

## In this Issue

[ITN Orlando: We're Off to the Races!](#)

[Sheldon Suroff: ITN Closes the Circle](#)

[Volunteering Gives New Perspective on Aging](#)

[Liberty Mutual Debuts "Driver Seat Game"](#)

[The Older Driver Evaluation Process](#)



**The Liberty Mutual and ITNAmerica Partnership.**  
ITNAmerica is excited to announce our partnership with Liberty Mutual, one of the nation's leading auto, home and life insurers. As the National Insurance Partner to ITNAmerica and our affiliate communities, Liberty Mutual has embraced ITN's mission to support safe, senior mobility and developed resources for seniors and their families to make good, safe transportation decisions found at [www.libertymutual.com/seniordriving](http://www.libertymutual.com/seniordriving).

Subscribe to our newsletter...

Email:

Go

Privacy by SafeSubscribe<sup>SM</sup>

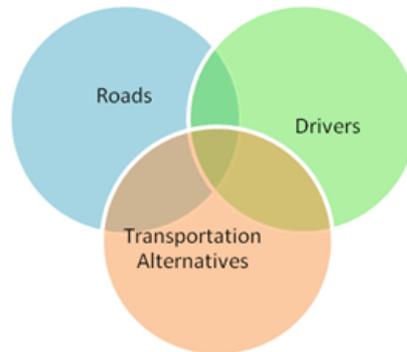
[Donate to ITNAmerica](#)

## ITN Orlando: We're Off to the Races!

By Fran Carlin-Rogers, Board Member, ITN Orlando

### Start Your Engines

Orlando began preparations to expand senior transportation options back in the mid 90s, long before we had ever heard of the Independent Transportation Network®. A visionary leader at the Central Florida Area Agency on Aging recognized that senior transportation was a key component of each strategic plan identifying critical needs of elders. Several programs were started which set a tone of innovation around this topic. Local and statewide transportation summits focusing on the triumvirate of safe roads, safe drivers and transportation alternatives, and an informative publication, "[What Do You Do When Your Car Won't Get You There](#)," helped prepare our community to start travelling together.



### Off To a Good Start

Our travels together as a new ITN affiliate have been exciting and challenging. Key partners contributed to our start in significant ways. The [Winter Park Health Foundation](#) saw the relationship between transportation for seniors and access to healthcare, civic engagement and healthy lifestyles. They pledged three annual grants to cover operating expenses for our planning and startup years. This tremendous gift allowed us to focus on operations and establish a solid reputation of customer service to seniors. We will always be grateful for their belief in innovative solutions to community challenges.

[ITN Orlando](#) began under the umbrella of the [Senior Resource Alliance](#) (our Area Agency on Aging). This non-profit home allowed us to capitalize on existing community relationships and business partners (payroll and HR service company; leadership access, etc.) and to avoid duplicative administrative costs through shared services and allocated expenses (copy, postage, rental costs). It gave us the benefit of being a part of a large, well-respected organization while we were incubating our own corporate track.

Support was cultivated from a broad array of community leaders including [Metroplan Orlando](#), our metropolitan planning organization; [AARP Florida](#), our legislative delegation; [Lynx](#), our public transit partner; and the large taxi company in our town. It was important that our community leaders understood what this new ITN model was and was not.

Our early days were guided by an advisory board that helped us make connections in town. It was also important to have a convergence of efforts among key stakeholders who continued to support our work as we began to offer real rides to real folks. As we established our service area, for example, we made a decision to exclude the Orlando airport, to avoid any perceived competition with taxi services to that important tourist hub.

### Hitting Our Stride

Orlando's "First Ride Day," October 26, 2006, arrived after a solid year of planning activities. I predicted that it would not take us as long as it did, considering our partnership development which had been happening for several years. I was wrong. There were understandable challenges being part of the first ITN replication group. I am pleased to learn that we have all learned along the way, and the process no longer takes most communities this long.

As we were putting our plans together to start services, we made a decision to put into place a comprehensive risk management program, involving an application, interview, state and federal background checks; driving record check; driving screening for educational purposes, and volunteer orientation and training. This was both good business practice and good for our members and volunteers as well. We knew these efforts would have a positive impact on our search for the various

necessary insurance packages. More about that later...

Two and a half years later, we are thrilled to report that we have provided 13,244 rides. Recently, we have been able to cover 66% of those rides with volunteer drivers! (The ITN model uses a combination of paid and volunteer drivers.)

