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Community Answers Need for Transportation Options

Program model identified by research has proven to be an effective choice

Claremont, CA – August 28, 2018 – Community Senior Services (CSS), a nonprofit community service organization, announces that it has now provided more than 250,000 trips and two million miles of volunteer transportation for senior and disabled residents who live in sixteen Southern California cities according to Abby Nuyda, Vice President, Administration and Transportation Services. She says that transportation was identified as the least available service in a 1975 community needs analysis and CSS decided to address the issue.

First CSS borrowed two vans from the Claremont Red Cross and began providing community rides. When the van service was operating, Nuyda says “CSS continued to research ways to provide more transportation services for seniors and discovered the innovative Transportation Reimbursement Information Program (TRIP) of the Independent Living Partnership (ILP) in Riverside County.” Nuyda continues that ILP helped CSS get started by providing guidance to establish CSS’s volunteer driver reimbursement, through-the-door, transportation program, which was named “Community Connections”.

At about this time, according to Richard Smith, CEO of ILP, “Federal funding for innovative transportation solutions, that would ‘go beyond’ the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, was beginning to become available.” In 2010 CSS was awarded a grant for their new Community Connections service from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA METRO) to provide volunteer assisted transportation services for senior and disabled residents in four communities.

Having gotten the new service up and running CSS received another grant a year later to add service for six additional cities in adjacent San Bernardino County. Two years after that LA METRO awarded more funding for service to six additional Los Angeles County cities.

Nuyda says, “The reason we received additional funding was due to the success of the program and the cost savings to riders utilizing the service. She continues “The CSS program design is also so efficient that the average trip cost for our agency is under six dollars, less than half what it costs for public agency paratransit van trips.”

Community Connections client, 65-year old Paulette from Chino, with multiple medical challenges, exemplifies public approval for the service provided saying “I just lost my husband recently and now I am alone. With the program I have something to look forward to, someone to talk to, help in everyday life. Without this program I would be lost.”

Another client is reported to have said “After my surgery, I had to give up driving. When I signed up with Community Connections, it was like a burden was lifted. When you can depend on someone completely, your life is changed.”

The Independent Living Partnership, creator of the rider focused TRIP volunteer driver model, assists agencies and organizations across the country to start and operate similar services based on TRIP’s experience. Smith says “Like Community Connections TRIP started small and then grew continuously as a result of the enthusiastic satisfaction for the program by riders, volunteer drivers, funders, the health community, and government agencies.”

Nuyda says, “Any community wanting to improve transportation service for the elderly and disabled should consider implementing a TRIP model service.” Read more about the Community Connections service at <https://communityseniorservices.org/community-connections>. Information about how to start a volunteer driver mileage reimbursement is available at ILPconnect.org.

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