

# TIP Profile

## 10 Minutes with a TIP Volunteer

(mostly serious questions and a few just for fun)



**Volunteer:** Kevin Pratt

**Affiliate:** TIP of Corona, Inc. [www.TIPCorona.org](http://www.TIPCorona.org)

**Years volunteering with TIP:** 2 Years

### **Kevin, why do you choose to volunteer with TIP?**

"For the sake of this short article, I must reduce a very long story down to the nuts and bolts. TIP found me! I saw a yard-sign one day that read, "CALLING ALL ANGELS". I googled TIP, read the Mission, and I was hooked! In short, the TIP Mission was a general outline of what I am familiar with in Ministry.. But, TIP afforded an opportunity that was very appealing to me...anonymity. Being a TIP Volunteer allows me to be there for hurting people without having to use one single "religious" word or phrase, much like The Good Samaritan. TIP helps me to achieve the Mission of my life."

### **What are some of your favorite things about volunteering with TIP?**

"Ministry can become a very lonely place. Most ministers carry an unbelievably heavy load with very little help. TIP overcomes this problem quite gracefully. As a volunteer I am required to de-brief after a call with our Crisis Team Leader Becky. Becky is one of those amazing people who seem to keep all the balls in the air with efficiency and joy. Her wisdom helps to keep our Team grounded, balanced, and moving forward. I am also required to attend a monthly continuing education meeting with my fellow TIP Volunteers. We are encouraged to share our experiences both good and bad with one another. We learn from our mistakes and we carry on. I am always learning something new from this group of "heroes" during our monthly meetings. I believe that it is exactly this kind of forward thinking that has led to the success and stamina of TIP National! We can only care for our communities in so far as we care for ourselves.

### **What do your family/friends say about your volunteering?**

"My family, my wife, especially, is thrilled at my involvement with TIP. In 2005 I was forced to retire from full-time work after a back injury and subsequent surgeries. TIP has enabled me to be more useful and as such, has given me fresh purpose in life and a much brighter attitude. My family has all been incredibly supportive and encouraging of my TIP duties. Sharing some of my experiences with my family have certainly helped to keep us aware of how precious life is and how blessed we truly are.."

**Can you describe any leadership roles you have or have had with TIP?**

"I have been the recruiter for our Corona TIP chapter for the past 6 months. Recruiting is quite challenging. It is very easy to talk about the things we love; it's quite a different thing to find those willing to listen. I really enjoy serving in this capacity because it gives me a greater sense of ownership of TIP's mission."

**Take us behind the scenes. Tell us about an experience you had while volunteering that made you realize you were making a difference.**

"One of my early calls will always stick out for me. Now, let me preface by acknowledging that I very much understand and respect that TIP is a secular non-religious organization. I further recognize and understand that TIP is not a platform for me to espouse any of my personal theological or liturgical beliefs. Yet, as any TIP Volunteer who may happen to read this would know by now, this one simple phrase...'I was meant to be there.'"

"I was sent to a home for an unattended death. Grandma and grandpa from Syria were here visiting family, and grandpa suddenly died in the house of his grown son. Only the son, his wife, and an uncle, spoke English. The home was distinctly decorated with Middle-Eastern style furnishings. There were many beautifully crafted Christian icons throughout the home. People from that particular region of the world grieve very differently from those of us in the West. On this occasion, I noticed that the men kept separate from the women both in terms of space and emotion. The men stayed in a back patio, smoked and drank tea, while the women remained in the house to prepare tea and food for the men. There was one exception, however. Grandma was left on a sofa to grieve alone. She seemed to have a rhythm of sorrow and tears. She was obviously my primary client and she didn't speak a word of English. I was able to do most of my TIPing with her through the son and uncle as interpreters. I told the uncle that I thought the language they spoke was beautiful. He said with a big smile, "it should be; it's the tongue of Christ." Through them, she told me about her husband and the kind of man he was. She went on to tell me about the terrible persecution she and her family had endured because of their Christian faith. It was clear that her faith was very dear to her and to her family. I tried to remain close to grandma throughout the evening and assisted her in saying goodbye to her husband. Soon it was time for me to leave. I felt so bad for grandma looking so alone,

and by this time into another burst of tears. I wanted to do or say something that might comfort her. Then, it came to me quite quickly and beautifully, that "little voice" telling me what to do. "She's from Syria. She speaks Aramaic. I went over to her and knelt down on my knees in front of her. I took her by the hands and placed my forehead on top of them. This would convey to her my willingness to break with "the custom of the men" and make a display that I was in fact grieving with her (a great reminder that we need to be on the same level as our clients.). And, some of my old education had somehow stuck; I was able to gently whisper in Aramaic something to the effect of, "Jesus The King to grant you Peace". Immediately her mournful wailing gave way to what I would call a tearful release. I believe it was a turning point for her. I knew that she was experiencing some form of comfort. It was for me, a beautiful and holy moment and I will never forget it. To this day I am so humbled to have been an instrument of God's peace for that dear woman."

**What do you do when you are not volunteering?**

"I enjoy quiet dinners with my wife of 32 years, Margi. We both love spending time with our kids and grandkids. Our children and grandchildren are the light of my life. Music has always been a big part of my life. I have been one of the drummers for my church for the past 20 years, and I have recently taken up the guitar. I'm always happy to be reading a good book or enjoying the beauty of creation. Also, at my home church I oversee pastoral care for our chapter of Celebrate Recovery. Celebrate Recovery is an international non-denominational Christ-Centered 12-Step recovery program."

**So Kevin, if you had to be trapped in a television show for one month, what show would it be?**

" Seinfeld. No question about it."

**What is the best advice you have ever received?**

"The best advice I have ever received came in the form of a prayer, which says:"

***"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a***

*time, enjoying one moment at a time accepting hardship as a pathway to peace. Taking as Jesus did this sinful world as it is and not as I would have it. Trusting that you will make all things right if I surrender to your will. So, that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with you forever in the next. Amen."* ~ Reinhold Niebuhr

**Do you have a favorite quote?**

"Yes, it is from C.S. Lewis, The Last Battle (Chronicles of Narnia, #7)

*"All their life in this world and all their adventures had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."*

**Kevin, what is one thing you wish someone would ask you about?**

"How do I become a TIP Volunteer?"

**Thanks Kevin, we enjoyed our 10 minutes with you. Keep up the good work and thanks for being a TIP volunteer.**