

ITNStCharles closes the circle

For Sheldon Suroff, ITNStCharles closes a circle that started in 1993 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) allows reporting an impaired driver through a signed affidavit by those closest to the situation: family members, law enforcement and the medical community. 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, 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.

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 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 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

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Turn your unused car into rides with Car Trade!

You may have retired from driving, but you still have all the same appointments, social engagements and errands to run. If you have a car just sitting in your driveway, costing you money in insurance, registration, and upkeep, make it work for you by trading it to ITN for an equal value in rides.

We will send a representative to your home to help you set a price for your vehicle. Once you are satisfied, your ITN Car-Trade funds your Personal Transportation Account™ for rides—wherever you want or need to go. ITN will collect your vehicle.

If you are not a member of ITN or are interested in donating a car rather than trading it for credits, we accept car donations and provide receipts so that you can claim your tax deduction. Donations will be accepted in late 2009. Please call us at 636-329-0888 to get the process rolling.

Meet Sherry Hartz, Executive director!

Sherry Hartz brings to ITN*StCharles* a heart for seniors and a proven track record of building a senior transportation program. While working at Mid-East Area Agency on Aging, she helped develop the STAR Program (Senior Transportation and Rides) for St. Charles County, for which she received a grant and an award from The Beverly Foundation.



In addition to serving as a social worker in senior housing, she has counseled and assisted countless clients as a financial assistance care manager during recent financially turbulent times.

Sherry has owned and managed her own business, and has experience as a board member of an international, non-profit organization. She has also started and currently helps manage her own non-profit. In her spare time, while raising four children, she served as a volunteer for many local and national organizations.

A graduate of the University of Missouri—St. Louis, Sherry brings a touch of Southern charm from her native Alabama to all personal interactions. She looks forward to finding innovative solutions to the problem of senior transportation and providing a sustainable system that will allow seniors to have dignified and independent rides. She looks forward, also, to having YOU join her in the process.

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testing and are effectively de-licensed. The law appears fair, reduces the crash rate of this group, and in that way improves traffic safety.”

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,” Sheldon said.

“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.

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.

Catch the Vision of ITNStCharles

Since the office doors of ITNStCharles opened in May, a flurry of activity and much interest has been generated as we respond to local civic leaders, adult children who serve as caregivers, and interested seniors who contact our office for information and membership applications. It is gratifying to see such support and interest in what ITNStCharles brings to the region. The excitement is building as ITNStCharles moves toward the celebration of First Rides in early autumn 2009.

As we anticipate the beginning of our first actual transport, we recognize that rider-memberships and fares will not support the entirety of our operation. Even when ITNStCharles is economically sustainable – in about its fifth year of operations – just over half of its revenue will come from rider memberships and fares. The remainder must come from local community support. That’s where you come in. Please consider becoming a Friend of ITNStCharles. With your tax-deductible gift of \$50, you help us move towards sustainability as well as show your support for a program that melds both business and charitable elements to address a societal challenge. Please consider joining in this community-based, grass-roots effort to provide a mobility solution to seniors who need transportation options.

Join us in our efforts by your financial support or volunteerism. We welcome the talents and treasures local citizens bring to this new organization. Let’s ensure that this wonderful program gets off to a good start!

Member-Donor Form

To become a member-donor, simply fill out the following form and mail it, along with your check, to ITNStCharles, 623 Breeze View Lane, St. Charles, MO 63304.

*Please make checks payable to ITNStCharles.

Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____

Apt. #: _____ **City:** _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Phone Number: (____) _____ - _____ **Email Address:** _____

I have enclosed (check all that apply):

- ◆ \$50 to become a member-donor
- ◆ Additional tax deductible donation: _____
- ◆ I am interested in volunteering in the following ways :
 _____ volunteer driver _____ office staff _____ hosting information sessions _____ other

Thank you for supporting transportation for seniors and people with visual impairment!



Drivers: Help us provide door-through-door transportation to people over 65 and adults with visual impairments. Must be friendly and willing to lend a steadying hand. May need to help rider carry items to and from the car.

Commitment: Drive a minimum of three hours per month for a year. Only drive when and where you want.

Compensation: Gas reimbursement plus the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping people stay independent and healthy by taking them to visit friends, to the gym, to the mall or to a medical appointment. Transportation Social Security™ in the form of earned transportation credits for the miles you drive.

Call for more information (636) 329-0888 or visit our website www.ITNStCharles.org.

Mailing Label