



TRAIL selected for Volunteer Iowa Service Enterprise Program

By TRAIL Executive Director Christine Scheetz



I am delighted to share that TRAIL has been selected to participate in the **Volunteer Iowa Service Enterprise Program**, a designation that positions our organization among a distinguished cohort of nonprofits elevating volunteer engagement through intentional strategy and innovation.

Fewer than 15% of organizations nationwide can be characterized as Service Enterprises, and TRAIL is proud to be invited to be among them.



At the completion of the program, TRAIL also will receive a \$4,000 grant to strengthen and enhance our volunteer program.

Volunteers have always been at the heart of TRAIL's work. Being chosen for the Service Enterprise Program allows us to take that commitment to the next level—ensuring our volunteer program is intentional, sustainable, and aligned with our long-term goals.

What this means for TRAIL

At its heart, TRAIL has always been about people—volunteers, members, donors, community partners, and the community at large. Being chosen for the Service Enterprise Program is both a validation of our past work and a launching point for strengthening how we support volunteers and weave their energy into our mission.

This opportunity will help us:

- **Invest in volunteer-centered practices** that build capacity and deepen impact
- **Adopt systems and strategies** used by high-performing nonprofits nationwide
- **Foster an organizational culture** where volunteers are at the center of everything

Continued on page 2

We ♥ our contributors!

Valentine's Day is the perfect time to say: We love our donors! To all those who made gifts to TRAIL's 2025 annual fund campaign, **THANK YOU!**

Our thanks as well to the individuals and organizations that helped sponsor new and ongoing events and initiatives last year, such as our Supported Membership Program for low-income seniors, our 2025 Johnson County Senior Housing & Services Guide, TRAIL's 8th Anniversary Celebration, our 2025 Senior Housing & Services Fair, and our Closing the Gap seminar series.

We depend on charitable contributions from TRAIL members, volunteers, and community partners for more than half of our annual revenue. Quite literally, we could not fulfill our mission without you.

We are deeply grateful for your generous support in 2025, and hope TRAIL will continue to merit your support again in 2026. Heartfelt thanks to all!

The National Service Enterprise Initiative

The Service Enterprise Program is rooted in the national **Service Enterprise Initiative**—a rigorous framework designed to help nonprofits transform volunteer engagement into a strategic asset. This national initiative encourages organizations to embed volunteers into core operations for measurable outcomes and lasting sustainability.

Nationally, the Service Enterprise Initiative has helped nonprofits:

- Increase volunteer retention and satisfaction
- Improve program quality by aligning volunteer roles with organizational goals
- Strengthen leadership capacity and community relationships
- Leverage volunteer talent to expand services and reach

Participating organizations undergo a thoughtful process, including evaluation, training, and implementation of best practices, supported by Volunteer Iowa and aligned national partners. Through this program, TRAIL will refine how we recruit, train, manage, and celebrate volunteers—ensuring that every volunteer experience is meaningful, effective, and connected to our mission.

Why it matters

Volunteers bring passion, ideas, and lived experience that expand our understanding of what's possible. As TRAIL grows and evolves, so must our approach to this invaluable resource.

By embracing the tools and insights of the Service Enterprise Program, we are strengthening the foundation of our work.

This investment will benefit:

- Members, who will receive consistent, responsive support
- Volunteers, who will have clearer pathways to meaningfully contribute
- Our community, which will see a more resilient, connected, and sustainable organization

Looking forward

I am deeply grateful for the dedication of our volunteers, the trust of our supporters, and the collaboration of partners across Johnson County and beyond. Being selected for the Service Enterprise Program is not an endpoint but a stepping stone—one that will help us deliver on our promise with greater clarity, capacity, and impact.

Thank you for being part of TRAIL's journey. Together, we are strengthening community, championing service, and building a more inclusive and vibrant future for all.



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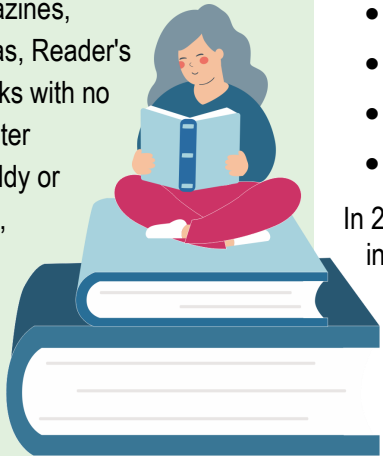
Thanks to Faithful Companions for sponsoring this month's newsletter.

Gently used books, other media welcome

If you're downsizing or just want to clear some space on a bookshelf, keep in mind the upcoming Shelter House book sale.

Donations will be accepted beginning February 15 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, 10 AM to 2 PM, and Sundays 2 to 4 PM, at 860 Quarry Road in Coralville. The annual sale will be held Saturday, March 28, and Sunday, March 29, 10:30 AM to 4 PM.

Books, CDs, vinyl records, puzzles, and board games in good condition are all accepted. (But please don't donate magazines, encyclopedias, Reader's Digests, books with no covers or water damage, moldy or musty books, textbooks, cassette tapes, or VHS tapes.)



