

## Why I'm a Volunteer Driver for ITNStCharles By Dorothy Gerner

My 79 year old mother has always been extremely independent. Being independent is at the core of who she is. Mom has eight loving children who would do anything for her as she has always been there for us.

I always promised that when the day came that it was no longer safe for her to drive, I would do everything in my power to ensure that she could continue to be active and come and go as she pleased without feeling like a burden to her kids (impossible for us to ever consider her a burden). I told her I would secure an account for her with a cab company.

The time has now come where it is no longer safe for her or for others for her to be driving. The conversation I had with her began in a joking matter about how her car looked like she was driving in NASCAR races. She laughed and we continued to talk about her driving and other options. By the next day, she was in tears telling my sister that she felt like I was taking her independence away. My sister, the protector of Mom, told me that, "Mom just needs to pay more attention to her driving." My sister was angry with me for bringing this up with Mom, but in my heart, I knew I could no longer avoid the discussion, before something tragic occurred that Mom would never be able to live with.

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## Annual Appeal: Help Build a Strong Foundation

Please consider making a special gift this year to honor the initial success of this new, nonprofit service that provides door-through-door rides to seniors and the visually impaired. Our goal is to raise \$5,000 to begin to build a sound financial footing for the future. All donations made before the end of the year are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law for the 2010 tax year. Administrative fees and rider fares cover less than half the true costs of our operations, so your support is critical to our future success.

### Gift Certificates

The gift of rides looks good on everyone, never expires, and you can never have too many! A gift certificate can be used for practical reasons or for fun. Call 636.329.0888 to order.



### Volunteer Driver (Continued from page 1)

I could not understand why she was so upset. In fact, I was shocked and angry about how she reacted. I thought her of all people would know and be willing to give up her license when that time came. You see, 40 years ago, her son Arthur, my brother age 5 at the time, was killed by a 78 year old driver who instead of hitting the break when they collided, panicked and hit the gas, dragging him to his death. In fact, she later denied that she had even hit Arthur.

Because another person was unwilling to give up her license when obviously she should not have been driving, Arthur was needlessly torn from our lives. Our lives were forever changed by this accident. Our family was never the same. Our family remained broken for a long time. We will miss Arthur forever.

After the response from our discussion, I decided I needed to reach out to the community and find as many resources as possible for Mom so that indeed she could work through this life changing transition. I set up an account with the local taxi service. I called around and finally found ITN. I went to the ITN website and thought that it looked like a great organization. I spoke with Althea and she invited me to an orientation and I became a volunteer.

I thought that perhaps if my Mom could see that I was truly committed to helping others that could not drive, she would understand that with all my heart, while I cannot possibly understand what she is feeling, she would know that I do not want people to drive that should not, and I do not want people who want to be independent not to be able to be.

My Mom is now signed up with ITN and has an account with a taxi service. She has decided that she will not license her car when it is due for renewal in February. While this is a very difficult time for her, with organizations like ITN, she will indeed be able to be independent.

I am grateful to Althea for starting ITN in St. Charles. Her commitment and dedication to this organization will give people the independence they so desire. ITN is lucky to have Chris; he's a pleasure to work with. I personally am grateful to ITN for giving me an opportunity to volunteer and help others be independent.

## Volunteer of the Year

I had the opportunity to attend the annual conference of ITNAmerica in Portland, Maine in October, 2010. The fall foliage was lovely, there were meetings and breakout sessions that were helpful, and the seafood was delicious. To conclude the conference, there was an awards luncheon planned and all the affiliates from around the country were in attendance. Each affiliate had been asked to submit a person's name who had been the most helpful in furthering the mission of the Independent Transportation Network.

As acting Executive Director (and a volunteer myself), I asked our Board of Directors to make a suggestion as to who might be a good candidate. I heard nothing back from the Board members so I submitted Chris Schulte as our candidate for Volunteer of the Year for ITNStCharles.



Althea West  
Executive Director

### Welcome New Members!

Jeannette Santagato  
Gerri Corzine  
Mr. & Mrs. Cummings  
Margaret Gerner  
Mr. & Mrs. Haertling  
Reacy Lee  
Betty Mitchell  
Mary Pellerito  
Zachary Nevels  
Marcella Spencer  
Elaine Epperhart

### Welcome New Volunteers

Janet Capitanelli  
Dorothy Gerner  
Leslie Cuppett  
Phillip Paul  
Kerry Schulte

### ITNStCharles Going Green

#### Receive ITNExpress via Email!

Along with everybody else these days, we are watching our costs carefully! Postage, paper and ink really add up, as well as add to our landfills!

If you received a paper copy of this newsletter, it means that we don't have your email address. If you have an email address and would like to help us save money, and the environment, please email us at [info@ITNstcharles.org](mailto:info@ITNstcharles.org) and put "Switch to email" in the subject line.

We will add your address to the system and you will receive future mailings via email.



I was relaxed and having a wonderful lunch when the Director of ITNAmerica announced that I had won the national Volunteer of the Year award! Without my knowledge, the ITNStCharles Board members had submitted my name to the headquarters as a candidate.

What a surprise and honor to be given the award! And the best part is that my right-hand man, Chris Sculte was also named Volunteer of the Year award for ITNStCharles! So, truly this was a win/win for everyone, and I'm pleased to share with our riders that you have two very dedicated, hard-working staff members who are committed to developing and growing ITNStCharles.

Althea West, MA, LTCP, CMC



Chris & Kerri  
Schulte

*“Look Who’s Riding”*  
Riding Home with Jim, aka “Santa Claus”



On a dreary drizzling afternoon, Althea and I pulled into the lot of a local Sam’s Club. We made our way past the masses of shoppers pushing carts, to the entrance where a joyful man suited in a Sam’s Club uniform greeted us. “You must be the guy here to take my picture. I bet you didn’t know you are photographing a celebrity,” he said jokingly. His snowy “santa-esque” beard further accentuated his affable expression.

It was quite evident why he might be mistaken for Santa Claus. Once Jim was comfortable in the front seat of the car, Althea, Jim, and I drove out of the lot in route to his residence.

Jim is never without something to say, and our conversation ranged from why I’m interested in ITN*StCharles* to what kind of day he had at Sam’s. Customer service is Jim’s gift, and he explained how important he feels it is to make sure each customer who comes in the door at Sam’s feels welcome and appreciated.

Once we arrived at his home, Jim invited us in to take more pictures of him as Santa, and to tell us stories of his adventures as Santa Claus in the St. Louis Christmas Parade and all the children’s events he has attended over the years. I asked him questions about how the ITN*StCharles* transportation service is working for him, and if there were any suggestions he had for improvement. He assured me that ITN*StCharles* is reliable in helping him to get back and forth to work, and that working is an important part of his life. He said, “If I didn’t go to work, what would I do all day?”



As a student of Gerontology, I have lots to learn about how to age successfully and how to prepare for the transitions all of us will face. I look forward to working with ITN*StCharles* because I know that providing transportation can help older adults remain at home and stay independent as long as possible. I look forward to meeting more riders who have stories to tell and learning how to serve more effectively.

By: David Ruvolo, Intern  
Graduate Student/Gerontology  
University of Missouri, St. Louis

*Note: If you or someone you know would like more information about ITN*StCharles*, please contact us at 636-329-0888 or [info@itnstcharles.org](mailto:info@itnstcharles.org).*