



*In-person programs are in the works*

## This committee keeps activities rolling

TRAIL members haven't let COVID keep them from learning new things and connecting with friends thanks to the Social/Educational Committee, which keeps the calendar full of interesting programming and opportunities for members to meet—at least via Zoom.

Committee Chair Barb Stein says with many members becoming fully vaccinated and COVID infections declining in the area, **the group has started to schedule in-person programs and social opportunities.** "We already have a few things set in April and May, like driveway coffees, hikes, and trips to area attractions like a koi farm near Swisher," Stein says.

That doesn't mean virtual programming will go away, she adds. "Some members have told us that they really appreciate virtual programming because they have mobility issues and don't drive," Stein says. "Of course, the first thing we all had to learn was how to Zoom!" Zoom sessions like *What's Your Hobby* and *Collections: Sharing Our Favorites* have helped build a feeling of community among members—several finding they have common interests and hobbies.

"We know people we are anxious to be with each other in person again—safely of course—so we have started scheduling some fun things for the spring, like a trip to the Walker Homestead on April 18," she says. "It's a beautiful setting—come join us!"

The committee is always looking for programming ideas—educational and social, so if you have an idea, contact Barb at [barb@trailofjohnsoncounty.org](mailto:barb@trailofjohnsoncounty.org) or 319-338-2931.

*From the Executive Director*

## Aging as opportunity

Last week I had the pleasure of speaking to the Iowa City Noon Rotary about TRAIL and its impact. As you may recall, TRAIL received a very generous grant from Rotary and the Johnson County Community Foundation last fall to boost our member recruitment efforts, which you'll learn more about in next month's *TRAIL Guide*.

I titled my Rotary presentation "The Opportunities of Growing Older" as a way of challenging the common view of aging—that is, as a process that means a narrowing of our lives—versus a time of openness and expansion.

Expansion is happening to the aging population itself, which is increasing fast. In Johnson County alone, the population of residents 65+ has grown by more than 33 percent since 2010, whereas growth among 18-to-24-year-olds was 12 percent.

But age is just a number, the saying goes, and these numbers don't tell the whole story. Here at TRAIL, it's a given that we're all aging. What's most important is *how* we are aging. And aging well, we believe, depends on finding and making the most of opportunities to keep learning, growing, and embracing all life has to offer.

COVID has curtailed some of the opportunities TRAIL provides to keep our members aging well. But vaccines are spreading, the virus is waning, and we're looking ahead with hope. In fact, as you can read at the left and see on the page 4 calendar, we plan on scheduling a few in-person, socially distanced member gatherings again this spring.

Opportunities can grow from new beginnings, and here's the latest: **Jessica Hahn** of Solon joins us this week as TRAIL's new **Member and Volunteer Services Coordinator.** Welcome, Jessica! I know she's looking forward to meeting and assisting our members, volunteers, and supporters as we explore more opportunities to learn and grow together in the months ahead.

*Bob Untiedt*



## Stimulus benefits TRAIL too

Charlie Anderson is both a longtime Iowa City resident and longtime TRAIL member. He's a longtime TRAIL contributor as well, but his most recent gift was special.



Charlie and his wife, Jane, arrived in Iowa City in September 1966 and have made it their home for 54 years. Charlie has served TRAIL of Johnson County in many capacities. He was one of the original founders and served as the first Past Chair of TRAIL's Board of Directors and also as Volunteer Committee Chair, a position he held for three

years. Currently, he is a member of the Volunteer Committee and is on the ad hoc committee called Major Elderly Life Transitions. He and Jane reside at Oaknoll and are Affiliate members.

"We have met some wonderfully interesting and active community members through TRAIL," he says. "I've often said that of all the committees and boards I have served on in my life, TRAIL is the best. I appreciate that every member devotes their time and energy to the organization."

Not only has Charlie given to TRAIL through his service, but he recently decided to donate his 2020 stimulus payment to TRAIL.

