact of Good Volunteer Recruitment

- **Satisfied Volunteers**  
“Our volunteer drivers tell us they are very satisfied and very few accept mileage reimbursement.”
- **Satisfied Passengers**  
“We match volunteer drivers and passengers, and they often become good friends.”
- **Recruitment of Friends**  
“Many of our volunteer drivers recruit their friends and neighbors and even family members as volunteer drivers.”

- **Low Turnover**

“We sometimes have wait lists for new volunteers because turnover is so rare.”

- **Minimal Staff Time**

“Our volunteer drivers and passengers recruit many of our volunteer drivers and we spend very little time recruiting volunteer drivers.”

#### An Admirable Volunteer Driver Recruitment Strategy

Below is an example of a volunteer driver program that uses a variety of methods for recruiting its volunteer drivers:

*“The most active volunteers are those who have been referred to the organization by current volunteers. For this reason, we host a monthly ‘Volunteer Hour,’ where we encourage long-standing volunteers to attend and provide feedback to new inquiring volunteers. Furthermore, the ‘Volunteer Hour’ serves as an open forum to address concerns and issues that may arise on transports, which can encourage conversation and help strengthen the policies and procedures of the program. Finally, the accomplishments from the previous month are shared and celebrated, which provides encouragement and excites new and long-standing volunteers as well as board members, staff and office volunteers.”*

**See Appendix #3 (4-A – Pages 28 & 29)  
Ten Successful Recruitment Strategies**

## 4-B. Volunteer Driver Retention Strategies

It was noted earlier that a variety of management practices can impact volunteer retention. Volunteer driver programs appear to use a variety of similar management strategies for promoting retention: a streamlined application process, volunteer training support by staff, providing knowledge of the organization's mission, creating meaningful and flexible assignments, and matching passengers with drivers. High volunteer driver retention rates also appear to be related to what programs do to ensure volunteers have a good experience.

The most frequently mentioned retention strategy is volunteer recognition. Examples include hosting recognition events for the volunteer drivers and sending cards, letters, and personal thank you notes from staff and passengers. Programs also pay homage to their volunteers by matching and/or scheduling volunteer drivers and passengers, promoting bonding between drivers with passengers, empowering the drivers to manage their own schedules, and maintaining ongoing communication with their drivers. In other words, successful volunteer driver retention can result from a climate that welcomes and encourages volunteers. Although programs are initially responsible for the driver passenger relationships, bonding between passengers and drivers and the development of "esprit de corps" may be a natural result of the experience of riding in a car together and enjoying the experience. Finally, it also should be noted, programs that use volunteers to recruit other volunteers "one-on-one" and enlist volunteers as "spokespersons" often say they are better able to retain volunteers.

### 10 Strategies for Retaining Volunteer Drivers

- *creating flexibility in assignments*
- *ongoing communication with drivers*
- *enabling driver/passenger bonding*
- *recognizing the volunteer drivers*
- *organizing for management support*
- *providing stipends to drivers*
- *encouraging volunteer satisfaction*
- *communication and appreciation*
- *organizing for driver empowerment*
- *a project management approach*

### An Admirable Volunteer Driver Retention Strategy

*"Once we 'have them' we take their 'care and feeding' with great attention; doing articles on them, sending hand signed birthday cards, making them jam, etc. Two things that especially seem to make folks shine are:*

- 1. passing on any 'gratitude and praise' quotes that we hear from the riders, and*
- 2. having 3 informal lunches a year where they can exchange best practices and give/get peer support. Once a year, we host a huge holiday volunteer appreciation party complete with music, awards, themes and so on!*

*Finally, each newly trained volunteer gets their own baseball hat (to emphasize TEAM spirit), VIP Rides T-shirt and an offer to reimburse them. Few asked to be reimbursed but they all know they can be if they wish."*

**See Appendix #3 (4-B - Pages 29 & 31)  
Ten Successful Retention Strategies**



## Part 5

# VOLUNTEER DRIVER RECRUITMENT and VOLUNTEER RETENTION PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

The following practice opportunities provide examples of each topic discussed in the handbook and invites you, as a recruitment planner, to specify your preferred example(s). The outcome will be volunteer driver recruitment and retention strategies.

### Volunteer Driver Recruitment Practice

#### 5-A "Go To" Recruitment Venues

##### Examples of Venues

- *the faith community*
- *retirees and retiree groups*
- *community service and civic groups*
- *education programs and institutions*
- *community events*

##### Your Venue Examples

#### 5-B Recruitment Tag Lines

##### Examples of Tag Lines

- *it's more than just a ride*
- *it's neighbors helping neighbors*
- *it's the journey, not just the destination*
- *it's a ride...but much more*
- *we drive Ms. Daisy*

##### Your Tag Line Examples

#### 5-C Recruitment Methods

##### Examples of Recruitment Methods

- *board involvement in recruitment*
- *emphasis on "pay it forward"*
- *driver involvement in "the sell"*
- *reimbursement for mileage*
- *meeting with community influencers*

##### Your Recruitment Examples

## Volunteer Driver Retention Practice

### 5-D Reasons for Driver Retention

#### Examples of Reasons They Continue to Drive

- *opportunity to serve seniors*
- *relationships with passengers*
- *get more than they give*
- *enjoyment of driving someone*
- *sense of worth*

#### Your Examples of Reasons They Continue to Drive

### 5-E Reasons Drivers Stop Driving

#### Examples of Reasons They Continue to Drive

- *older persons age out of driving*
- *move away from community*
- *not used as a driver very often*
- *change in the work schedule*
- *burn out because too few drivers*