### Rounding the Curve

As one of the first class of ITN affiliates, we have certainly had some challenges to manage. They have caused us to carefully approach possible obstacles, but have not stopped our forward movement.

- The insurance climate in Florida has been darkened by a succession of hurricanes creating legendary property damage in 2005 and by the general litigious nature of our state. In 2006, we believed that we had the roughest road of any state when it came to our search for liability protection. We have had some initial success in this area, but are facing some new challenges in obtaining hired and non-owned vehicle insurance. The issue of livery regulations being applied to volunteer driver programs is an obstacle that still hangs before us.

At the start, we knew that our statutory protection of volunteers in Florida was weak, and we were not at all certain that the language on the books would cover volunteer drivers. With significant leadership from the [Department of Elder Affairs](#) and from AARP Florida, new language (modeled after Maine's law) was proposed which enhanced protection for volunteer drivers and most importantly, added a statutory definition of a volunteer driver. While the Governor signed this legislation in June 2007, we recognize that much work lies ahead of us, as the biggest issue is introducing protections for organizations which sponsor volunteer driver programs such as ITN.

### Keeping Up the Pace: Board Leadership

Our initial expectation was that our Advisory Board would evolve into a Board of Directors for our new corporation. For a variety of reasons, that did not happen. We found ourselves in an odd situation of having a new business, a business plan, and funding support, all of which preceded the establishment of our Board of Directors. As a result, we spent our first operational year educating our new Board members about the transportation needs of seniors, the ITN model, best practices and national trends and how ITN *Orlando* fit within those big issues. Our second year has seen our Board become full owners of our ITN services, our business practices and performance metrics. The Board has recast the five year business plan and has set annual budgetary targets against our own plan.

Like every other small business, ITN *Orlando* has been challenged to revisit our expenses and practices to identify cost reductions which will help to reduce our fundraising burden and help us move farther down the road toward sustainability. We do no one any favors if we are not here to serve our members for the long haul. Our Board has developed a sustainability plan which has required substantial cost reductions, but has also created new levels of support for our operations. For example, a multiyear giving program called Pacesetters was created.

Partnership with AARP Florida has enabled us to double our corps of volunteer drivers. Last month, we provided 66% of our rides with volunteers. Our Board has set a goal of 95% of recurring rides by volunteers. We have 41 active volunteer drivers: this strong level of community support is helping to decrease operating costs such as gas and repairs.

### Finish Line in View

There is no doubt in our minds that ITN *Orlando* is sustainable and will be here in the long term to serve our members. We know that the tasks before us will require all of our best efforts with current levels of service and that new strategic challenges lie ahead. These include:

- Broader visibility and community support
- Creating diversity among members and volunteers
- Developing an expansion strategy that meets community needs and helps us reduce our overhead costs for rides
- Continuing to battle insurance and liability issues in our market

### Summary

Being one of the first communities to replicate the ITN model has been both a challenge and a wonderful opportunity. The best has been providing rides for our members—what a thrill! No matter how difficult the growing pains have been, recognizing what this service does to promote independence and improve quality of life makes it all worthwhile.



## Sheldon Suroff: ITN Closes the Circle

For Sheldon Suroff, ITN *America's* newest affiliate [ITNStCharles](#)™ closes a circle that started in 1994 when his son was killed by a 92 year old wrong-way driver suffering from dementia. After Jason's tragic death at

21 years old, Sheldon and his wife Karen turned their grief into activism, establishing a nonprofit organization, Concerned Americans for Responsible Driving (CARD), and creating the Impaired Driver Law.

Their law (House Bill 1536), which was mirrored by California one year later, allows reporting an impaired driver through a signed affidavit by those closest to the situation: family members, law enforcement and the medical community. (Any fraudulent report is a Class A misdemeanor, which could lead to a \$500 fine and up to six months in jail.) The signed affidavit is sent to Missouri's Department of Motor Vehicle regulation, where based on the pre-determined guidelines of a three-member Medical Advisory Board, the state can then determine its ruling.

The law, which took years of work to get passed, was written to get to impaired drivers before a tragedy occurs. It does not target older drivers (though they are the most often reported), and has been endorsed by AARP, AAA, the Alzheimer's Association of St. Louis, and many other organizations. A study released by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety said that the law should serve as a model for the nation.

