

Toyota Presents Sienna Mobility Vehicle to Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition Alongside National Volunteer Transportation Center

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SEDONA, Ariz. (July 25, 2017) – Today, Toyota presented a Toyota Sienna Mobility Vehicle to the 2016 STAR Awards Grand STAR winner, the [Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition](#), for excellence in volunteer transportation service. As part of the awards program, an additional \$50,000 in cash was presented to 20 winning volunteer transportation programs across America.

“Mobility is deeply personal, especially when the absence of it creates limitations and impacts quality of life and overall wellbeing,” Albert Smith, Jr., Toyota Motor North America group vice president, social innovation, said. “At Toyota, we believe mobility is the freedom to move and helps build connections to loved ones, the community and basic necessities. The Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition, and all the STAR award winning organizations, are true examples of this and are enriching the lives of community members in need through critical transportation solutions.”

This year’s Grand STAR Award winner, the Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition, provides volunteers, programs and services to support adults in need of assistance in maintaining their independence and quality of life at home. In 2016 alone, 350 volunteers provided services to more than 2,300 adults in need, including 23,000 unique trips and nearly 2,000 friendly visits.

“Toyota’s support of our mission to help older adults maintain connected independence through transportation services to medical and other appointments, rides to the grocery store, shopping, and other errands, is invaluable to our community,” Kent Ellsworth, executive director of Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition, said. “Our volunteers serve as the only transportation system for the greater Valley Verde area providing upwards of 200 trips a day.”

In its 16th year, the annual STAR Awards recognize outstanding volunteer transportation programs, and enable winners to continue the involvement of their volunteer drivers by promoting and providing transportation services. The awards are organized by the [National Volunteer Transportation Center](#) (NVTC). The NVTC provides technical and informational support to volunteer driver programs in the U.S.

“There are thousands of volunteer drivers across America, and these drivers are providing more than just a ride. They are combating unmet, specialized transportation needs within communities. We are proud to partner with Toyota and recognize this essential service that enables the freedom of mobility,” Helen Kerschner, Ph.D., Director of NVTC, said.

Each organizational applicant to the 2016 STAR Awards also received AARP Smart Driver training, courtesy of Toyota, to help ensure their volunteer drivers – and riders – remain safe and confident on the road.

2016 STAR AWARD WINNERS

GRAND STAR AWARD WINNER (Toyota Sienna Mobility Vehicle)

- Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition – Sedona, Ariz.

STAR AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE (\$10,000)

- ACC Senior Services, Sacramento, Calif.

STAR AWARDS FOR INNOVATION (\$7,000)

- Berthoud Golden Links, Inc./project RAFT – Berthoud, Colo.
- RSVP Driver Services – Madison, Wis.

STAR AWARDS FOR DISTINCTION (\$5,000)

- Good Shepherd Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers – Shepherd’s Town, W. Va.
- Neighbor Ride, Inc – Columbia, Md.

“FAST START” STAR AWARDS (\$1,500)

- JFS Patient Navigator Program – Framingham, Mass.
- Silver Spring Village – Silver Spring, Md.
- Ready Rides Transportation Assistance – Northwood, N.H.
- Senior Miles (Smiles) – Maryville, Tenn.

STAR AWARDS FOR MERIT (\$1,000)

- Ahwatukee YMCA Outreach Programs for Seniors – Phoenix
- Brandywine Village Network of Jewish Family Services – Wilmington, DE
- Drive A Senior Access – Round Rock, Texas
- Hears and Hands Faith in Action – Getzville, N.Y.
- Interfaith Caregivers of Washington County – West Bend, Wis.
- Island Volunteer Caregivers – Bainbridge Island, Wash.
- I Care, Inc. – Decatur, Ga.
- Molly’s Angels of Napa Valle – Napa, Calif.
- Ride Connect – Mount Kisco, N.Y.
- The Mustard Seed Project of Key Peninsula – Lakebay, Wash.