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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RSVP's Provide A Ride Program Serves as Transportation Alternative for Elderly Parents Who Can No Longer Drive

OKLAHOMA CITY— About one in five licensed drivers in the United States is over the age of 65. Driving is one of the last points of independence some seniors have to give up. This makes it difficult when a family has to have the conversation with an elderly loved one about whether or not it is safe for them to continue driving.

“It is a major life change,” said Faye Beam, coordinator for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Central Oklahoma’s Provide A Ride (PAR) program.

Provide-A-Ride is a free medical transportation program for seniors who are no longer able to drive to doctor’s appointments. Volunteers pick up seniors, take them to their appointments, wait with them, and return them home. Currently, volunteers take PAR clients to more than 300 physicians in the Oklahoma City metro area.

“I receive calls often from children concerned about their elderly parents driving,” Beam said. “All families face similar scenarios. Children become caregivers for their parents, and they worry about their well-being and safety.”

Some of the red flags Beam hears from family members about their elderly parents and driving include: parents getting lost, vision problems at night, easily distracted while driving, developing fear related to driving, or unable to keep up with the expenses of owning a vehicle.

Beam wants families to know that PAR can be a reliable, safe alternative form of transportation for their loved one and encourages family members to have their loved one call and talk with her about the program.

“I always try to make clients feel at ease and comfortable and in charge of scheduling their transportation to medical appointments,” she said.

As with new things, the PAR clients get used to their new form of transportation and most make friends with the volunteer drivers, Beam said.

“They have interesting conversations, and many look forward to the time spent with their Provide-A-Ride drivers,” Beam said.

Beam suggests taking gentle baby steps with elderly parents about the subject of driving.

“Give mom and dad time to think about giving up their vehicle,” she said.

Currently, the PAR program has 683 active clients and 55 volunteer drivers. Volunteer drivers choose their schedules and receive free supplemental liability insurance coverage and mileage reimbursement. If you would like more information for a loved one who can no longer drive or if you would like to sign up to be a volunteer driver, contact Faye Beam at 405.605.3110 or email her at faye.beam@rsvpokc.org.

About RSVP of Central Oklahoma:

Since 1973, RSVP of Central Oklahoma has helped senior adults continue to live with purpose and meaning by connecting them with rewarding community volunteer opportunities, including RSVP’s Provide-A-Ride Senior Transportation Program. RSVP is a partner of Senior Corps and the United Way of Central Oklahoma. To learn more about becoming a volunteer, call 405.605.3110 or visit rsvpokc.org. You can also follow RSVP on Facebook at facebook.com/RSVPokc.