

## **2018 Giving Challenge – Thank You!** **You Were The One!**

Thank you to all who made donations to ITN SunCoast during the 2018 Giving Challenge. The strong support we received is very important financially. We raised nearly \$15,000! At the same time, it also is important as an indicator of community support for the services we provide. Without our volunteer drivers and the donations we receive, we would not be able to continue providing rides. On behalf of our riders, Board of Directors and staff at ITN SunCoast, thank you for your vote of confidence!

## **Thanks to Goodwill Manasota** **You're the Best!**

In addition to securing donations and the “match” generously provided by The Patterson Foundation, the 2018 Giving Challenge also included a number of prizes as incentives to local non-profits to be creative, form partnerships and play full out during the Giving Challenge season. Goodwill Manasota was our non-profit partner and they were amazing! We partnered with Goodwill in competing for “Best Giving Challenge Community Event” and “Best Nonprofit Partnership”. While the winners of these contests will be announced later this month, our partnership with Goodwill was energizing and inspiring. Goodwill took the lead in kicking off the Giving Challenge with “Oh, the Places We’ll Go Road Trip, filming celebrity Car Karaoke and the Be The One – Let’s Go Places Fair on May 1. Goodwill was very generous with their time and resources! Veronica Brandon Miller (Vice President, Foundation) was extraordinary in her creativity and energy, and Margie Genter (Vice President, Mission Services) was terrific as the initiator of the partnership and with planning the campaign. THANK YOU Goodwill Manasota for being the BEST non-profit partner we could have imagined!

## **Hurricane Season is Nearly Here – Plan Ahead**

A year ago, Eugene, one of our riders, asked me if ITN SunCoast would be there if he needed to evacuate his home due to an approaching hurricane. He lives alone, has no family in the area, and depends on us for his transportation. It was a sobering conversation. As it turns out, during Hurricane Irma, we did provide some rides to members and non-members to shelters with return rides. We had some amazing drivers who were willing to brave the elements at times when there were very few on the road.

Over the past few months I have thought further about Eugene's question and have taken some action in response. I met with staff of Sarasota County Emergency Management. This agency is charged with the development and maintenance of a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. I am pleased to say that ITN SunCoast is now part of the plan as a transportation asset.

If you are in the situation where you will need transportation in order to evacuate from your home in the event of a hurricane, there are 2 things you should do to plan for the future: register with Sarasota County for public transportation during a storm and call ITN SunCoast and register with us. Here are the instructions for registering with the County.

*For those who cannot drive or otherwise be transported by family, friends or neighbors, Sarasota County will provide last-resort, free bus transportation for you and your pets (along with a limited amount of supplies) to and from a general population evacuation center. Transportation will be offered at designated rally points throughout the county.*

*Complete the online registration form. The link is:*

*[https://scgovmedicalneeds.formstack.com/forms/transportation\\_dependent\\_registration](https://scgovmedicalneeds.formstack.com/forms/transportation_dependent_registration)*

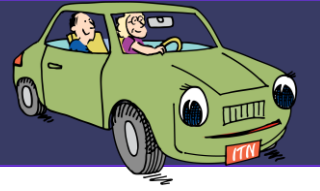
*All county libraries are available to help with online registration for those without a computer or you can call ITN SunCoast. The form will include guidance for those who cannot drive or walk to a designated rally point.*

*Rally points may change depending on the severity of a storm. Residents who pre-register will receive an automated telephone message with information about the location of rally points and when they will be picked up.*

*Important: The online registration process will cease when landfall is expected within 60 hours.*

## **Changes in Rides – Don't Wait for Your Confirmation Call**

If you make a ride request and subsequently there is a change in your plans, please do not wait until your confirmation call to tell us of the change. Waiting until your confirmation call to tell us that you no longer need the ride, that your pickup time or return time has changed, or that you would like to make an additional stop along the way creates significant problems for us. Rich, our incredible dispatcher, works very hard in scheduling rides, no small task when there are days with over 100 ride requests. One change in the schedule can upset the apple cart and cause all sorts of problems. Please work with us and call sooner rather than later if your plans change. Thank you!