#### Your Examples of Reasons They Stop Driving

### 5-F Retention Methods

#### Examples of Retention Methods

- *good rapport with bosses*
- *offering several volunteer opportunities*
- *involving them in recruitment*
- *knowing and meeting their expectations*
- *recognizing that they are stakeholders*

#### Your Examples of Retention Methods



## Volunteer Driver Recruitment Strategy

### Examples of Recruitment Strategies

- *creating flexibility in assignments*
- *ongoing communication with drivers*
- *enabling driver/passenger bonding*
- *recognizing the volunteer drivers*
- *organizing for management support*

### Your Volunteer Driver Recruitment Strategy

## Volunteer Driver Retention Strategy

### Examples of Retention Methods

- *providing stipends to drivers*
- *encouraging volunteer satisfaction*
- *communication and appreciation*
- *organizing for driver empowerment*
- *organizing for driver empowerment*

### Your Volunteer Driver Retention Strategy

# Appendices

## Appendix #1

# VOLUNTEER DRIVER RECRUITMENT

## *Challenges, Venues, Tag Lines, Successful Methods*

### **Narratives: Volunteer Driver Recruitment Challenges Reference Text Pages 6-7 (Part 2-A)**

#### **1. Competition**

"We are a small county and since transportation is such a big issue, we find ourselves competing with other non-profits (and for profits) for drivers, plus we are competing with other volunteer opportunities that don't take as much time. Also, many of the government and county grants place us in direct competition with other 'like' organizations."

#### **2. Increasing Demand for Transportation**

"With a growing population of older adults in our community, the need for rides outpaces our ability to recruit and train volunteer drivers; and although we can increase the number of hours of existing volunteers we cannot meet demand, the result may be volunteer driver burnout."

#### **3. Responsibility and Risk**

"Volunteer recruitment is a challenge because we are asking people to not only donate their time, but to drive using their own cars, help frail older adults, wait in medical offices, and call the clients to set up the ride and call to remind them about it. Some are concerned about risk and liability, the price of gas, the cost of insurance, wear and tear on their car, mileage reimbursement and winter driving."

#### **4. Driving People**

"It is easier to recruit for driving food because the public is familiar with it. They can envision exactly what will be required of them. Driving a person is a more intimate event. One really has to be ready to connect relatively closely with a stranger, at least initially. Having someone hold your arm or helping them into a vehicle is very different from handing someone a meal."

#### **5. Availability**

"Living in a rural area, we have several volunteers who are unavailable in spring or fall due to planting and harvest. We have several who are snow birds and we have many who are 'lake people' during the summer months. Additionally, there are higher demands on families because of increased work expectations, there are fewer stay-at-home parents, people are delaying retirement, and many have conflicting responsibilities of caring for aging parents and young children. There also is a general lack of interest in providing rides on weekends, during the early morning, after hours and on holidays."

#### **6. Retirement and Workforce Issues**

"In the past, the prime age of volunteers was seniors, and recent retirees, but today people are now working into their 70s instead of retiring in their 60s and cannot be a full-time employee and drive during the weekday. Thus, we are limited to retired people, stay-at-home parents with kids in school and some graduate students. Also, there are many other ways for retirees to become involved in our community."

#### **7. Communication**

"It is harder to reach potential volunteers through newspapers and other daily printed media, as many printed communications have shifted to an online platform. Additionally, funding for recruitment is low which therefore makes it difficult to advertise about the program and the volunteering opportunity."

#### **8. Time and Money**

"We are a small paid staff with little funding for advertising. Most of our staff time is geared towards direct services for our clients and it is difficult to carve out the time to recruit. Additionally, there is expense of time but also background checks and conversations via phone/e-mail, etc."

### 9. Volunteer Drivers vs. Passengers

"Most groups we meet with are groups of retired elderly that want to use our services and not volunteer. Many of our volunteers are now becoming our clients."

### 10. Screening

"We carefully screen potential volunteers to ensure that they are capable driver. Due to this, we have had to turn some volunteers away or provide them with other volunteer options."

### Other Volunteer Recruitment Challenges

- convincing volunteers to give up some time and freedom
- helping people realize they have time to volunteer a few hours each week
- difficulty getting in front of people to tell them about the service, needs of passengers
- lack of knowledge and understanding about the importance of transportation, what our program does, why it's important, and the reason we need volunteer drivers.
- requirements for driving long distances in a large service area
- lack of interest because of required safety training and monitoring required
- assumption that people can use public transportation services
- difficulty in conveying the need until it affects people personally
- some would rather give a friend a ride and not do it through a volunteer program, even though they could get reimbursed for mileage and have additional insurance

## Narratives: Volunteer Driver Recruitment Venues Reference Text Page 7 (Part 2-B)

### 1. The Faith Community

At least 100 mentions were made of various religious organizations and groups, the majority of which were churches. However, applicants often specified these recruitment venues by identifying area churches, houses of worship, Christian congregations, Catholic parishes, synagogues, Shepherd's Centers, Faith in Action groups, clergy associations, church members, religious organizations, partner churches, Jewish Family Services, Catholic Charities, and neighborhood churches. It should be mentioned that a large number of STAR Awards applicants were organized by a faith community group.

**2. Retirees and Retiree Groups** received more than 50 mentions which included retirees in general, recently retired seniors, retired professionals, retired educators, retired nurses, and retired law enforcement personnel. Other retiree groups included senior groups, organizations for people age 55+, 55+ adult communities, and AARP.

