

Transportation Assistance: Tina's Story

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NBA Incubate Partner
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When most people prepare to go to work, they never have to worry about how they are going to get there. That's because they either have a vehicle to transport them, a friend or colleague to rideshare with, or they depend on public transportation.

But the same is not true for struggling families in a city like Memphis, Tennessee, where getting to and from work can be quite a challenge. In many situations, family and friends are not able to help. So, low-income families must depend on public transportation. The first problem with public transit in Memphis, however, is the system itself. City officials make no apologies for the reduction of public transportation services in poor and impoverished neighborhoods - even though they admit that the need is great. Officials say it

is simply an issue of economics. They have to place buses on routes with the most ridership and where riding the bus shows a financial return.

Tina J. makes the most of the transit system problems because she has no other means of transportation. So, she must rely on riding the bus to take her mother to and from the doctor and to and from other important appointments. "It's a real headache sometimes," she said. "But, we just do what we have to do to get where we need to go. I am most concerned when we have to go across town, and we need to pay extra money to get a transfer to another bus. It can be expensive, especially if I take any of my kids with me. Sometimes, we have to walk long distances to catch the bus, and the cost went up to \$3.50 per person round trip. That's a lot of money on my limited income."

Although she soon hopes to get a better job, Tina earns minimum wage working at a local cleaners. After taxes and other deductions, she takes home just around US \$220 a week. Since the bus fare was taking such a big chunk out of Tina's pay, HER Faith Ministries was able to help by providing a monthly bus pass which allowed her to transport herself and her mother to destinations and appointments across the city. The passes are provided through the ministry's transportation program which assists qualifying families in solving transportation problems. Tina qualifies because she works on a minimum wage job and receives government assistance.

Executive Director Elaine Sanford says Tina is typical of many people in Memphis who are trying to improve their lives but face obstacles such as adequate and affordable transportation. HER Faith Ministries launched its transportation assistance program in 2010 and has assisted countless families. "Let's face it, we will never get to a place where everyone has a car. So, public transportation is a necessity and the only viable option for some families right now. We feel that the ministry is providing a basic need and responding to a market demand for low-income families."

Tina has been using her bus pass to also search for a better paying job which will be closer than her current employment. "I need to find something on the better bus routes, so that I can get back and forth to work. I just thank HER Faith Ministries for helping us. It really makes a difference."

HER Faith Ministries, Inc., provides emergency food, clothing, rent and utility assistance, some medical, and transportation assistance for struggling families. Through assistance and grant support from the National Benevolent Association, the ministry has been able to extend services such as these to more needy families in Memphis. The ministry was founded in May 2008.

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