



## Getting to know you



The title of this month's column (can you name the Broadway show it comes from?) describes what I've loved most about

TRAIL's early months of operation. Getting to know you – our members, volunteers, donors, and vendors – has been a great pleasure, as well as a valuable learning experience.

For example, the suggestions that arose during our Member Social event in June are helping us improve our communications as well as our services. This illustrates what we mean when we describe TRAIL as a true community, where we find ways to get together, to know and help one another, and to have fun along the way.

In fact, we've just added one helpful new event to our schedule: An **AARP Safe Driving class** on Wednesday morning, August 9, at the ISU Extension Office in Iowa City. Fees are \$15 for AARP members, \$20 for non-members. Visit our [online calendar](#) to learn about this and future educational and social gatherings.

If we've not yet met, I hope we'll get that chance at one of these upcoming events. See you then!

Sincerely yours,

Executive Director

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## *Volunteer Profile:*

## Joni Jones goes the extra mile

Retired kindergarten teacher Joni Jones wanted her first assignment as a TRAIL volunteer to go well. She had signed up to drive a member to a medical appointment.

"I thought it would be helpful if I called her a few days ahead of time to introduce myself and make sure I had all the information I needed," Joni says.

Because Joni was unfamiliar with where the member lives and the location of the appointment, she got directions through MapQuest, and then decided to also drive the route in advance—just to be sure.

Her preparation paid off. Joni called the member again about 15 minutes before pick-up time and wore her volunteer badge; the member was ready to go and they arrived at the appointment on time. In the office waiting area, the member introduced Joni, who then had a chance to share information about TRAIL with the office staff.



As they headed home, Joni asked how she could improve the member's volunteer experience. The member didn't have any suggestions and noted how much she appreciated the personal service, as opposed to other transportation options she had used since giving up driving last fall.

In a follow-up call to the TRAIL office, the member said, "I have been meaning to call to let you know how extremely pleased I was with service. The volunteer was such a delightful person!" Thanks, Joni, for going the extra mile!

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# What is a Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist?

*(And where can you find one?)*

According to AARP, homeowners overwhelmingly prefer to continue to live in their own homes as they grow older, and just as important, to do so safely, independently and comfortably. That's why TRAIL was formed. It's also why we're grateful that AARP, along with the NAHB Remodelers of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) in collaboration with the NAHB Research Center and the NAHB 50+ Housing Council, developed the **Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist (CAPS)** education program, aimed at contractors and remodelers serving the growing number of households that require aging-in-place home modifications.

A recent NAHB survey (Remodeling Market Index) indicated that 65 percent of remodelers already perform aging-in-place related home upgrades. The most requested improvements include installing grab bars, upgrading with higher toilets, creating curb-less showers, widening doorways, building ramps or lower-thresholds on doors, and adding task lighting.

While most CAPS professionals are remodelers, an increasing number are general contractors, designers, architects, and health care consultants. Since 2002, nearly 4,000 individuals have earned the CAPS designation, a number of whom are identified as such on TRAIL's list of Prescreened Service Providers.

Among them is **Jane Hagedorn** of Bea Day Plumbers in Iowa City. "The CAPS certification is a valuable tool for me as a Remodeling Contractor," Jane says. "The knowledge I gained about current and future methods of construction for accessible living, and the products that can aid customers in safely remaining in their home, helps me better serve my customers during the remodel or new construction process."

Jane explains that many aging-in-place concepts are now standard operating procedure when she plans bathroom remodels, from grab bars to toilet height. "When I am included in the floor plan design, I'm also conscious of any sharp corners or edges that can be eliminated or softened, and door widths that can be adjusted," she says.

For **Marc Olson** of Olson Remodeling and Construction, pursuing the CAPS designation grew from personal experience. "I have a family member who has been wheelchair-bound his whole life," Marc says. "I have seen the struggles he's had to go through sometimes to achieve simple tasks the rest of us may take for granted."

Completing the CAPS certification process taught Marc that communication with clients is key to serving their aging-in-place needs. "Different people will have different requirements to make their home comfortable," he says. "Handicap requirements are a place to start, but many people will have additional needs to make their home work for them."

"Many of our clients, as they get older, want to stay self-sufficient as long as possible," he continues. "If we do our job properly, they can live in their home longer and feel safe while doing it."

## Your vendor experience is important to us!

Need help around the house? Remember to check TRAIL's list of Prescreened Service Providers, accessible via the "For Members" section of our [member website](#). Mention TRAIL when you contact the provider, and then let us know about your experience. Our Member Service Provider Satisfaction Survey is also accessible via the member website. Under the "For Members" tab, click on Member Documents, then on Vendor Services, and follow instructions on the survey document. Your feedback helps our contractors improve their services. Also, if you have a favorite service provider who's not on our list, let us know and we'll reach out to them. *Thank you!*