**3. Community Service Organizations and Civic Organizations** received more than 45 mentions. They included the United Way, the YMCA, local community leadership organizations, local community network organizations, local community service clubs, civic groups, the community justice network, and the Rotary, the Lions, the Kiwanis, the Elks, and veterans organizations like VFW.

**4. Program Volunteers and Word of Mouth** received more than 45 mentions. The most frequently mentioned category was volunteer drivers recruiting volunteer drivers. Subcategories included referrals from current volunteers, referrals from existing drivers, volunteers speaking at local clubs and organizations, volunteers recruiting their friends and neighbors, volunteers recruiting their personal social circles, and volunteers recruiting friends at work. Word of mouth included recruitment of board members, referrals from current and former passengers, and families of passengers.

**5. Senior Service Organizations and Groups** received more than 40 mentions. Senior service organizations included senior centers, Councils on Aging (COA), Friends of COA, aging service and elder service organizations, county and city senior and elderly service departments, senior housing and independent living centers, human service agencies, caregiver organizations, and home care organizations.

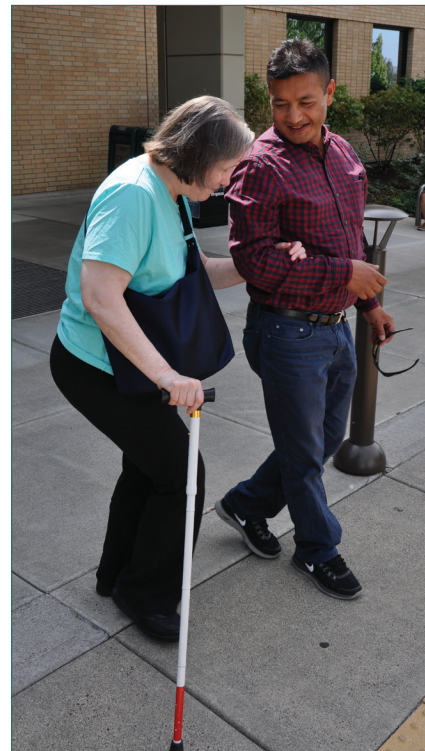
**6. Neighborhood and Community Social Clubs and Groups** received more than 30 mentions. They included the garden club, local women's clubs, fraternities and sororities, junior women's club, neighborhood organizations, social clubs and groups, golf clubs, League of Women Voters, neighborhood associations, area "village" partnerships, home owner/civic associations, neighbors, and family and friends.

**7. Volunteer Centers and Information Organizations** received more than 20 mentions. These included area and county volunteer organizations, Volunteer Connect, Volunteer Match, local volunteer clearinghouse, local, county and state volunteer centers, community volunteer groups, the 50+ volunteer center, Meals on Wheels Program, and other volunteer stations.

**8. Educational Programs and Institutions** received more than 15 mentions. These included state universities, local state colleges, local public school system, university service learning programs, faith-based learning program, and 4-H programs.

**9. Community Events** received more than 10 mentions. They included volunteer recruitment fairs, health fairs, community event information booths, senior health fairs, volunteer fairs, outreach at the city market, various public events, fundraising events, senior retirement fairs, trade shows, and a booth at the annual flea market.

**10. Other Venues** including local police department, local town boards, local government agencies, local public health organizations, Chambers of Commerce, local business groups, the local for-profit airport shuttle service, airline personnel, real estate agency, job boards at area universities, and general public that observe program vehicles on the road.



## Additional Recruitment Tag Lines Reference Text Pages 7 & 8 (Part 2-C)

"Heroes Needed. Spend a Little Time — Make a Huge Difference."

"You get more than you give."

"It's No-Guilt Volunteering."

"What would you do if you couldn't drive?"

"A neighbor's independence depends upon you."

"We help our neighbors go places."

"Helping the community by driving seniors and keeping roads safer."

"You can give back to your community."

"Volunteers are statistically healthier than those who do not volunteer."

"It's not just a ride, it's a relationship."

"Give the Gift of a Lift."

"Drive for us now and we will drive you later."

"We are a 'pay it forward' organization — you might need us in the future."

"Got an Hour? Give an Hour."

"Imagine how it feels to give up your keys and know you still need to go to the store!"

"Give seniors a lift while lifting their spirits."

"We could be transporting your parents, grandparents and eventually you."

"Give the Gift of YOU."

"Volunteering is like eating good chocolate without the calories."

"We'll keep you busy and not bored sitting at home."

"A neighbor's independence depends on you."

"Do good, feel good!"

"The best part of being a volunteer driver is the people you meet."

"Put your faith in action by volunteering with us."

"Drive. Give. Serve."

"A car + a big heart = a volunteer driver."

"Give an Hour, Change a Life."

"We make a difference, one ride at a time."

## Ten Successful Recruitment Methods Reference Text Pages 8 & 9 (Part 2-D)

### 1. Board Involvement

"We have a permanent committee of the Board of Directors that is solely dedicated to policies regarding recruitment, training, and retention of volunteers."

### 2. The "Personal Sell"

"Very few referrals come from print ads. Recruiting for volunteer drivers is a 'personal' sell. Potential volunteers need to hear the passion in our voices and our heartfelt belief in what we do, and that kind of recruiting takes time."

### 3. Driver Involvement

"We have rarely had a shortage of volunteers primarily because many of our drivers bring their friends and neighbors into the service. The success of this recruiting strategy enables us to focus on delivering our service to passengers in need of transportation."

### 4. Schedule Flexibility

"Schedule flexibility is an asset for our volunteer recruitment as people can donate hours based on their availability. There is no set minimum number of hours people must drive which is appealing to our community-minded volunteers."