For more information (including the Early Entry pass), visit [Shelter House book sale](#).



TRAIL service helps members make **LIFE TRANSITIONS**



Jeanne Bancroft retired as a University of Iowa science educator in 2020 to care for her aging mother and ailing husband. She is grateful for the time she had with them before both passed away within a year of each other in 2021 and 2022.

But she had a recurring thought: "As I was helping them, I often wondered about people who might not have a son or daughter or spouse to help. What happens to them, how do they cope?" Jeanne said.

As a TRAIL member, service volunteer, and now a member of the TRAIL Board of Directors, it was not long before Jeanne learned how TRAIL's Life Transition Service offers such assistance to its Full members.

“As I learned more, I realized that the experience I gained caring for my mom and husband is exactly what that service is all about,” she says.

The Life Transition Service helps TRAIL members navigate changes in their ability to age in place. The service is provided by a group of seven dedicated, specially trained volunteers, and is actively recruiting more volunteers. Volunteers assist members who are experiencing the need for additional support or a change in their independence, including:

- Transition from hospital to home
- Family or personal crises
- Increase in caregiving responsibilities
- Decrease in skills needed for independent living (meals, laundry, finances, etc.)

In 2025, Life Transition volunteers helped six members with various needs, including assisting with locating new housing and preparing for a move, end of life planning, and managing daily business affairs and community support.

Guided by the motto "Plan for the worst, hope for the best," Life Transition volunteers work one-on-one with TRAIL members and receive professional guidance from TRAIL's social work consultant. Member choices and confidentiality are always respected.

Although she continues to volunteer as a driver and a medical advocate for TRAIL, Jeanne says being a Life Transition volunteer is rewarding in a different way. "When I am with a member as part of the Life Transition team, I spend more time with them and really get to know them. It's a very personal relationship when you can help relieve many of their worries."

Full members who want to learn more about the Life Transition Service or persons interested in volunteering for the service can contact Jessica Hahn, member and volunteer services coordinator, at 319-800-9003 or send an email to membersupport@trailofjohnsoncounty.org

MEMBER PROFILE: Sharon Stubbs



Who, among you, has met the “dragon lady” in Coralville? That would be TRAIL member and fiber artist Sharon Stubbs.

Inspired by medieval motifs, Sharon collects “mythical beasts.” She has also designed and made dragons herself.

Sharon notes that “I did make, and name, over 300 of them when I was doing art fairs in the 90s.”

Sharon has been a member of TRAIL since 2017. In her former position as morning receptionist at the Senior Center, she recalls, “I had long felt there was a need for a service like this.” She was delighted when TRAIL began to take shape. First as an Affiliate member and now as a Full member, Sharon has personally experienced many of the benefits TRAIL offers.

Those benefits range from the social to the practical. A TRAIL volunteer who began checking in daily with Sharon by phone during COVID has become a friend who stays in touch. When Sharon decided to clean out her studio (and secret dragon lair), TRAIL volunteers helped pack nearly 30 boxes of supplies. Sharon was especially grateful that the volunteers found people who needed craft supplies so that her treasures will be useful to others. Having test-driven many of the recommended experts and companies on the TRAIL Vendor Requests and Recommendations list, Sharon has been impressed by the courtesy as well as efficiency they bring to large and small tasks. She also applauds efforts to make more TRAIL programming available by Zoom.

Members like Sharon have a unique long view of TRAIL and how the organization has grown. From her early enthusiasm for an organization that would support elder members of our community to her appreciation for the volunteers who have become friends, Sharon remains one of the wizards who keeps the TRAIL magic alive and well.



< The TRAIL Board of Directors held a half-day strategic planning retreat with facilitator Jennifer Horn-Frasier on January 27. The resulting goals and strategies will guide TRAIL’s efforts over the next three years, including our 10th anniversary year in 2027. We will share plan details in a *TRAIL Guide* issue later this spring.

TAX CHANGES

for 2025 tax year

As you start to gather the information you need to file income taxes this spring, be aware of these changes brought about by the One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB):

- ① **The standard deduction for 2025 has been raised to** \$15,750 (previously \$15,000) for single filers. For married couples filing jointly, it has been raised to \$31,500 (up from \$30,000). For heads of household, the standard deduction will be \$23,625 (up from \$22,500).
- ① **Older adults now have a new personal deduction:** Anyone born before January 2, 1961, can now take an additional deduction of \$6,000. It doubles to \$12,000 for married couples filing jointly if both spouses qualify. This is on top of your other deductions, whether you use the standard deduction or itemize your deductions. Note: the deduction is reduced above certain income levels.
- ① **The cap on the so-called SALT** (state and local tax) deduction has increased from \$10,000 to \$40,000 (\$20,000 for married individuals filing separately. This deduction can be taken only if you itemize your deductions. It phases out above certain income levels.

Other changes apply to taxes on overtime pay, car loan interest, tip income, the child tax credit, and crypto transactions.



For more information, visit [the IRS website](https://www.irs.gov) or talk to a tax professional.



UPCOMING EVENT

Celebrating American Heart Month

FREE BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING

In recognition of American Heart Month this February, the Iowa City Senior Center (ICSC) is participating in the “Libraries with Heart” program, a national initiative of the American Heart Association that increases access to blood pressure monitoring in public spaces.

