

Over 1,000 volunteers drove for TRIP riders with disabilities last year

TRIP Program riders are able to get their own volunteer drivers

RIVERSIDE, CA, USA, September 19, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Every rider who uses the TRIP volunteer driver program in Riverside County California has one or more volunteer drivers,

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Richard Smith, CEO

according to CEO Richard Smith. Unlike other volunteer driver services, TRIP Program riders solicit their own volunteer from among friends, caregivers, and neighbors with the promise that the volunteer will receive mileage reimbursement for the travel they provide.

Last year 1,002 volunteer drivers for TRIP Program riders with transportation limiting disabilities across Riverside County provided 109,499 free, volunteer escorted trips and contributed 105,808 hours of volunteer time in support of their riders. Smith says, “For years I have heard complaints

from volunteer driver programs, some that have failed to start or to continue to provide service, that it is hard to get and keep enough volunteer drivers.” He continues, “We have operated successfully for over 30 years, without driver recruitment or retention issues, because we partner with and counsel riders to recruit their own volunteer drivers.”

Smith says in an internal survey of 222 TRIP riders in 2021, [we asked riders to “evaluate the operating components of the service.”](#) When we asked active TRIP users to evaluate the program principle of being able to recruit their own volunteer driver, 97.74% of the respondents to the written survey said that it was either somewhat important or very important. He continues that, “While other volunteer services think they are doing their riders a favor by providing them with a volunteer driver, we believe that the demonstrated reliability of TRIP rider self-recruitment of volunteer drivers that they need provides the opposite evidence.”

According to Ivet Woolridge, Chief Operating Officer of ILP, “Unlike other volunteer driver programs, TRIP is a ‘rider-centered’ volunteer driver service, anchored in strong relationships between riders and volunteers”. She says that paying mileage reimbursement for the drivers helps riders recruit their drivers and helps maintain ongoing engagement between riders and their drivers. Woolridge continues that the result of riders “hiring” their own volunteer driver and managing the relationship with their driver helps to establish the basis for close and lasting

relationships to develop between riders and their volunteers.

Woolridge recounts a recent example, "A rider who speaks Japanese and limited English asked her caregiver to be her volunteer driver". In addition to providing needed rides, we are told that the volunteer driver also helps her rider by being her translator. We also heard that the volunteer driver now goes out of her way to also check on the rider's ex-husband who lives a few doors down. We hear that he sometimes falls and had lost his wallet one time during an ambulance trip. Woolridge marvels that the story is that the rider's volunteer driver tracked down the lost wallet and returned it to her rider-friend's ex-husband. This is a level of volunteerism that goes far beyond pick-up and delivery.

Administrative Specialist II Karen Long, who talks with TRIP riders every day, says "Volunteer drivers go beyond the volunteer driving part of the commitment." She continues "I have found over the years working at ILP that most of our Riders are alone or feel lonely and that the relationship that TRIP provides for the riders and the volunteers is truly a blessing." She says, "The exchange of money to off-set the travel expense seems to be the start of beautiful relationships. I talked to a volunteer driver last week who told me she was happy that she had become friends with her rider, and they enjoy each other's company and have started baking cookies together to share with the rider's neighbors."

Woolridge says these are not unusual stories to hear and she thinks they explain why TRIP is such a successful transportation alternative for people who cannot use other types of transportation services.

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](https://ilpconnect.org).

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