## **ITN Member Spotlight...Aleida Saenz**

By Linsea Mohr

In the midst of post-Cold War 1960s Cuba, political tides turned tumultuous when Fidel Castro ascended to power and promulgated Communism and dictatorship. There were rumblings that the government would take away children of the middle class and elites. Parents panicked. Given the choice of raising their children in oppressive Cuba or releasing them to live in freedom of the United States, many parents chose the latter--never knowing if they would reunite. It was a heart-wrenching decision.

It was a point of impasse for ITN rider Aleida Saenz, her husband and their three children. Saenz, 87, did the unthinkable and sent her children to live in the United States. Years later, she realized her dreams of her family reuniting when she and her husband immigrated here in 1966.

“It wasn’t easy to get out,” she recalls. “My husband was a physician and the government was adamant that he remain in Cuba. I remember many nights when cars would arrive filled with militia men and machine guns (pointed at us) to scare us into staying.”

Undaunted, Aleida worked tirelessly to find a way for both of them to leave together. Eventually, she met a woman who worked with the government who helped her husband gain permission to leave. Ultimately, the decision was a good one for the family and the United States was good to the Saenz family.

The family flourished in the land of opportunity. Initially, they started out settled in Warren, Ohio where her husband practiced as a physician. A year later The following year, they moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Later, they relocated to Miami where Aleida received an Associate’s Degree in accounting and worked in the Food-Service Accounting Department of Dade County Schools for 28 years.

These days, Aleida feels lucky to bask in Sarasota sun and yet maintain her independence by living in her own apartment behind her daughter’s house. Her secret to longevity has been to savor her blessings along the way and appreciate the present moment of each new day.

The overriding theme of her life has been her constant faith. She has always been active in the Catholic Church. A lifetime Catholic Church patron, ITN drivers continue to take her to church on Sundays for mass and Wednesdays for Bible Study class. “Family and faith are my two biggest blessings,” she says with certainty.

Her recipe for a long, happy and healthy life has been to keep busy and try to stay away from unhealthy food. She routinely attends church. In addition to church activities, she participates in fitness classes along with spending time with her family, extended family and her dog. She used to paint and knit but doesn't do it anymore. Sometimes she attends the ballet with her daughter because it takes her back to a fond memory where she was a ballet student as a child in Cuba.

She credits ITN for helping her stay active. "The service is great," she says. "The drivers are very reliable and that's important. I appreciate that the drivers who pick me up are very nice."

Aleida's experience epitomizes the American Dream. She overcame many obstacles to come here and has thrived. Although she endured many hardships, she often feels compassion for her Cuban comrades who didn't make it out and suffered under the Castro regime. Her optimistic outlook is infectious as is her courageous, pioneering spirit; both have propelled her to a wonderful life beyond the scope of her wildest childhood dreams.

### **Do You Know Jane Brody?**

We are making plans for our next "Come Ride With Us" luncheon that will take place next January. We are looking for a keynote speaker and some have suggested Jane Brody, a health and wellness columnist for The New York Times. Are you familiar with Jane Brody? Would you like to hear her speak at our luncheon? Do you have other suggestions? Give us a call or send us an email with your thoughts! Thanks!

### **Email – Do You Use It?**

Email is a fast and inexpensive way to communicate. At the same time, we know that a number of our members do not use email. That said, we are getting an increasing number of ride requests thru email, which is a good thing. Help us figure out who among you we can communicate with using email. For example, we sometimes get offers of free tickets from local theaters a day or two in advance of a show. In this case, email is the quickest way to let you know about this. If you use email, send us one at [info@itnsuncoast.org](mailto:info@itnsuncoast.org) and let us know that it is an effective way of communicating with you. Thanks!

### **Ambassador Program – We Need Volunteers!**

We need volunteers! We need volunteer for lots of reasons including drivers, office volunteers and people who can work from home and help us figure out what to include in our Let's Go Places! calendar. Do you or someone you know have some time to help us out? Please call Jennifer in the office – (941) 364-7530! By the way, we now call our volunteers "Ambassadors". How can you resist a title like that! Give us call and make a difference!

**Thank you for being a member/supporter of ITN SunCoast!!**