It can ask for a driving test, physical or mental exam, revoke or suspend a license, or do nothing at all. Although dementia and aging do contribute to many accidents, so do neuro-muscular diseases, seizures, eye problems and other health issues at even earlier ages. The law also provides immunity from prosecution and confidentiality for the person reporting.

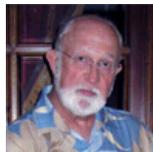
Sheldon, along with Dr. David Carr of the Washington University School of Medicine, were instrumental in paving the way for the new ITN affiliate in St. Charles. They co-chaired the steering committee, held meetings over two years, and eventually brought in gerontologist Althea West, the chair of the board of directors. ITNStCharles has received grants from East-West Gateway Coordinating Council of St. Louis, Lutheran Senior Services at Breeze Park, St. Joseph's SSM Health Center, and Veterans Home Care.

Thousands of professional and family reports and health statements are available for analysis because of the law. According to Dr. Carr, "The information we obtained has been very helpful in gaining insight into the process of how our state, Missouri, evaluates medically impaired older adults. Most older adults who are referred for testing are very cognitively and/or physically frail. Thus, many of them choose not to be tested and/or are unable to pass testing and are effectively de-licensed. The law appears fair, reduces the crash rate of this group, and in that way improves traffic safety."

"St. Charles is booming," Sheldon said, and future plans will bring the service to St. Louis. "It's a rocket ready to take off. People want to know when rides start." The proposed start date for rides is this fall. Next steps include getting donated or traded cars, volunteers and interns.

It was never Sheldon's goal just to get people off the roads, or to satisfy a vendetta. The person who killed his son didn't know what he was doing. "To me, it's a personal extension of our goal of safe driving," Suroff said. Thousands have come off the roads as a result of the law, and it has been a major contribution to the field of safety.

"We worked for four years to get the law passed that took impaired drivers off the road. Now I happily see how we can give [these seniors] more freedom. They can go where they want to go with ITN. It's come full circle," Sheldon said.



## Volunteering Gives New Perspective on Aging

By Bill Clark, Volunteer Driver,  
ITNNorthCentralConnecticut™

Getting on in years is not easy, especially when it comes to getting from one place to another. When no family member is available to help, driving yourself to the appointment appears to be the only option. This decision can cause mixed feelings. Eyesight is not what it used to be and reaction time is slower. Guilt about driving under these conditions may arise, but what are the other choices? Aging requires visiting doctors more often, and with blood draws, x-rays, and other transportation needs, it is not unusual to have more than one appointment in a week.

Alan Baer said "Seniors in our country are often disadvantaged in so many ways, too often becoming 'shut-ins' with fewer and fewer social opportunities, and very limited transportation options for essential needs. The overall framework of support for seniors needs to be improved. Thanks to ITN volunteers, seniors across the country have access to dignified transportation."

When asked about his feelings on being a volunteer driver for ITNNorthCentralConnecticut, Alan said, "Volunteering as a driver with a community-based organization such as ITN gives us the opportunity to improve seniors' quality of life and meet some wonderful folks. Heck, even the cranky folks can be fun if you show them the way!"

Volunteer driving for ITN gives a new perspective on aging. On some trips, clients are taken to dialysis—a procedure requiring four hours three times a week. This is an eye-opener that suppresses the minor

complaints you may have about your own circumstances. There are shorter trips, too — taking people shopping or to the bank or the hair salon.

Joe King of South Windsor, a retired long distance truck driver with 35 years experience, saw an article in the *Hartford Courant* and signed up to volunteer. Joe said that driving these short trips are a "piece of cake" compared to what he used to do.

"It gets me out of the house to do something I enjoy. Driving a car is a lot easier than driving an 18-wheeler," he said.

Bob LeMay of Enfield reports that driving for ITN is an amazing experience. The joy of helping people is profound. Not only are the people grateful, but friendships that would never ordinarily occur can blossom. "You find that you talk about anything and everything ranging from family to politics. It's amazing to learn the things you have in common," he said. "And when you arrive back at their home, you can't wait until the next time your paths cross. One man entered my vehicle one stormy day and asked me if I was nuts. I responded with a smile and said that the sun was shining somewhere today. We laughed and away we went."

Maureen Mazza from Enfield, who formerly drove for Meals-on-Wheels and acted as a part-time receptionist for them, feels "good inside providing rides for people. This may be the only time they get out the front door for anything," she said. Maureen has met many new friends as a result of volunteering.

