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VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED FOR SENIOR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

Wood-Ridge, May 2014 – In an effort to meet the growing demands of New Jersey's rapidly aging population, Meadowlink is currently seeking volunteer drivers for its Senior Transportation Program, which provides low-cost, safe and reliable transportation service for those who can no longer drive themselves.

"Volunteer drivers not only make a meaningful difference in the communities," said Krishna Murthy, Executive Director of Meadowlink, "But at the same time, they enjoy incentives and get an opportunity to decrease the cost of their personal auto insurance."

The transportation program, dubbed *Community Cars*, has been serving seniors throughout Northeast New Jersey, and has been especially popular in North Arlington, for the last six years. The program provides affordable and flexible transportation for seniors; rides are not restricted and can be used for shopping, lunches with friends, or salon and medical appointments. This type of transportation may seem trivial, but it helps to combat the isolation and helplessness that can sometimes accompany old age. The independence lost by being unable or unwilling to drive can be very costly, both physically and mentally. The *Community Cars* program aims to cater to those seniors, and help them regain some of their freedom -- and its volunteer drivers provide some friendly company along the way -- for a fraction of the cost of taxi services. Last year, Meadowlink's dedicated team of volunteer drivers provided over 10,000 rides.

In exchange for donating a few hours a week, volunteer drivers enjoy a host of benefits, including:

- A fun, easy way to make a real difference in their communities
- A free defensive driving course, which may lower the cost of their personal auto insurance
- A free ride for every four hours of volunteer service. Volunteers may even bank their hours for their use or transfer their rides to others.

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While drivers donate their time, Meadowlink provides the cars and insurance. Late model Honda Accords, all fully insured and equipped with in-vehicle cameras, are provided for volunteer drivers.

The senior population in the U.S. has been growing steadily for the last six years in a trend that is slated to peak in 2030 at 71.5 million seniors. That's one in every five Americans. New Jersey alone will see a 60 percent increase in senior citizens. This aging trend was identified by Meadowlink and resulted in the creation of the senior transportation program.

Launched in 2008 with seed funding from the National Center for Senior Transportation (NCST), the program received the Beverly Foundation's prestigious STAR of Excellence Award. More recently in 2013, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) recognized Meadowlink as the "*Urban Community Transportation System of the Year*" for responding to the needs of the community with its model senior transportation program.

Meadowlink is a non-profit, public-private partnership that was created to improve access to affordable transportation, reduce traffic congestion and promote economic growth by working with business and government agencies to address the transportation challenges in Northern New Jersey. Under its EZ Ride brand, Meadowlink manages the state's largest carpool, vanpool and employee shuttle programs as well as senior transportation, special transportation and bike and pedestrian services.

For additional information, please visit Meadowlink online at: www.ezride.org. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer driver should call Kinga Skora at (201) 939-4242 or email kskora@ezride.org.

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