



Volunteer Handbook

TRAIL helps older residents live and age safely and comfortably in their homes by providing access to essential services and social opportunities.

Serving Johnson County, Iowa

info@trailofjohnsoncounty.org

www.trailofjohnsoncounty.org

TRAIL Volunteer Handbook
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Message to Our Volunteers

TRAIL was organized by a group of Iowa City-area neighbors and friends, at or near retirement age, who were committed to “aging in place.” Rather than moving to traditional senior-living facilities, they preferred to remain in their own homes as they grew older, close to established social circles. The alternative to moving to a residence for seniors is to arrange for needed services and programs to be brought to homes.

This is not a new idea; the concept of naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs) – a geographically defined community in which some portion of the population is 60 or older and live in their own homes – first appeared in the 1980s, and the first “aging-in-place village” began in Boston in 2000. Since then, these projects have been successfully implemented across the country. Much has been learned much from the Village to Village Network (see <http://www.vtvnetwork.org/>), which provides tools and resources to help communities establish and manage aging-in-place organizations throughout the nation.

With the first wave of Baby Boomers now turning 65, retirement is in the news, and the concept of aging in place has received a good deal of attention. An AARP poll revealed that most seniors today would rather stay in their own homes than move to retirement homes or communities. But family members may live in different parts of the country, and children and other extended-family members may not be close enough to help aging seniors realize that goal. Even when adult children live nearby they are often too busy to help, and older adults are reluctant to become a burden to their own children or relatives.

This is why the volunteer program is so central to the mission of TRAIL. Many of us remember the list of tasks that Mom and Dad had waiting when we went home for a visit: moving furniture, looking over legal documents, setting up the new computer, programming the DVD player, washing windows, cleaning out the garage, shopping for a new appliance, providing a ride to the doctor’s office for an appointment. Any task you might have performed (or still perform) as a good son or daughter, you might perform as a good neighbor for a member of TRAIL.

TRAIL will work with you to find and ensure matches between your interests and abilities and the needs of the TRAIL members. Many TRAIL members are also volunteers.

We are deeply grateful to you for the time and talent that you provide to help TRAIL members get where they need to go, participate in social activities, make new friends, gain access to professional advice on a range of important matters, and feel safe and confident in their community as they grow older.

INTRODUCTION TO THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

GOALS OF THE TRAIL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

1. To support the mission of TRAIL by providing effective and quality services to members and the organization.
2. To employ a “volunteer-first” policy, seeking a qualified volunteer to fill a need before referring the member to a professional service provider.
3. To nurture and build community by developing connections among members and volunteers of all ages.
4. To provide opportunities for new friendships to develop among volunteers and members as they participate in social programs, share experiences, and discover mutual interests.
5. To ensure volunteers have a pleasant and rewarding service experience.

Organization structure

TRAIL is a nonprofit membership organization serving the residents of Johnson County, Iowa. TRAIL is dedicated to helping members age successfully, on their own terms, and is building a community of like-minded adults of all ages in the process. Volunteering is crucial to building this age-friendly community and is one of the main ways to become involved with TRAIL. While TRAIL is a member-driven organization, our volunteers also provide input into how TRAIL develops. Our organization and the programs and services we provide evolve with our members’ needs and our volunteers’ abilities.

TRAIL is managed by a part-time Executive Director and overseen by the Board of Directors. Several committees support different aspects of the organization, such as Executive, Fundraising, Finance, Marketing, Membership and Vendor Services. These committees report their recommendations to the board and work with our Executive Director to implement programs and activities. The vast majority of board and committee members are TRAIL members, all of whom actively guide the direction of the organization. The Executive Director oversees the organization and manages all operations and program development including our volunteer program.

The role of volunteers

TRAIL would not be able to function without volunteers. Volunteers support the mission of TRAIL by providing direct member services, participating on committees, providing office assistance, and serving as ambassadors for the organization. TRAIL continually works with volunteers to match their unique skills with the evolving needs of the organization and its members.

Program design

The TRAIL Volunteer Program is designed to support the members of TRAIL and the organization as a whole. Most TRAIL volunteers provide direct services to members, although volunteers may also provide office support.

There is an ebb and flow that comes with being a TRAIL volunteer. At times, there may be a number of member requests for volunteer services; at other times, there may be few. TRAIL volunteers are flexible and understand that there may not be consistent service opportunities.

Both members and volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback of their volunteer experience in order to improve the services provided and the volunteer experience.

TRAIL provides support, expertise, and services that give older adults the practical resources and confidence they need to live safely and comfortably as they age.

TRAIL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM POLICIES

Our volunteers

Our volunteers are a talented group with widely varied backgrounds. A number of TRAIL members are volunteers. Non-member volunteers are recruited from the community at large. Each is motivated by a desire to serve others and make a difference in our community.

Volunteer-first policy

In providing services to its members, TRAIL employs a volunteer-first policy. This means we will make every effort to assign a volunteer to meet member requests, but the availability of volunteer assistance may depend on the amount of notice given, the skill set of our current volunteers, the needs of other members during the same period, the weather, and other factors. If no volunteers are available, or the service requires a professional, TRAIL will refer members to our approved service providers. If a member elects to use a provider, the member contacts the provider, mentions membership in TRAIL, and contracts with the provider for payment.