### 5. Software Support

"Our web-based software enables volunteers to make their own schedules and receive reminders, so volunteering is flexible. Prospective volunteers are intrigued with this scheduling method."

### 6. Outside Assistance

"Volunteer recruitment is a challenge since we only have two part-time staff. We rely on other organizations to help with recruitment efforts."

### 7. Pay it Forward

"Our community includes many retirees who have a high level of affluence. We discuss volunteer driving as a way to pay it forward to other retirees who have been less financially, physically, or people with cognitive limitations."

**8. Drivers Spread the Word** about how rewarding it is to be a "volunteer driver." It's the reciprocity that occurs between volunteers and care receivers that often keeps volunteers volunteering.

### 9. Extensive Vetting Process and Comprehensive Orientation

"During the orientation, we train volunteers on some of the specific characteristics of the program, the passenger demographics and potential vulnerabilities as well as the types of situations drivers might encounter. We also discuss boundaries and do everything possible to empower volunteers with insight and understanding."

### 10. Volunteer Driver Recruitment as a 24/7 Task

"We ask our volunteers to recruit other drivers and if they are successful, we give them a gift card. When volunteers recruit other drivers it is a positive endorsement of our program."

## Appendix #2

# VOLUNTEER DRIVER RETENTION

*Longevity, Reasons for Continuing, Reasons for Leaving,  
Methods of Supporting Volunteer Drivers*

### How Long Volunteers Drivers Continue To Drive

#### Reference Text Page 11 (Part 3-B)

- “We have experienced very minimal turnover with volunteers and the relationship often continues for many years.”
- “Since we started our transportation program, we have only lost two drivers, and that’s because they moved out of town.”
- “We have drivers who have been with the program since its inception 18 years ago.”
- “Our program has a volunteer retention rate of 92%.”
- “Individuals who volunteer as drivers tend to stay with the program for many years: 90% of drivers have served for 1+ years, 5% have served 5–10 years, and 3 drivers have served for 15+ years.”
- “Our volunteers average 12 years of service and 12 of our volunteers have more than 10 years of service.”
- “Once recruited, volunteer retention has been excellent with most volunteers staying on as drivers for an average of 10+ years each.”
- “Our volunteers feel connected to our passengers, which can be related to our retention numbers: 66% of our volunteers have been with us for 3 or more years; 54% have been with us for 5 or more years; 48% have been with us for 7 or more years; 12% have been with us for 10 or more years.”
- “The average number of years an individual is a volunteer is 10 years and sometimes even 15 or 20 years. Next year, our program will have its first volunteer reach 25 years.”

### Reasons Volunteer Drivers Continue to Drive

#### Reference Text Pages 11 & 12 (Part 3-C)

- “It’s a tangible need, and potential volunteers understand the necessity of driving someone from Point A to Point B.”
- “They understand what the loss of driving can mean to someone, and are usually happy to step in to help out.”
- “Volunteers are pleasantly surprised by the relationships that are formed between the volunteer and the care receiver—even in a short ten-minute drive. They realize at that point (often on that first drive) that this is so much more than providing a ‘taxi service’ to someone.”
- “The most common statement we hear from our drivers is ‘I get more out of this than I can begin to give!’”
- “They see the improvement in people who are now getting to regular medical appointments, and people who are now involved in social or educational programs.”
- “They know that being able to drive oneself places is something that can’t be taken for granted.”
- “We have twelve volunteer drivers who have been with us since 1995.”
- “Once our volunteers experience the benefits they provide to our elderly clients via free ride services, they wish to continue.”

- “Our drivers stay with us for a long time. Even when they leave for a while, to go to a new job, to have a baby, or other of life’s interruption, they return to us if they are still in the area. Our longest driver started driving in 1991 and is still with us.”
- “Once the volunteers experience how they are positively impacting the lives of our clients, they will volunteer for many years. It seems like the younger generation may not be as willing to spend their time volunteering these days. Most of my volunteers are retirees.”
- “The majority of volunteer drivers we recruit remain with us for a very long time. Several until they become recipients themselves.”
- “Many of our volunteers have been with us for over 10 years, serving as drivers, mentors, and friends to our care receivers.”
- “Volunteers stay because of passengers. One passenger who was undergoing physical therapy said his volunteer driver served as an inspiration to him and gave him the motivation he needed to get better.”
- “Once they volunteer they do stay for years. We had one volunteer for 15 years.”
- “We have two volunteers who are experiencing medical issues that affect their mobility. They both have asked to be put on hold, but don’t want to retire from volunteering.”
- “We have volunteers who go south during the winter and then call us as soon as they get back so they can get back on the schedule. The volunteers are truly special people and we enjoy working with them every day!”
- “We have a core of volunteers who have stayed with us through the years.”

- “When the economy first took a turn for the worse, we got a number of volunteers who were unemployed and were willing to volunteer. But as soon as they found employment again, they stopped volunteering.”
- “Drivers enjoy meeting new people and getting to know them through the life stories they share.”

### Reasons Volunteer Drivers Stop Driving Reference Text Page 12 (Part 3D)

- “We usually only lose drivers due to their own health issues or the health of a loved one.”
- “The loss of volunteer drivers is due primarily to relocation (sometimes to a milder climate).”
- “Medical limitations have caused some of our volunteers to stop driving.”
- “Any attrition that we have had is attributed to personal circumstances (health or job related).”
- “We usually only lose drivers when they permanently move away.”
- “Occasionally our drivers age out and lose the capacity to drive and help others. Sometimes they become passengers.”
- “Some drivers discover different interests.”
- “Interestingly, a number of potential volunteer drivers have cited car accidents/insurance issues as a barrier.”
- “Every so often we have a new driver who decides volunteer driving isn’t the volunteer activity that he or she wants to do.”
- “It is unusual for them to end their volunteer service with us unless it is for family or medical reasons.”
- “Once we have them and they find out how rewarding it is, we have no problem keeping them unless medical/physical reasons cause them not to be able to drive any longer.”



