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SUPPLEMENTAL

TRANSPORTATION

PROGRAMS for

SENIORS

Prepared by the Beverly Foundation

STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Volunteer Drivers Write from the Heart

"The best part about being a volunteer driver is..."



written from the heart

After reviewing the 244 stories that were submitted by volunteer drivers (as part of the STAR Search 2004 Project), the Beverly Foundation made the decision to publish a book of the "best of the best" stories. 75+ stories were selected on the basis of their "from the heart" description of the life of the driver or the rider and their description of the value of transportation for seniors. The stories will be supplemented with general information about senior transportation and volunteer drivers, will include photographs of many of the volunteer drivers and their riders, and will include information about the STAR Award Winner and the 3 Award winning stories. The expected completion date is August, 2005.

"... the good feeling I get for doing something that really matters to others. Most of the riders I have would have no other way to get to wherever they are going. I feel that the volunteer driver program is wonderful for me as well as for our riders. I have taken home many invaluable life lessons, and I look forward to each trip to see what new experiences I will have and what I will learn."

- Mary L. Faigle

"...helping people remain independent."

- Aaron Shostak

"... the look in the eyes of the passenger as they approach the car. There is nothing like it! They have braved the uncertainty of calling a phone number, speaking to a stranger, and requesting a driver for their personal needs."

- Patricia Britt

Stories From The Road presents the experience of more than 245 volunteer drivers from across the country. The stories were submitted in response to a request to write a one or two paragraph story about one of several themes. Almost 50% of the stories addressed the theme “the best part of being a volunteer driver...” Their emphasis was on what driving meant to them, how much they benefited from the experience, how much their passengers meant to them, and how happy they were when they had the opportunity to drive. As one driver put it, “When I drive, it’s a good day.”

Individually, the stories offer a glimpse at the role of a volunteer driver. As a whole, they weave what one reader described as “a tapestry of human lives enhanced by a need presented and a service delivered”. Happily, they undermine much of the “common knowledge” about volunteer driving. Many experts, for example, believe that volunteers and volunteer drivers are concerned about liability and insurance, about the expense of driving, about the burden of commitment, and about the difficulty of finding time. However, the volunteer drivers tell stories that describe their experiences as opportunities - to help and support and listen and laugh; and their contributions as helping people who, through no fault of their own, need someone to drive them so they can get where they need to go. Many of them say that they, the volunteer drivers, are the ones who really benefit.

The primary purpose of travel was for medical services (84%). Most drivers (84%) drove their own vehicle to transport passengers. The vast majority drove on during the day (96%) and on weekdays (84%). Also, most drivers (58%) spent 1-5 hours a week driving, and provided door-to door transportation

Many drivers (61%) said they drive to help others. A smaller number (31%) said they drive to give back to the community or to do something meaningful. A large majority (72%) said they received the greatest satisfaction from driving in helping people and feeling needed. Their major challenge was finding time to drive (31%).

A resounding 79% of the volunteer drivers said they believed they might someday become riders.

Stories From The Road will be available in September, 2005

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