Lorraine Davis, a former contract analyst in Farmington, likes the wonderful people and the good conversations she has as a driver. Along with driving, Lorraine has been a companion for the elderly for two years. She said she has always been a volunteer and that it's in her blood from how she was raised.

Recently she drove a sight-impaired woman to the train station. The woman had given up visiting friends and family in New York City. She told Lorraine that because of ITN, she "had her wings back."

To learn more about volunteering, please visit your local affiliate [website](#).



## Liberty Mutual Debuts "Driver Seat Game"

Liberty Mutual, ITNAmerica's national insurance partner, launched its online [Driver Seat Game](#), a video game that allows players of all ages to experience first-hand the physical and cognitive limitations that older drivers may experience while operating a motor vehicle. The goal of the [game](#) is to make players sensitive to the physical obstacles faced by their parents at various stages of aging and inspire conversations between adult children and their senior parents.

To take the experience even further, Liberty Mutual unveiled the Driver Seat Game by inviting members of the media to participate in a closed-course driving experience based on the game at Rentschler Field in East Hartford, Conn. Reporters put on movement restricting "senior simulator suits" and special vision-impairing glasses to help simulate the effects of aging on driving ability.

### A Conversation Starter

The Driver Seat Game is designed to be a conversation starter. Greg Gordon, senior vice president of Consumer Marketing at Liberty Mutual, said, "Most families are simply not addressing the very important issue of senior mobility, perhaps because they feel ill-equipped on how to approach it. The game and our other online resources at [www.libertymutual.com/seniordriving](http://www.libertymutual.com/seniordriving) can help overcome that reluctance."

Indeed, according to a recent national survey of Baby Boomers and senior drivers by Liberty Mutual, the vast majority (75 percent) of adult children say neither they nor anyone to their knowledge has ever spoken to their parents about driving safety issues. An even greater percentage of seniors (88 percent) say no one has had these conversations with them.

Importantly, the survey sheds light on a possible reason why Boomers and their aging parents don't discuss driving safety. More than half of Boomers (58 percent) think their parents would find a conversation about changing their driving habits "uncomfortable," and more than one in three (38 percent) believe their parents would "be angered" by such a discussion. Encouragingly, seniors report this isn't the case. Only one-quarter (24 percent) say they would find the conversation "uncomfortable," and 9 percent say they would "be angered." Further, 92 percent of seniors say their adult children "have a right" to raise this issue with them.

Liberty Mutual's Driver Seat Game is launched in an era when more seniors than ever are driving. According to the most recent data available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), there were more than 30 million Americans ages 65 and older on the road in 2007. Of those, 196,000 were injured in car crashes, and drivers from this age group constituted 14 percent of the total traffic fatalities and 14

percent of passenger fatalities that year.

ITNAmerica affiliates provide 24/7, personalized rides to seniors who limit or stop driving. ITN volunteers from the local community and a small paid staff use their own or donated cars to bring member-riders to and from various errands, including medical appointments and grocery shopping; to work and to the gym; and a host of social and personal local destinations.

### The Driver Seat Game

"Today's older Americans are among the most active and community-engaged seniors in our nation's history, and mobility and independence are essential to preserve those great qualities," said ITNAmerica Founder and President, Katherine Freund. "The online tools, including the new Driver Seat Game, are welcome resources that seniors and their families need to make responsible driving decisions."



## The Older Driver Evaluation Process

Healthcare practitioners play an important role in addressing driving safety with their patients.

Changes that often come with age—vision and hearing loss, slower reaction times, chronic illness and medication—can affect driving ability. The problem is that patients might not know it.

For example, a member of [ITNPortland](#) lost her license after being involved in a car accident. She attempted to regain her license, only to fail the test three times. Due to a back problem, she is unable to shift in her seat to see behind her. While she uses the ITN service, she still hopes to return to driving, and keeps her car dormant in her garage. She is slowly making the transition away from driving, at her own pace, while keeping up with her activities as a member of [ITNPortland](#).

Given that driving is strongly linked to independence, the thought of losing the ability to drive can be traumatic. Planning ahead before there is a crisis and approaching driving retirement as a process rather than as a single event is recommended.<sup>1</sup> Those who counsel seniors and their family members should take a solution-focused approach with an emphasis on the benefits of alternative transportation rather than on any loss associated with not driving.<sup>2</sup>

Funded in part by a grant from the [Silver Century Foundation](#), ITNAmerica researchers conducted a pilot study with seven driving evaluation specialists in the state of Maine. The primary focus of the study was to learn how the introduction of alternative transportation into the driving evaluation process might impact the older adult's transition to driving cessation. Occupational therapists, physicians, and driving instructors were asked to incorporate alternative transportation information into their routine driving evaluation process and discussions and to document each of those discussions using uniform reporting forms. In-depth interviews were conducted with the evaluation specialists at two points in time; before and after the alternative transportation information was incorporated into their driving evaluation process and discussions.

