



## Happy Holidays!



This is the time of year when we gather to celebrate the December holidays, the winter solstice and the beginning of a new

year. In other words, it's a time for community – whether huddling with family around the hearth, or joining with friends to serve those in need.

After 10 months with TRAIL, the concept of community has taken on a deeper meaning for me – and I hope for you as well. It's more than coming together; it's about creating and strengthening bonds that, when we pull together, help lift us all up. At its best, community allows us to live fuller and more rewarding lives, at any age. That's what our TRAIL community aims to do.

On behalf of the TRAIL Board of Directors and volunteers, we thank you for your ongoing support of TRAIL and our mission. We wish you a warm and joyous holiday season, and a New Year that is uplifting in every way.

We look forward to growing with you and coming together often in 2018.

Sincerely yours,

Executive Director

[hillary@trailofjohnsoncounty.org](mailto:hillary@trailofjohnsoncounty.org)

## *TRAIL event re-cap:*

## Tips to make your home safer

At a special presentation for TRAIL members on November 16, Lori Wiles, a Cedar Rapids-based interior designer, explained how to increase the safety of three main areas of our homes: exterior entryways, kitchens and bathrooms.

**Exterior entryways** can present a major risk for falling. A landing and handrails are vital for stairs leading up to the front door. In fact, Iowa City building codes require handrails if you have three or more steps to your door. Well-lit landings provide a safe place to stop, open the door and proceed into the house, which can be especially helpful when carrying groceries or other items.

**Kitchens** present multiple safety issues. Lori noted that having to carry hot items across the kitchen can lead to spills and burns. Make sure you have easy-to-reach surfaces on which to place hot items near your stove or microwave, and keep adjacent counters free of clutter.



(Decluttering your kitchen is an excellent New Year's resolution!) Another tip: place a stool near work spaces to provide a place to work safely and prevent fatigue. Finally, having a water source right next to the stove makes filling and straining pots convenient.

**Bathrooms** present multiple risks for falls. The best aging-in-place bathroom designs include room to maneuver a walker and are large enough for a helper to provide assistance, if necessary. High or sunken bathtubs are inconvenient and can be dangerous. Hand-held shower heads with a seat or ledge in the shower, and grab bars in the tub and near the toilet all increase bathroom comfort and safety.

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## *Village to Village Network:*

# TRAIL Executive Director attends national conference

In early November, TRAIL Executive Director Hillary Ramaker traveled to Baltimore to attend the 9<sup>th</sup> annual National Village Gathering, sponsored by Village to Village Network, the consortium of aging-in-place villages of which TRAIL is a member. The title of this year's conference was "Enhancing the Power of Aging," a theme that Hillary says definitely resonated with her.

"It's great to be part of a national movement empowering communities to take care of each other and support our individual aging journeys. Getting to meet and interact with my peers across the country was exciting, inspiring and informative," Hillary says.

"I'm very grateful that thanks to membership fees and donations, and with the support of our Board of Directors, I was able to attend the conference and start connecting TRAIL to the larger international movement," she adds.

The conference was attended by more than 350 people representing 200 open villages and about 150 villages in development. Attendees also learned that the first international villages opened in New Zealand this year.

Among the featured conference speakers were Rona Kramer, Maryland Secretary of Aging; Dr. Peter Rabins, Richmond Family Professor of Alzheimer's and related diseases at Johns Hopkins University; and Roger Anunsen, a pioneer in studies of the aging brain. (Hillary suggests watching his latest TED talk about applied brain science here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9EwtB0fyqU>.)

A major topic among conference goers, Hillary says, was the fact that aging-in-place organizations like TRAIL "are all about making an investment in the future. By planning now, our members give themselves a gift of time and peace of mind later."

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*Making your home safer, continued from page 1:*

Lori explained that most homes are designed for people who are 18 to 40 years old. Safety factors for aging are rarely considered. She recommends that older adults look at our homes with fresh eyes and ask, "What is serving me best in my home today and in the future, as opposed to what have I always had here?" For example, throw rugs are nice when we are young, but can present a tripping hazard when we are older.

If you are interested in more information on designing your home for safety, the TRAIL Member website lists home construction and remodeling vendors who are skilled in serving the needs of older adults committed to staying in their homes. Log into the Member website and click on "Find a Service Contractor" under the Member Services tab. Lori can be reached through her website: <http://loriwilesdesign.com/>.

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