"When I received the \$1,200 stimulus check, I planned to put it in our savings account. But then I thought, that will not provide any stimulus to the economy, and further, I'll gain nothing either," he says. "I thought about several ways that I could best use this money to help the economy, and TRAIL became a priority. TRAIL can use the money, and I trust that they will use it in ways to stimulate the economy. 'Bingo!' I thought it was a great idea and wrote my check."

Charlie hopes that his gesture may "stimulate" others to give in the same way. Thank you, Charlie, for your continued support of TRAIL.



**"Pi Day" surprises** We're pleased to announce the winners of TRAIL's first "Great Pi Day Raffle"—an idea cooked up by the TRAIL Membership Committee to give members a sweet boost while we wait for spring to arrive for real. Fresh pies were delivered on "Pi Day" (March 14) by TRAIL volunteers to four winning TRAIL member households: Elizabeth Clothier (*pictured at left*), Norlin Boyd and Julie Hegmann, Bill and Sharon Oglesby, and Connie Peterson. Congrats and bon appetit to all!

## COVID vaccine information resources

With availability slowly increasing and eligibility expanding, these websites provide updated resources to help connect you and loved ones to COVID vaccinations.

◆ **Johnson County Public Health (JCPH) [Coronavirus Information Hub](#)** provides information about vaccine providers, transportation assistance, and scheduling help. Questions? Call JCPH at 319-356-6040 or email [jcpublichealth@johnsoncountyiowa.gov](mailto:jcpublichealth@johnsoncountyiowa.gov).

◆ **CDC.gov** On this [webpage](#) the CDC provides public health recommendations for fully vaccinated people.

Mercy and UIHC are reaching out to their patients to offer vaccines, and UIHC is also vaccinating non-patients.

◆ **Mercy Iowa City [COVID-19 Vaccine](#)**

◆ **University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics** Visit [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources](#) or call 319-384-8819 to express your interest in vaccination.

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## **A changing world? The pandemic and the future**



**Mercedes Bern-Klug**

A *Wall Street Journal* article titled "How Covid-19 Will Change Aging and Retirement" focused on how the worldwide pandemic has and continues to affect older adults. At TRAIL we wanted to know if its national perspective rang true for Iowa and contacted local leaders for their thoughts.

In this third and final of a series, we talked with Mercedes Bern-Klug, PhD, MSW, Director, UI School of Social Work, and Director, Aging and Longevity Studies Program. Below are the insights she shared.

### **What pandemic-related effects have you observed on the lives on older Iowans?**

"Older Iowans" refers to a very broad group of people. We're talking about an age span of 40-plus years and a very wide function span as well. Some older Iowans have been very severely impacted and have experienced the most isolation. These are individuals who require personal care and who are in long-term care and group living situations. But older Iowans who are retired and living independently have been able to avoid many of the risks of the pandemic. And they've done a marvelous job of adapting to the challenges of the pandemic. People in this age group have long experience with change.

Just one year ago we had no idea of what this contagion was and how it would spread, so anxiety was very high. But messaging about the coronavirus has been clearer lately and that helps everybody. Great innovations have come from businesses; they've made it much easier to purchase products and that really benefits the whole society.

### **Do you foresee that any of these effects or responses will persist into coming years?**

As a society we recognize that internet access is a requirement. It has become very clear that to function fully in our society people need internet access and the skills to use it. That's true for kids too. In many cases grandparents have stepped in to help children with their online school work. And I think merchants will continue the accommodations they've developed.

### **What societal changes as a result of the pandemic do you envision? Will they improve the lives of older Iowans or make them more difficult?**

First, there's a recognition that diseases impact people differently based on their age and other conditions, so any public health effort needs to be age-aware. Also, in the case of infectious diseases, we need to recognize that nobody is safe unless everybody is safe. That's very clear now.

We also know that clear and consistent messaging is a lifesaver.