Participants will have the opportunity to have a meet-and-greet with Miss Iowa, Lydia Fisher.

Saturday, February 28

9 AM to noon

Iowa City Senior Center
28 South Linn Street

For more information,
visit [TRAIL's online calendar](#).



Community Conversation focuses on senior support

The Community Foundation of Johnson County (CFJC) hosted its first 2026 "Community Conversation" on January 22. The theme of the panel discussion, held via Zoom and joined by some 40 community members, was "Senior Support" and the many resources available to older adults and their families in Johnson County.

The five panel participants included TRAIL's Executive Director Christine Scheetz and representatives from the Iowa City Senior Center, Horizons/Meals on Wheels, Cycling Without Age, and ThinkJoy.

CFJC Executive Director Shelly Maharry welcomed the audience and cited the Iowa City area's national reputation as a top retirement destination. Besides excellent health care and quality of life factors, retirees are drawn here by the many support services available to older adults. But not everyone is aware of those resources, she explained, which was the impetus for focusing this "Community Conversation" on senior services.

Jeff Kellbach, aging specialist with Johnson County Social Services, began the session by reviewing the many senior-serving programs offered by the county. These range from financial assistance and social supports to the events and resources offered through Johnson County Livable Community.



Sara Krieger of Iowa City Hospice and Visiting Nurses Association stepped in as moderator and asked the panelists to respond to questions around the topics of access, mobility, nutrition, joy, connection, and planning. **"How do we and our organizations all fit together to meet needs in our community?"** she asked. **"What does it take for older adults to age well here?"**

Panelists offered a wide range of perspectives, and the audience learned about several innovative programs and new ways of thinking about their aging journey. A common factor was the importance of making connections as a way to ensure healthy aging, not only to available services, but to one another—connections that TRAIL works hard to facilitate.



You can view the entire 75-minute panel discussion at this link: <https://cfjc.org/community-conversation-senior-support/>.

Tim Charles, founder and president of Aging Life Design, Inc., presented "Art of Aging" on Friday, January 30. The event was held at and co-sponsored by the Iowa City Senior Center. Charles' company addresses the needs of the aging community. >





Upcoming TRAIL Events Calendar

NOTE: Some events are virtual, while others are in person. Full details for each event can be found on [TRAIL's online calendar](#).

New events are frequently added, so check TRAIL's weekly calendar preview emailed on Fridays or the [online calendar](#) to stay up-to-date.

Calendar key: **BLUE** events are for TRAIL members. **GREEN** (virtual) and **YELLOW** (in-person) events are hosted by other groups but may be of interest to TRAIL members.

Members pay their own fees if there is a cost associated with an event (\$).

Want to attend an event, but need a ride? Call Jessica at 319-800-9003 or email her at membersupport@trailofjohnsoncounty.org.

TRAIL Guide is published on or about the 15th of each month by the TRAIL Marketing and Communications Committee for the benefit of TRAIL members, donors, volunteers, and friends. If you have questions or suggestions about the newsletter, email info@trailofjohnsoncounty.org.

[Book Club: Buckeye by Patrick Ryan](#) (via Zoom)

Monday, February 16, 1 to 2 PM

[Coffee at My Home](#)

Tuesday, February 17, 10:30 AM to noon

Home of Ann Romanowski

[Dine Around Lunch at Shakespeare's Pub & Grill](#) \$

Tuesday, February 24, 11 AM to 12:30 PM

819 South 1st Avenue, Iowa City

[Play Pool with John](#) \$

Tuesday, February 24, 1 to 2:30 PM

Hilltop Tavern, 1100 North Dodge Street, Iowa City

[Let's Talk Books: Cozy Mysteries](#) (via Zoom)

Tuesday, February 24, 7 to 8 PM

[FeatherStone Lunch & Learn: TRAIL of Johnson County](#)

Thursday, February 26, noon to 1 PM

FeatherStone at Hickory Hill, 2450 Hickory Trail, Iowa City

[The 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's](#) (via Zoom)

Thursday, February 26, 3 to 4 PM

[Johnson County Historical Society and Antique Car Museum](#) \$

Friday, February 27, 1 to 2 PM

200 East 9th Street, Suite 101, Coralville

[Iowa City Public Library Big Book Sale](#)

Friday, February 27, 5:30 to 7:30 PM

IC Public Library, Meeting Rooms A, B, C, D, 123 South Linn Street, Iowa City

[Free Blood Pressure Screening](#)

Saturday, February 28, 9 AM to noon

Iowa City Senior Center, 28 South Linn Street, Iowa City

[Member Happy Hour](#) \$

Tuesday, March 3, 4:30 to 6:30 PM

The Bistro (Marriott Hotel in University Heights), 901 Melrose Avenue, Iowa City

[Not Any Old Shoe Will Do](#)

Friday, March 6, 9 to 10:30 AM

Fitness Sports, 103 5th Street, Coralville

[Lunch at Blackstone](#) \$

Wednesday, March 11, 11:30 AM to 1 PM

503 Westbury Drive, Iowa City