## Methods for Promoting Volunteer Driver Retention

### Reference Text Pages 12 & 13 (Part 3-E)

- “The Program Coordinator takes out the volunteers to lunch occasionally and sends them thank you notes with a gift card inside.”
  - “We have a yearly volunteer recognition event to honor our volunteer drivers.”
  - “We make them feel rewarded by what they do.”
  - “We hold an annual volunteer recognition event and volunteers who drive over 50 miles in a month are entered into a raffle drawing for small prizes.”
  - “Some of the volunteers are paired with a couple of seniors with whom they bond with and build a relationship.”
  - “For volunteer drivers who are low income, we are able to offer mileage reimbursement. We believe that being low income should not stand in the way of a person being able to volunteer.”
- “A reason for our high retention rate is because of the sense of purpose the drivers feel when they help a client in need. A volunteer once said: ‘Volunteering brightens my whole day. I love knowing that what I do helps charitable organizations reach their goals without having to hire (and pay) additional people with money taken from those who really need the services.’”
  - “The noteworthy way to retain volunteers is respecting their time and the days they prefer to drive.”
  - “Once someone starts driving, the satisfaction of being a volunteer and then the appreciation shown by clients keeps them.”
  - “The two most important words that we communicate to our volunteers is ‘thank you,’ which does much to keep the volunteers motivated to volunteer. Many of the volunteers provide transportation to the same group of recipients. This helps in establishing relationships which motivates persons to continue to volunteer.”



## Appendix #3

# VOLUNTEER DRIVER RECRUITMENT and RETENTION

## *Strategies and Practice Opportunities*

### Ten Successful Recruitment Strategies Reference Text Page 14 (Part 4-A)

#### 1. Word of Mouth

Staff, members of the program, program supporters and passengers were mentioned several times. In fact a dedicated volunteer recruitment coordinator was mentioned several times. At the same time, the most frequently recurring comment was that volunteer drivers were the most effective volunteer driver recruiters. Their recruitment included recruiting their friends, making referrals, spreading the word about the program, sharing their experience with others, and talking with their neighborhood groups and clubs. Some volunteer driver programs mentioned that their most useful form of recruitment was through incentivized recruitment such as a gift card program for volunteer drivers.

#### 2. Media Communication

Many traditional types of communication were mentioned including fliers and print ads, newsletters, press releases to area newspapers and community newsletters, advertisements in program newsletters and newspapers, newspaper articles (telling our needs and client stories), radio ads, public service announcements, and advertisements at local TV stations and local cable TV channels. Electronic media including advertisements through social media. Types of media avenues included Facebook, online platforms, online portals, Internet listings, and putting up posters at local businesses.

#### 3. Community Presentations

This method appears to take many forms including staff speaking in tandem with a current volunteer, presentations that tell the story and then making it a personal invitation presentations at senior centers, hosting informational sessions, speaking at senior centers and to retiree groups, volunteer groups, veterans and service organizations; making presentations to partner churches, synagogues,

at public meetings, at community events, and to local service groups; meeting with individuals (one-on-one) for immediate personal communication, holding small group presentations and initiating dialogues, sending out personal invitations, and speaking at social gatherings and to social circles and service organizations.

#### 4. Community Outreach

This approach appears to emphasize “one-on-one” communication by being “face-to-face” in the community and talking directly with people. It includes sharing recruitment information during community social gatherings and events, discussing volunteer opportunities during recruitment coffees, maintaining a booth during public events and at local events and fairs, meeting with individuals during fund-raising events, staffing information tables at community and village events, meeting with referred individuals, and a direct ask with potential volunteers. Outreach also includes community partnerships with congregations, partnering with towns to create local volunteer groups as part of a county-wide program, and a partnership with a volunteer clearinghouse.

#### 5. Direct Appeals to Congregations and Community Groups

Direct appeals include outreach to churches in the immediate area, letters to local churches, announcements in church bulletins, one-to-one meetings with church members, and personal solicitations and presentations at churches and congregations.

#### 6. Cause-Related Recruitment

“Veteran’s volunteer driver programs do not appear to face huge obstacles in finding volunteer drivers, possibly because of shared military experiences which leads to an immediate bond between volunteer and client. The camaraderie of a non-driving low-income veteran and the veteran volunteer who understands the need for transportation to and from a VA Clinic or other medical facilities, or to grocery stores appears to make volunteer

recruitment easier. It seems that there is a natural fit that enhances not only the client's life but also the volunteer's life. Retention rate tends to be high due to the compassion and dedication of the program's volunteer drivers."

### **7. Brief and Positive Presentation**

By far the most success some organizations have when recruiting volunteer drivers is to do a brief and positive presentation for a group like a membership club or a faith-based organization using a volunteer coordinator teamed with a sincere volunteer. Some programs find this to be especially effective when the volunteer is slightly older, perhaps because they say people tend to trust elders more or perhaps because so many prospective volunteers are those who are retirees themselves.

### **8. The Volunteer Driver as a Story Teller**

Volunteers often tell wonderful stories about their experiences with passengers. They understand the positive impact on the passengers they serve as well as the many benefits they receive from their selfless care of others. They become dedicated and committed volunteers. When the volunteers recruit friends, families, and neighbors with their stories they convey the message about how meaningful the service is and how important their role is in it.

