

Happy New Year

From all of us at ITN SunCoast, we hope you enjoyed the holiday season and wish you a healthy and happy 2018! You can count on us to get you to where you need and want to go. We appreciate our relationship with you and will do all we can to support you in living a joyful and fulfilling life!

“It’s Never Too Late to be Happy”

A quote from Jane Fonda on her 80th birthday this past December.

At ITN SunCoast, we have the privilege of making many new friends (our members/rides), a number of whom happen to be in their 80s and 90s. You are an inspiration to us. While some of you are facing medical issues that slow you down a bit, your enthusiasm for life and your interest in continuing to live life fully challenges the widely held view of older people.

The image that older people hang around all day doing nothing except for an occasional game of bingo is simply not accurate. At the same time, it is not uncommon for older individuals to feel increasingly isolated as their social network of family and friends gets smaller due to the passing of people near and dear to you. As noted by Dr. Rich Luker, the social psychologist who spoke at our December luncheon, the keys to living a fulfilling life are: have love, have purpose, and keep moving.

Let’s Go Places!, the new service we launched a few months ago, is our attempt to help you stay active, meet a few new people, and continue to live life fully. ***Let’s Go Places!*** provides an exciting monthly calendar of activities. You will be picked up at your home, share the ride with two or three friends or new acquaintances, go to the specified destination, and get a ride home at the scheduled return time. Door-to-door, round-trip rides to scheduled activities cost \$15. As an added benefit, we are negotiating **discounts** for ***Let’s Go Places!*** participants at local businesses to get you bargain prices.

You do not need to be an ITN SunCoast member to go on a Let’s Go Places! trip. This service is open to anyone age 60+ or any adult with vision limitations living in the Sarasota and Venice areas. To take advantage of ***Let’s Go Places!***, you need to make a reservation at least 3 business days before the scheduled activity. You can do this by calling ITN SunCoast at 941-364-7530 or emailing us at info@itnsuncoast.org.

Trips From Venice to Sarasota Theaters

We received a call from one of our Venice members who wants to go to the theater in Sarasota. Since the cost of a ride from Venice to Sarasota can be pricy, she is looking for one or two other people who would like to make the trip and share the cost. Anyone interested? Details about which performance to go to and the date can be worked out later. Give us a call at 941-364-7520 and ask for Megan.

Free Rides to Eye Appointments - An Update

As you know, we are able to provide free rides to eye appointments as the result of a generous grant from Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc. The grant is for a specific amount of money on an annual basis. Since the number of eye appointment rides we provide varies from month to month, we periodically need to adjust what rides are covered to stay within the limits of the grant. The good news is that there are enough funds available so we can provide free rides both to and from eye appointments through January and February. We are not sure if this will be the case in March. We are hopeful that the grant will be renewed in April so that the free eye rides program will continue throughout 2018. We will keep you informed.

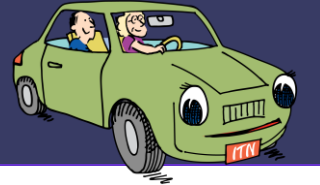
Looking for a Lift Van

We recently received a call from someone looking for a ride and the person uses a personal, motorized vehicle. Unfortunately, currently we do not have a driver who has a vehicle that can accommodate such a request. At the same time, we want to be able to meet the transportation needs of all people in the area. So, does anyone have or know of a lift van that we could use to give rides to people who have that need? Give us a call!

Road Scholar Program Update

Our mission at ITN SunCoast is to provide convenient, comfortable, and affordable transportation to all individuals in Sarasota and Manatee Counties who are 60+ and any adult with a vision limitation regardless of their financial situation. Toward that end, our Road Scholar Program makes rides available to individuals living on limited incomes at a reduced cost. We are proud to note that in 2017 we provided over 1800 Road Scholar rides, double the number we gave in 2016. This represents 12% of the 15,000 rides we provided in 2017.

The Road Scholar Program does add to the financial challenge we face in being able to sustain our services. At the same time, we have been able to secure financial support in general and specifically for this program thanks to the generosity of local foundations and individuals. We are pleased to announce that we are off to a good start in 2018 having recently received grants targeted to the Road Scholar Program from the Sarasota County Aging Network, the Manatee County Aging Network, and the MSC Foundation (Michael Saunders). Thank you for your support!



Pick Up Service Available Thru ITN SunCoast

We do offer a pick-up service to all of our members. Do you need to pick-up a filled prescription or anything else and don't feel like going out yourself? Give us a call and we will take care of it for you. For this service, we charge the cost of the ride from the pick-up location to your home plus a \$3.00 pick-up charge.

Credit Card Convenience Fee

The number of ITN SunCoast members who pay their monthly statements by credit card has increased quite a lot. While we recognize the convenience of paying this way, the credit card processing fees we have to pay has become a significant expense. As the result, beginning January 1, 2018 we are charging a \$3.00 per transaction credit card convenience fee.

Longboat Key – Siesta Key Surcharge

If you live on Longboat Key or Siesta Key, you know that traffic during season can be a real challenge. Depending upon the time of day, it can take double or triple the normal amount of time to reach a destination, particularly on the mainland. This situation has made it difficult to find drivers willing to provide rides to and from the Keys during the season. In response to the legitimate concerns of our drivers, beginning January 1 through April 30, in the event of heavy traffic, we will be charging riders for additional time needed to get to and from the Keys at a rate of \$15 per hour calculated in 15 minute increments. We will use the travel time calculated in our ITN Rides software as the baseline. Please call us if you have any questions about this. We want to be fair to both our riders and drivers.

Want to Sell Your Car? We Make It Easy

ITN SunCoast makes selling your car quick and easy and we get great prices for you! We will pick up your car and make arrangements for its sale. With the proceeds, you can put some of it in your personal transportation account with us to cover the cost of future rides and use the balance as a donation. All donations to ITN SunCoast are tax deductible since we are a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization. For more information, call us at 941-364-7530.

Friendly Reminders

- Our office hours are 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, Monday thru Friday and we may be reached by calling 941-364-7530. If you call us after 2 pm, we will get back to you the following day. **In case of an emergency after hours or on the weekend, call 941-928-6506.**
- You may request a ride for any reason, on any day of the week including weekends, at any time of the day or night to anywhere within Sarasota and Manatee Counties. **Please make your ride request by 1 pm the day before you want a ride.**
- **For rides you need on Sundays and Mondays, please call in your ride requests by 1 pm the previous Friday.** On Friday afternoons, we set the schedules for Saturday, Sunday and Monday rides.
- If the details of a particular ride change after you have called us and made the ride request, please let us know asap and do not wait until you receive the confirmation call. Our ride schedules are pretty set by the time of the confirmation calls so making changes at that time can cause problems for us.
- When you call to make a ride request, please be prepared to give us your pickup and destination addresses and the times when you want to get picked up for both portions of your travels.
- You now have the option of submitting ride requests through email. Requests should be sent to info@itnsuncoast.org.
- You are welcome to have friends join you for rides to wherever you want to go. Your friends do not have to be ITN SunCoast members and there will be an additional charge of \$2.50 per person per ride.

You may request rides for friends to visit you at your home. In this case, we will charge you, our member, the regular fare for the ride requested and it will be up to you to collect the charge or not from your friend.

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

Arthur Lerman, Executive Director

Susan Shaw, Executive Assistant

Rich Henderson, Dispatcher

Megan Radish, Administrative Assistant