

# The Guardian Express

## ▶ Special Needs Chicago – Providing Hope and Support for the Elderly and Disabled

Added by GM on January 17, 2013.

Saved under Chicago, Illinois, Jim Donahue, U.S.



Special Needs Chicago recently opened to provide non-emergency, wheelchair accessible transportation services in the Chicago metro area, and companion calls for people nationwide. The new year is a good time for families to evaluate the needs of elderly or disabled relatives, as visits reveal just how fragile and in need of assistance they may be.

For transportation, Special Needs Chicago's client base is private pay individuals seeking service for themselves or loved ones, and healthcare organizations and corporate entities outsourcing rides, or referring them to a reliable source.

"After 10 years coordinating transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, it's clear to me that I want to focus my business on customer service, not sales volume," stated Michelle Dacy, owner of Special Needs Chicago. "People are not a number or line item on a spreadsheet. They are our patients, clients, family, loved ones and ourselves. It's a privilege to do my job and my kids are proud of my venture."

There are excellent and extensive city resources available for paratransit, but the sheer volume and guidelines leave a lot of room for private medicar service. Reliability, ease of reservations, availability in the city and suburbs, and an exceptional customer experience puts Special Needs Chicago in a unique category as a private provider.

Special Needs Chicago also offers companion calling services throughout the U.S. "The idea for companion calls came from talking to family members when we were coordinating their transportation. Sometimes it's a spouse in a caregiver role who wants to talk, other times it's a family member who needs a kind person to chat with their loved ones," according to Michelle Dacy.

For family, companion calls are a light, friendly 10 minute conversation and can be scheduled 1, 3, 5 or 7 times a week. For the healthcare industry, reducing hospital readmissions is a hot-button issue right now. Companion calls as one-time or ongoing discharge follow-ups are an excellent way to bring those numbers down.

In the U.S., approximately 65 million people are currently providing aid to loved ones in need. 55% of caregivers say they are overwhelmed by the amount of care their family members require. Further, Baby Boomers are increasingly becoming long-distance caretakers of elderly parents. The Baby Boomers are accustomed to paying for services and expecting high quality and results.