### **9. The Two-Step Method**

Volunteer recruitment requires educating people about the challenges and risks faced by those who no longer drive including neglecting their health and increased isolation. It also requires educating potential volunteers so that they realize that every single ride provided can have a significant impact on someone's well-being. Programs often say that people in the community need to know that getting places can be a real problem for many people and that they can provide a real solution.

### **10. Holiday Recruitment**

One program tells the story of putting a flier about the program in one of the local papers the week between Christmas and New Year's. They received 12 volunteers from that one advertisement, and every year since, they have expanded on their holiday time recruitment. While they realized considerable success during and right after the holidays, because it is a time of giving, they do not tend to receive the same results during the summer months.

## **Ten Successful Retention Strategies Reference Text Page 15 (Part 4-B)**

### **1. Flexibility of Assignments**

"We have a great retention rate for both drivers and dispatchers. Every effort is made to make our volunteers happy and to feel valued. Days and hours worked are flexible. We have substitute drivers and dispatchers so vacations and/or illness can be accommodated. City events acknowledge and honor volunteers. Suggestions for improvements in service and operating procedure are encouraged. Probably the biggest incentive for continuing to volunteer comes from our riders themselves who are very appreciative of the service and the kindness of our volunteers. Because of our good retention rate, we don't have to be too aggressive in our recruitment efforts."

### **2. Ongoing Communication with Drivers**

"Retaining volunteers involves regular communication with a weekly e-mail, a monthly newsletter and an annual 'happy birthday' card. It also involves an 'open door' policy, meaning that we encourage our volunteers to contact us with both their positive and challenging experiences so we can offer support and keep them happy volunteering. When a client expresses gratitude for a specific volunteer, we are sure to let that volunteer know. We share client stories and the specific impact volunteers make for our seniors in our newsletter and on our Facebook page. With a small staff, we juggle our activities to continually recruit and retain new volunteers."

### **3. Enabling Driver Passenger Bonding**

"Once the drivers are in our program they often form a bond with their riders. This bonding is an important factor in retaining our drivers. We have quite a few drivers who have volunteered for 5 or more years. Additionally our director takes the time to get to know each driver personally making sure they feel like part of the volunteer driver program family and reinforcing the importance of what they are contributing to the community. As a result, many of our riders and drivers have formed very special friendships outside of our program."

#### **4. Recognizing the Volunteer Drivers**

"We personally recognize each volunteer via birthday, Thanksgiving, and volunteer anniversary cards. Our annual volunteer breakfast is well attended, and many of our volunteers receive the President's Volunteer Service Award (bronze, silver and gold). We also name a 'Volunteer of the Year.' Our volunteers feel connected to our organization and to our passengers, which is indicated by our retention numbers: 66% of our volunteers have been with us for 3 or more years, 54% of our volunteers have been with us for 5 or more years, 49% of our volunteers have been with us for 7 or more years, 12 % of our volunteers have been with us for 10 or more years."

#### **5. Organizing for Driver Empowerment**

"Our drivers are totally empowered to sign up for rides online, at their convenience, and to 'un-assign' themselves should their situations change. The lack of pressure really appeals to our target driver age group, those who are retired, recently retired, own their businesses, or are stay-at-home parents. Staff rarely calls volunteers to fill open rides. The appreciation shown to the drivers by the riders keeps the transportation flowing. Our program gives no free rides. Every rider has 'skin in the game.' That imparts a certain value to what the volunteers are providing and it shows in the way the riders and drivers interact. It's a relationship-based program."

**6. Providing Stipends to Volunteer Drivers** "One of the main reasons that we are able to keep our drivers is being able to give them a stipend to help defray the cost of their incurred expenses. Our major medical facilities are anywhere from 75 miles up to 350 miles round-trip for our volunteers. Our stipends help secure some of our volunteers who could not otherwise afford to provide this service but have the time to do so! Some of our volunteers use the wait time to do other errands so it works to benefit for all concerned."

#### **7. Encouraging Volunteer Satisfaction**

"Our retention of volunteer drivers is highly successful and thus, our retention rate is very high. This quote from one of our long-time volunteers sums up how our volunteers feel after they begin to drive. 'Since I have volunteered for the program, my life has rediscovered the spirit of charity. Transporting individuals who are in need of assistance has opened my heart with compassion and a sense of contributing to a need that requires our total commitment.' This driver tells the story of many drivers who say they receive so much more than they would have ever expected! Our drivers say that they get joy by helping others."

#### **8. Communication and Appreciation**

"Keeping volunteers engaged and informed are the keys to retention. We do a monthly newsletter. We acknowledge each birthday with a handwritten card. We send out get well and sympathy cards to our volunteers. And, best of all we have an annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic which includes donated door prizes from local businesses, Presidential Awards for volunteers that have donated more than 100 hours of service and a fully catered event to including music donated by a local band. We can never show enough appreciation for our volunteers."

#### **9. Organizing for Management Support**

"The key to our success at keeping volunteers is that the office takes all the guesswork out of the job. They (the volunteers) are our 'number 1' focus. We do everything possible to make the opportunity as interesting and easy as possible. If they are unable to drive one week, or don't seem too keen to accept a particular ride, we do not make them feel bad. We call our office the 'no-guilt zone.' The fact that we make it easy to accept a ride just encourages them to stay with us. Additionally, it is imperative to us that we do not waste their time and that we make them feel as important as is possible. We personally know each and every driver by face and name and go out of our way to establish good personal relationships with them. The more we know about their families, their likes/dislikes, hobbies, etc., the more tied to the organization they become."

