



## TAKING OFF

A blog to get you going

By Chicago Tribune's Travel staff

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# Flying companions for seniors

*Posted by Toni Salama at 9:38 a.m. CDT*

When his well-traveled friend couldn't take a routine airplane trip without assistance, Doug Iannelli saw a greater need. There might be others who could use his help. So, a few months ago, Iannelli, whose experience in the travel industry includes a stint with Alitalia, began laying the groundwork for [Flying Companions](#), a new company that would provide traveling companions to senior citizens and others with special needs.

The service has just begun, and can cover every step of the air-travel process from fare research all the way through to baggage claim.

For the time being, Iannelli says he's a one-man show whose care can include escort to the airport, wheelchair assistance, expedited security, access to airline lounges, smoothing the transfer to connecting flights and taking care of problems that might arise. Flying Companions is based in Atlanta, but Iannelli can travel to meet his clients anywhere. Because his service is so customized, he says it's unrealistic to discuss hypothetical fees. Helping someone one-way between Chicago and New York, he says, is a very different assignment than accompanying a client on a round-trip for several days in Paris and London.

Another practicality: He encourages clients to let his company research and book the tickets as part of the package.

That makes sense. Getting a companion seat on a flight that's already booked can be tricky and expensive, if not impossible.

Here's the phone number: 888-350-8886