General expectations

Volunteers should adhere to the policies of the Volunteer Handbook. Working closely with the staff, volunteers are expected to:

- Attend orientation and training sessions
- Consult with staff before assuming new responsibilities
- Be prompt and reliable
- Notify TRAIL as soon as possible when unable to report for a scheduled assignment
- Protect confidential information
- Exercise good judgment
- Treat members and other volunteers with courtesy and respect
- Decline any gifts or tips that may be offered

BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

Eligibility

TRAIL invites all residents of Johnson County who share a belief in the mission of the organization to serve as volunteers. Many TRAIL members are also volunteers, but it is not necessary to become a member in order to serve. Interested persons are encouraged to call TRAIL to discuss the program with the Executive Director.

Volunteer recruitment

TRAIL recruits volunteers in several ways, including volunteer application forms given to members, TRAIL flyers, website descriptions of the program, publicity at TRAIL events, media announcements, and word of mouth.

Service requirements

The requirements a volunteer must complete are determined by the volunteer service to be performed. The table below outlines requirements:

Volunteer Service	Application	Orientation	Specialized training	Background check	MVR Motor Vehicle Record Check	Driver License and Auto insurance on file
Medical Advocacy	x	x	x	x	x	x
Rise and Shine	x	x		x		
In-Home Tasks	x	x		x		
Lawn and Garden	x	x		x		
Technology	x	x		x		
Transportation	x	x		x	x	x
Member Support Specialist	x	x	x	x		

Orientations are scheduled throughout the year. Interested volunteers will be notified of these sessions in advance. These orientations are designed to give volunteers an opportunity to meet one another, learn about the program, and ask questions.

Background check

Background check consists of a complete criminal background check including a nationwide Social Security number trace and the sex offender registry. Drivers must provide proof of current auto insurance coverage and show evidence of a valid Iowa Driver's License. An Iowa Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) check will also be performed on drivers. All volunteer files are confidential.

Insurance

As a volunteer for TRAIL you are covered by our insurance while performing duties related to the conduct of TRAIL of Johnson County. Some examples of the coverage: If, as a volunteer, you cause damage or injure someone, TRAIL's liability policy will provide the coverage. If you injure yourself while volunteering, TRAIL's medical coverage will pay for your medical bills only up to the limit of insurance provided by our policy. If you are driving your own vehicle while volunteering and injure someone or damage something, your personal auto liability will provide protection for you, but TRAIL's non-owned liability coverage may come into play to protect TRAIL. TRAIL's policy will not provide coverage for physical damage to your car; therefore, you will need to rely on your own policy to take care of your vehicle. Please check with TRAIL for specific questions you have about our insurance coverage.

Privacy

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed, whether information involves a TRAIL member or another volunteer. TRAIL operates on a "need to know basis" with information shared only with TRAIL staff and volunteers who require the information to ensure appropriate care and services. Member information should not be shared outside the organization. Volunteers are required to comply with the Privacy Policy of TRAIL and sign a privacy statement.

Name badges

When volunteers have completed the screening process, they are presented with an official TRAIL volunteer badge. Volunteers are to wear these name badges when they are volunteering (providing services to members) so that they are easily identified as TRAIL volunteers.

Representation of the organization

Volunteers should not act on behalf of or make statements representing the official position of the TRAIL, unless they have been authorized to do so by the Executive Director or an officer of the Board of Directors. For example, volunteers should not make statements to the press or broadcast media without prior authorization. No volunteer is authorized to sign any agreement involving contractual or financial obligations on behalf of TRAIL.

Boundaries

Volunteers often come into personal contact with TRAIL members as they provide transportation, help with minor in-home repairs, work in yards, and offer technical expertise. TRAIL volunteers are not permitted to perform services that require personal care, such as bathing, grooming, or wound care. Such requests should be reported to the TRAIL Executive Director, who will then work with the member to discuss other support options.

Finally, while we encourage friendships to develop among members and volunteers, service requests should come through TRAIL. Volunteers should not feel obligated to fulfill every service request, even if the requesting member has become a friend.

Requesting the services of a volunteer

We ask that members request services at least one week in advance, if possible. This notice helps TRAIL find the right volunteer for the job.

Placement

Volunteers select the assignments that coincide with their particular interests, abilities and availability.

Records of volunteer service

Accurate records are important to both TRAIL and our volunteers. Records of volunteer service are used for program development, volunteer recognition, insurance coverage, budgets, and seeking foundation support.

TRAIL maintains confidential records of volunteer services rendered for each volunteer. When deemed appropriate or necessary, volunteers are encouraged to provide the Executive Director with reports on their assignments.

Volunteer support and recognition

Volunteer recognition activities will be conducted to highlight and reward the contributions of volunteers to the TRAIL's programs.

Resignation

We understand that volunteer work is not permanent. A volunteer may decide to stop volunteering at any time. We ask that you give as much notice as possible if you decide to resign or take a leave of absence from the program. To help TRAIL grow and learn from experience, volunteers are asked to participate in an informal exit interview when leaving the volunteer program.

Termination

TRAIL may dismiss a volunteer for failing to fulfill the duties of their position and/or meet the basic standards set by the organization. Grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, misconduct or insubordination; being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while volunteering; theft of property or misuse of TRAIL's equipment or materials; verbal or physical abuse of members; failure to fulfill volunteer obligations; and breach of privacy.

Volunteer service at TRAIL should not be a burden. Volunteers should feel free to accept or decline particular assignments depending upon their personal schedules and commitments. Volunteers may serve on a regular or periodic basis.