**10. A Project Management Approach** "Retaining volunteer drivers requires constant maintenance. We utilize a project management approach. Ongoing coordination efforts are required in anticipating needs and fulfilling positions. We offer our volunteers flexible scheduling and mileage reimbursement to defray the cost of gasoline. A streamlined process is used involving an application, orientation and background check for volunteers and care receivers for everyone's safety. Drivers are insured and thus protected by our organization. Often volunteers establish a schedule

with 'routine' transports, as they find themselves needing to fulfill requests such as essential dialysis and cancer treatments. We find that life enriching requests are selected by the volunteers once they have established a friendship with the care receiver and enjoy the companionship. The volunteers are also aware that in some cases we are the only support the senior has in his or her life. Many volunteers have been with us for more than 5 years, and were recommend to us by their friends."



## Appendix #4

# VOLUNTEERING IN AMERICA and VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAMS

### 1. Volunteering in America

*“What might begin as an act of altruism can become a volunteer service for the neighborhood or community.”*

Volunteering has been a part of American life since colonial times. As early as the 1600s, colonists formed citizen fire brigades to combat fires in Boston, Philadelphia and New Amsterdam. Volunteers and voluntary associations were so central to society that when Alexis de Tocqueville traveled through the country in the 1830s, he commented that they were uniquely American. In his detailed study of American society and politics published in 1835, he considered volunteering a form of civic engagement; recognized and applauded American voluntary action on behalf of the common good. Because organized volunteering was run on private donations, his observations often are used to support his assertion that America is a uniquely philanthropic country.

Fast forward to 2011 when a study by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies estimated that approximately 140 million people in the 37 countries engaged in volunteer work in a typical year. If those 140 million volunteers comprised the population of a country, it would be the 9th largest country in the world and would contribute \$400 billion annually to the global economy annually. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2013, 62.6 million Americans, or 25.4% of the adult population, gave 7.7 billion hours of volunteer service through an organization.

Volunteers in the United States tend to be involved in their local communities, and very often within their immediate neighborhoods. Rates of volunteerism in suburban and rural areas are somewhat higher than those in urban areas. Types of organizations with which people volunteer include: libraries, food support programs (soup kitchens, food collection, and food delivery programs such as Meals on Wheels), churches, service clubs, school activity programs, legal and financial services, animal shelters and zoos, museums, hospitals and cancer centers, hospice programs, senior centers and nursing homes, organizations such as the Red Cross, the Ronald McDonald House, and senior programs and of course volunteer driver programs.

### 2. Volunteer Driver Programs

*“Getting where you need to go is a universal need.”*

As the population ages, an increasing number of people need to “give up the keys.” However, they still need to travel and their trips may be for medical appointments, shopping, visitation and many other purposes that contribute to their quality of life. For those without easy access to public and community transportation options, without relatives or friends close enough to be able to drive them, and without resources to pay for taxis or private transportation services; volunteer driver programs are providing a vital service. Indeed, they are vital and in increasing demand. Nationwide, nonprofit organizations are trying to keep up with that demand, not only with volunteers, but importantly with volunteer driver programs that put the safety of drivers and their passengers first. At the same time, many are unfamiliar with the many volunteer driver programs in the United States.

*“We believe our program is unique since we know of no other like it in the immediate area.”*

Every volunteer driver program tends to believe it is one of a kind, and in reality, every program has unique characteristics. However as a group they have a number of characteristics that set them apart from many other community-based transportation services. For example:

- Volunteer drivers provide rides to passengers.
- The majority of their passengers generally are older adults.
- Quite often, the vehicles used are those of volunteer drivers.
- They frequently provide transportation on a budget of less than \$100,000.
- They provide assistance, frequently high levels of assistance such as door-through-door and stay-at-the-destination service.
- They generally do not charge for rides.
- They regularly cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- Their drivers and passengers enjoy socialization.
- They sometimes are supported by passenger donations.
- Many reimburse volunteer drivers for mileage.

The assistance needed by many of their passengers, and the assistance provided by their volunteer drivers contributes to the uniqueness of volunteer driver programs and their importance in promoting the personal mobility of older adults. Thus, volunteer drivers generally are viewed as the reason for the success of a volunteer driver program. Thus, volunteer recruitment is perhaps the most important endeavor of a volunteer driver program.

Volunteer driver programs frequently provide transportation to a variety of passenger groups: children, people with disabilities, workforce participants, people undergoing cancer treatment, patients requiring dialysis, veterans, and older adults. They are especially appropriate for meeting the needs of older adults, many of whom have access challenges related to physical and cognitive limitations that accompany the aging process. In many instances such limitations resulted in their cessation from driving and their dependency on community-based transportation options. It is estimated that men can expect to be transportation dependent for 10 years and women for 6 years. People who are unable to drive

generally rely on informal or formal transportation options or experience isolation due to an inability to get where they need to go.

Isolation can be a result because of an inability to get places and also because of the lack of need to get places. Quite often services for older adults are provided in the home or in a care facility. Social services, health care, meals delivery...all may be taken to the person's home. The problem may not be that the nurse or caregiver or meals-on-wheels volunteer cannot meet the care needs of a homebound person, but rather that the care receiver may experience isolation, depression and even an inability to age in place. Getting out of the home once a week or once a month can be important to anyone whether it is to the grocery store, the post office, the library, the ice cream shop, or the hair dresser. Getting somewhere, sometimes anywhere, can ensure that more is at stake than mere survival. However, anywhere is not a very specific destination. Volunteer driver program sometimes only take passengers to life-sustaining destinations and are unable to take them to what are called life-maintaining and life-enriching destinations. However, while some destinations attend to quality of life, those that promote quality of life also are important.