My research is in the area of nursing homes. The general public has little understanding of what infection control in a nursing home means. The individuals who work in a nursing home live in a community, and so to care for nursing home residents, we need to care for the whole community.

We also have a new appreciation of the importance of human connections. Most nursing home residents haven't had visitors for a year; they've been very isolated. And that's not the responsibility of the staff alone; the whole community needs to be involved.

After this pandemic, none of us will take for granted the joy of sitting down for a beer or a cup of coffee with a friend. We'll appreciate it in ways we never did before. We're enriched by our connections with other people and nothing beats seeing other people eyeball to eyeball.

**NOTE:** These events are virtual, that is, they are being held online. More details and registration information for each event can be found on [TRAIL's online calendar](#).

New events are added frequently, so check the online calendar often to stay up-to-date.

[TRAIL Virtual Event Pick: “Emir Abdelkader’s Connection to Elkader, Iowa”](#)

Tuesday, March 16, noon to 1 PM

Learn more about Elkader, Iowa, and its namesake in this online presentation.

[TRAIL Virtual Event Pick: “Stay Independent: A Healthy Aging Series”](#)

Wednesday, March 17, 10 to 11 AM

This session, from ISU Extension and Outreach, focuses on the topic *Brain Health*.

[TRAIL Virtual Event Pick: Stories from the Life of Lou Henry Hoover](#)

Thursday, March 18, 6 to 7 PM

Celebrate Women’s History Month with this program about Lou Henry Hoover, a First Lady with lasting impact, presented by the Hoover Presidential Library and Museum.

[Johnson County Trails: New Ways to Explore the Outdoors Close to Home](#)

Friday, March 19, 1 to 2 PM

Explore the hiking, biking, and walking trails in our county with Brad Freidhof, DNR.

[TRAIL Virtual Event Pick: “The Grant Wood Sleeping Porch Mural”](#)

Sunday, March 21, 2 to 3 PM

This Zoom presentation features a unique sleeping porch at Bruce more and the connections between Grant Wood and one of Cedar Rapids’ best-known families.

[TRAIL Virtual Event Pick: “The Paving of Iowa City Streets,” with Tom Schulein](#)

Tuesday, March 23, 11 AM to noon

Local historian Tom Schulein will share how Iowa City streets came to be paved.

[TRAIL Virtual Event Pick: “Stay Independent: A Healthy Aging Series”](#)

Wednesday, March 24, 10 to 11 AM

In this final of six presentations, the topic will be *Cooking for One or Two*.

[Antique Treasures and Their Stories](#)

Wednesday, March 24, 3 to 4 PM

In this Zoom event we’ll visit with Laura Lovell to hear about her antiques career.

[New Member Orientation](#)

Friday, March 26, 1:30 to 3 PM

This informal Zoom meeting will be led by TRAIL Executive Director Bob Untiedt with other TRAIL members on hand. Both newbies and longtime members are welcome.

[TRAIL Virtual Event Pick: “The People Before the Park” UI Theatre Performance](#)

Friday, March 26, 8 to 9 PM

This play by Keith Josef Adkins is set in New York City in 1856. Tickets are free but must be obtained in advance; the production will be available online for 48 hours.

[End-of-Life Care Documents: Not As Simple As You Might Think](#)

Tuesday, March 30, 1 to 2 PM

Learn how to handle critical, end-of-life decisions from UI Law Prof. Sheldon Kurtz.

[“My Natural Disaster Books and Some Tales They Tell”](#)

Wednesday, April 7, 3 to 4 PM

TRAIL member Linda McGuire will talk about her collection of nonfiction books about disasters and why they fascinate her.

[Virtual Painting Class with Brush and Barrel \\$](#)

Friday, April 9, 3:30 to 5 PM

Supplies will be sent to your door before class for this step-by-step painting class.

[TRAIL Volunteer Orientation via Zoom](#)

Saturday, April 10, 10 to 11 AM