

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Unique Transportation Service for Seniors and Disabled in Riverside County

**Don't Drive? No Family? No way to use transit?
No problem! Not here!**

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Residents of all of Riverside County have a resource for independent living that hardly anyone anywhere else has. Home bound people needing to get medical care or groceries, go to worship, or just to get out are those who TRIP helps. And TRIP helps a lot of them – more than ten thousand rides a month!

“TRIP is a big deal”, according to Richard Smith, the executive director of the non-profit Independent Living Partnership and manager of the TRIP Program. He says, “It doesn't matter if the person lives in downtown Corona or by the Salton Sea, in Calimesa or in Aguanga – if transportation is needed and otherwise not available TRIP is a real option.”

TRIP rider Steven Kendrix says “When I was first diagnosed with Stage IV cancer I had no insurance and no income. I was told that I needed to go to chemotherapy in a city 25 miles from my home, to another city for radiation, to another city for hyperbaric therapy, to another city in an adjacent county for oral surgery, and to various other doctors. I was overwhelmed. I didn't know how I was going to do all these appointments with no income.” He continues, “I was referred to TRIP through IHSS (In-Home Support Services). TRIP has made it possible for me to get to my doctor appointments and to pick-up my prescriptions. It has been a very long journey for me and still to this day I depend on TRIP to assist me in getting where I need to go to get the health care I need on a weekly basis.”

This year and every year TRIP helps hundreds and hundreds of people make critically important trips that they could not have made in any other way but, according to Smith, the program is unique because it does more than deliver free rides. He says that the real importance of TRIP is that it helps create a lasting support network for people who are alone and isolated.

The program was designed using focus groups of mobility challenged people in the Coachella Valley more than twenty years ago. Focus groups were conducted by the Riverside County Office on Aging and the Riverside County Transportation Commission. Focus group participants told what they wanted in a consumer friendly service. They said they wanted easy and convenient transportation in automobiles,

escorts who would come to their homes, accompany them to appointments, travel whenever needed without advance scheduling, and they wanted the rides to be free.

TRIP incorporated all of these ideas in innovative ways. Riders are able to recruit their own volunteer drivers from among friends and neighbors. If riders have a problem getting volunteers, TRIP staff coaches them on effective ways to ask people around them who they may have overlooked. Enrolled riders receive mileage reimbursement payments to give to their volunteer drivers. This makes it easier for riders to recruit their own drivers in a straightforward business relationship and helps to cement that relationship so that friendship and bonding is able to develop.

The TRIP Program of the nonprofit Independent Living Partnership has been quietly helping thousands of Riverside County residents without other personal transportation alternatives since 1993. During that time 1.8 million escorted rides have been provided. Residents of Riverside County can call the Aging and Disability Resource Connection of the Office on Aging at 1-800-510-202 to apply for program service.

The Independent Living Partnership is assisting other organizations in California and other states establish TRIP services. According to Smith transit agencies are becoming increasingly interested in offering the TRIP alternative in their service areas. He says, "The latest program in start-up is at the Victor Valley Transit Authority where TRIP will soon be available to residents of the high desert from Trona to Needles and everywhere in between.

Read more about the TRIP for Riverside County at <http://www.TRIPtrans.org>.

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