

Disability Service Adjusts When Service Increase is Needed

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RIVERSIDE, CA, USA, September 7, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The TRIP volunteer driver program

“

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Richard Smith, CEO

of the nonprofit Independent Living Partnership in Riverside California for people with disabilities is able to adjust when a transportation-challenged rider's needs change, according to CEO Richard Smith. Mary, not her real name in compliance with The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), now receives more than 400 miles of free transportation assistance and seven to nine needed medical trips each month, two times what she needed in 2016.

When first assessed for transportation requirements and capabilities, Ivet Woolridge, ILP's Chief Operating Officer and TRIP Manager says, “Mary was reported to have Chronic Heart Failure, a brain tumor, and suffer with seizure disorder”. She had verified nervous and psychiatric disorders and was unable to walk across a room unassisted. She was not able to drive, did not have family members who could drive her to needed medical services, and was not able to use public transportation alternatives.

Smith says, “The level of TRIP transportation assistance for each rider is based on an evaluation of the rider's individual capabilities and needs.” He continues, “Initially she completed an application and review process that determined a mileage allowance that met her transportation requirement, but over time and through continual monitoring of her month-to-month service use and communications with her, the level of service we provide has increased.” The operating principle is to make sure that our riders have the ability to make the trips they need to make, according to Smith. He says, “One size definitely does not fit all.”

Her current travel requirements include neurological, orthopedic, pulmonary, and gastroenterological appointments on a regular, recurring basis. She is receiving physical therapy weekly and also receives psychological counseling each week. Some of her required travel is from her home to the University of California San Diego Medical Center, in a neighboring county.

This level of needed transportation would be prohibitively expensive for a rider to afford if any other service would even be able to provide the needed rides. With the TRIP service all of these trips are free for Mary, and comparatively inexpensive for TRIP to provide due to the volunteerism around which the program was designed. For the program year from July of 2022 through June of 2023 the average cost per trip to ILP was \$8.19.

Mary has three different volunteer drivers every month who she recruited from her care givers and friends to split driving responsibilities for her needed trips. At the end of each month, Mary submits a request for mileage reimbursement and divides the reimbursement payment between her volunteer drivers for the transportation they have provided.

Last Fall, "Mary" wrote a long letter to the ILP Board of Directors telling them "I have been able to make every doctor appointment scheduled because of the financial assistance I have been given through the Trip service. My health and overall emotional, mental and physical, as well as spiritual state of mind and body has changed for the better because I have had transportation to make it to all my counseling and doctor appointments." She says that TRIP helped her not to need to isolate and to continue make her appointments during the Covid Pandemic.

Woolridge says, "TRIP is unique because of the relationship that forms between TRIP clients and the caregivers, friends and neighbors who have volunteered to drive for them." She says that the closeness of the bonds between TRIP transportation riders and drivers has persisted, even through the public health crisis, because riders and their volunteers have become friends through regular and recurring transportation outings.

During the Covid Pandemic, from January 2020 through November 2022, 1,442 people with disabilities, living in Riverside County, received 320,479 one-way trips and 5.25 million miles of volunteer escorted transportation.

For the year of July 2022 through June of 2023, 1,002 people with disabilities in Riverside County, from 4 years old to 97 years of age, received volunteer assisted TRIP transportation for purposes ranging from accessing medical services to meeting subsistence needs, to making visits to the homes of family and friends, whatever was needed.

Detailed records show that the service has provided more than 2.5 million one-way trips and more than 35 million miles of volunteer escorted transportation for mobility challenged riders in Riverside County over 30 years. Woolridge says, "The TRIP program is long established, reliable, proven to be effective and efficient, and well-liked by our riders."

For more information about TRIP, visit ILPconnect.org.

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