

INNOVATION BRIEF

FROM THE GIA RURAL AGING INITIATIVE

Getting Around with the Freedom Express

Project: The Freedom Express: Offering Free Transportation in Wickenburg, Arizona

Challenge: The lack of public transportation in Wickenburg, a town of just over 6,000 people, left many older adults isolated and lonely.

Objective: To find an affordable way to take older adults to doctors' appointments, grocery shopping, senior center activities and more, and to provide social interaction.

Program Description: The Arizona Age-Friendly Network supported the development of a transportation program, Freedom Express, through partners in Wickenburg. Freedom Express offers free rides to Wickenburg residents 60 years of age or older, five days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The program uses two leased vans and operates with one paid staff member who recruits and manages a group of volunteer drivers. The Salvation Army handles background checks, testing, and certification for all volunteers. While the service is free, Freedom Express solicits contributions to reduce operating costs.

Outcomes: Since its inception in January 2015, Freedom Express has provided 9,000 rides to local seniors with no transportation of their own.

Keys to Success:

- Finding a formal home for the program within local government.
- Providing interdisciplinary solutions (example: rides to the doctor address both transportation and health care needs).

Location: Wickenburg, Arizona





Lead Agency/Nonprofit: Foundation for Senior Living (FSL), which also operates as the Salvation Army Service Extension Unit, the Town of Wickenburg, and Wickenburg Community Services Corporation.

Funding: The program is funded in partnership with the Salvation Army, the Town of Wickenburg, and the Wickenburg Community Service Corporation. The Wellik Foundation and the Wulkan Foundation have provided grants, and an anonymous foundation has supplied \$65,000. The Town of Wickenburg has provided \$19,000 through Arizona State Lottery funding. The Wickenburg Salvation Army’s annual Red Kettle Campaign covers the \$2,600 monthly vehicle costs. The staff expense totals about \$60,000 annually.

For More Information:

Freedom Express website,
www.ci.wickenburg.az.us/1128/Dial-A-Ride-Transportation

“In rural projects, you can reach a greater percentage of the population and have such an impact. For example, only eight people in Wickenburg needed transportation to dialysis, but 100 percent of them received it. By supporting the development of Freedom Express, the Arizona Age-Friendly Network is not only giving rides—it’s saving lives.”

— Amy St. Peter, MPA
Assistant Director
Maricopa Association of Governments