### Selected Study Findings

The physicians interviewed said patients are reluctant to bring up the driving issue during the physical exam. One geriatrician remarked, "There are two consistent fears that the older patient has when they walk through our doors: the first is the fear of having to move out of their home, and the second is the fear that they won't be able to drive anymore." During the follow-up, we learned that when a family member was present during the discussion of alternative transportation, the patient's reaction was usually good and both patient and family member accepted the recommended plan. The physician said that using the ITN membership brochure during the discussion can be very useful because he doesn't have to make a final decision that the patient should not drive, but is able to offer an alternative way of getting around that the patient can voluntarily choose to use. It saves face and patients don't feel they've had a privilege taken away.

One of the occupational therapists (OT) said one easy way to introduce the concept of alternative transportation is during the consent process, for example, by adding the following statement: "If we find that you are not safe to drive then I can help you find alternative means of transportation." If there are red flags before the road test the OT might say, "Have you thought about retiring from driving or limiting your driving? Have you ever heard of ITN?" Some patients don't want to discuss it at all, and will typically respond by saying their life is over and they are ready to die. Family members are almost always receptive to the discussion. They tend to be relieved when the OT says the patient should not be driving because they have tried to make that point themselves. Patients are usually not so interested in the alternatives presented, but family members want all the information they can get.

The OT often recommends the [Safe Driving for Mature Operators](#) class, part of the AAA Driver Improvement Program, to patients who are still able to drive. The class is informational and non-threatening since it does not involve testing or reporting to the state.

Most who take the driver evaluation class, even those in their 90s, believe that retirement from driving is a long way off and they do not want to worry about it now. The instructor often broaches the subject by asking, "What would you do if you had to give up your license?" She

frequently advises people to restrict their driving to daytime and good weather and recommends people use ITN in bad weather, at night or for highway trips. Many are surprised to learn they can use ITN to supplement their own driving.

Results of this pilot study indicate that alternative transportation discussions with older drivers are particularly beneficial when a family member is present. The findings also suggest that older drivers are more receptive to the discussion when it occurs early in the process and before they are told they must stop driving entirely. Professionals involved in the older driver evaluation process are willing to initiate the dialogue about transportation alternatives more often and at earlier points throughout the evaluation process with older drivers. Providing the health care community with forms and information about local alternatives can alter the health care professional's practice behavior as it serves as a reminder to discuss alternatives to driving with patients.

In the future, older driver evaluation specialists should be encouraged to initiate the dialogue about alternatives more often with older patients who are still driving to help them plan for the future. Also, physicians should be educated so they recognize that many older adults may find it difficult to request certain rides from family members for fear they will become a burden and might still benefit from information about other transportation options. When older drivers and their family members receive information about alternatives early in the process the transition to non-driving can become a planned and supportive process.

For more information about this research study, please contact Jackie Vine at [Research@ITNAmerica.org](mailto:Research@ITNAmerica.org).

<sup>1</sup>Dickerson, A.E., Molnar, L.J., Eby, D.W., Adler, G., Bedard, M., Berg-Weger, M., Classen, S., Foley, D., Horowitz, A., Kerschner, H., Page, O., Silverstein, N.M., Staplin, L., Trujillo, L. (2007). Transportation and Aging: A Research Agenda for Advancing Safe Mobility. *The Gerontologist*, 47(5), 578-590.

<sup>2</sup>Stephens, B.W., McCarthy, D.P., Marsiske, M., Shechtman, O., Classen, S., Justiss, M., Mann, W.C. (2005). International older driver consensus conference on assessment, remediation and counseling for transportation alternatives: Summary and recommendations. In *Community Mobility: Driving and Transportation Alternatives for Older Persons*, The Haworth Press, Inc., 103-121.

---

The Road Ahead is the e-newsletter of ITNAmerica, and is generously supported by The [Atlantic Philanthropies](#).  
© 2008 ITNAmerica. [ITNAmerica.org](#). All Rights Reserved.

Subscribe to our newsletter...

Email:

Privacy by  SafeSubscribe<sup>SM</sup>