It may be difficult for passengers with physical or cognitive limitations to reach any or all such destinations without the support of a volunteer driver program. The ability to provide physical and cognitive assistance is one of the reasons volunteer driver programs are increasingly viewed as an important member "the family" of transportation services. In providing supportive assistance they can fill the transportation gaps that exist if formal or informal transportation options cannot meet the access, assistance or destination needs of passengers. Supportive transportation may include door-to-door, door-through-door, stay-at-the-destination assistance, help carrying packages, pre-trip telephone reminders, and even taking notes during a health care appointment. The physical and cognitive support they generally provide to their passengers and their ability to provide it at a low cost is one of the reasons for their increasing acceptance as a viable and valuable transportation option. The volunteer driver is the key to ensuring that such assistance is provided.

## Appendix #5

# DATA SOURCES and THE NATIONAL VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION CENTER

The information provided for this handbook was contributed by the 157 volunteer driver programs that applied for the National Volunteer Transportation Center's 2015 STAR Awards. The applicants were located in **39 states** and operated an average of **17 years**. As a group, they served **95,610 passengers**; involved **14,722 volunteer drivers**; mobilized **12,263 personal vehicles** owned by volunteer drivers; provided **955,138 one-way rides**; totaled **17,116,497 miles** from volunteer driving trips; counted **1,450,242 volunteer driver hours** and valued those hours at **\$33,457,082**. The applicants' **14,722 volunteer drivers** provided exceptionally high levels of assistance. In fact, **83% provided door-through-door assistance**; and 49% provided transportation services on a **budget of less than \$100,000**.

The applications indicated that volunteer driver programs make immense contributions in meeting the transportation needs of older adults as well as other population groups. The 2015 STAR Awards applicants also provided considerable information on their organizational and service characteristics.\* **Applicants served many locations:** suburban (36%), rural (35%), urban (27%). **They provided rides to a variety of passenger groups:** primarily seniors (97%), people with cognitive/physical limitations (91%), people who could no longer drive (72%), veterans (76%), and veterans and people who could not afford other transportation services (72%). **They were organized in a variety of ways:** within a senior or human service

agency (43%), as a stand-alone service (23%), and as a service within a volunteer agency (19%). **Their hours of service varied:** weekdays only (92%), Saturdays and Sundays (53%), evenings (44%), and 24/7 (15%). **Their primary destination were** health care services (99%). **Other top destinations were:** grocery shopping (61%), personal errands (29%). **They provided high levels of assistance** in the form of: stay at the destination (84%), door-to-door (83%), door-through-door (79%), and curb-to-curb (68%). **The top five non-transportation services they provided were:** volunteer activities in the office (72%), handy person service (46%), caregiver respite (42%), food delivery (41%), and home repair (41%). Their top **sources of funding** were: personal donations (64%), government grants (63%), foundation support (56%), passenger donations (49%), and fundraisers (42%).

These data offer a case in point for the use of volunteer drivers programs as a high-touch, low-cost method of providing transportation services. They also suggest the need for the recruitment and retention of volunteer drivers.

*\* It should be noted that not all data was included and thus, some reported results for questions do not total 100%.*



# THE NVTC

## (The National Volunteer Transportation Center)

*A Message from Helen Kerschner, Director*

The NVTC was established in 2014 and is the successor to the Beverly Foundation, a research and information-sharing organization that addressed transportation for older adults and emphasized volunteer driver programs. Its purpose is to promote and support the concept and practice of volunteer transportation. NVTC's focus is on information gathering and dissemination related to volunteer driver programs and activities, identification and promotion of promising practices, collection and development of informational and technical resources, planning and delivery of online educational programs, and communication with volunteer organizations and volunteer driver programs across the United States. The Center mobilizes experts in community and volunteer transportation, aging and volunteerism as participants in its research and information assistance activities. Its notable website (below) and its data set of more than 800 volunteer driver programs enables it to reach volunteer driver programs, and community transportation services with its exceptional educational resource materials. It is an initiative of the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), a national membership organization of more than 4,000 community transportation services in the United States ([nationalvolunteertransportationcenter.org/](http://nationalvolunteertransportationcenter.org/)).

As a result of its successor relationship with the Beverly Foundation, the NVTC inherited a large data set of volunteer driver programs, and a vast pool of informational and technical materials. What follows are five examples of how NVTC impacts on the community:

1. Its annual STAR Awards program in 2015 received applications from 157 volunteer driver programs located in 39 states and will convey awards of a new vehicle and \$50,000 in cash this May.
2. Its monthly series of webinars and podcasts that began in mid-2015 has reached hundreds of volunteer driver and community transportation managers and staff.
3. Its work with the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Boston enables it to participate in online education classes in senior and volunteer transportation which are offered to graduate students and professionals working in the fields of aging and transportation.
4. Its work with the developer of volunteer driver program ride scheduling and data management software enables it to enhance the ability of its network colleagues to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their ride scheduling and data management methods and activities.
5. Its work with the director of the Volunteers Insurance Service has enabled it to collaborate in the preparation and communication of informational materials on risk management and to create an online training course on risk management for volunteer drivers.

And finally, recognition and support from Toyota, the NVTC and its annual STAR Awards program, multiple publications (including this handbook), and a variety of other activities has enabled our Center to flourish in providing informational, technical support, and awards to volunteer driver programs throughout the United States.

*For more information, please visit the NVTC  
<http://nationalvolunteertransportationcenter.org>*



