



From the executive director

Celebrating our volunteers

As the March winds and cold temperatures slowly make room for more springlike weather, I'm reminded that April brings both rain showers and the opportunity to say "thank you" to our volunteers during National Volunteer Month.

In doing a little research for this column, I learned that in his 1989 inaugural address, President George H.W. Bush shared his vision of 1,000 points of light. He founded Points of Light, the world's largest organization dedicated to volunteer service, with a mission to encourage millions of people to take action and change the world. And in 1990, National Volunteer Month was recognized worldwide.

Did you know volunteering improves your physical and mental health? According to the Mayo Clinic, volunteering offers many health benefits:

- ◆ Lower rates of depression and anxiety (especially for people 65 and older)
- ◆ Reduced stress and increased positive, relaxed feelings through the release of dopamine
- ◆ Lower mortality rates than those who do not volunteer, even when controlled for age, gender, and physical health.

TRAIL of Johnson County is built on a foundation that encourages neighbors helping neighbors. Volunteers are the lifeblood of this organization. Without the willingness of our 50 service volunteers, TRAIL wouldn't be able to help our 74 Full members age more securely in the places they call home.

A few amazing statistics: Our average number of volunteer hours per month has increased significantly over the past six months. From January to September 2021, we averaged around 140 total volunteer hours per month. Since September 2021, that has increased to 165 volunteer hours per month. That increase of 18 percent each month is due to having more volunteers AND having a greater average number of volunteer service calls.

In April, TRAIL will salute its volunteers for their unwavering services to our members. The Volunteer Committee is currently planning a special recognition for TRAIL volunteers, but I won't spoil the surprise here. Just let me say, thank you, volunteers, for all you do!

—Bob Untiedt

...And now meet this new volunteer

Brijesh Sutariya had plenty of experience helping senior citizens improve their lives even before moving to Iowa City in 2021.

A native of Ahmedabad, India, he helped care for his mother and two grandparents in his family home. He also volunteered at a local residential home for seniors, picking up groceries or prescriptions or helping out in whatever other ways he could. Those experiences made him want to keep doing that kind of work after he moved to Iowa City in August 2021 as a post-doctoral research scholar at internal medicine, University of Iowa. He learned about TRAIL of Johnson County and joined as a volunteer just a few months after moving here.

"I know the challenges that many people face during aging, and I feel a sense of responsibility to support them, and this is one way to give back to the community," said the 34-year-old Sutariya.

In his months as a volunteer, he has gone grocery shopping with TRAIL members and helped teach elders how to use modern cell phones. He also gives back to his new community by volunteering with the CommUnity Crisis Services and Food Bank on weekends.

He'll be joined by his wife, Neetika, and their 1-year-old son later this spring. He says she also believes in the importance of giving back and may join TRAIL as a volunteer, as well.

Sutariya says his volunteer experience is helping him in meeting and socializing with people from different backgrounds in his new home. "I am getting a lot of experience and knowledge from the people I work with, and I am also learning more about the culture," he said.

This is also the first time he's lived outside of India and volunteering with TRAIL helps him learn about American culture and how life is lived in Iowa.



A friendly voice on the phone, a smiling face in the office

Jessica Hahn starts her day in the TRAIL Office by making a to-do list, but sometimes, she says, that list “gets blown up” as the phone rings nonstop and other needs arise.

Jessica is TRAIL’s member and volunteer services coordinator, and she carries out a variety of duties. But what she enjoys most is simply connecting with TRAIL members and volunteers, lending an ear, and learning about their concerns.

When Jessica joined TRAIL in March 2021, she worked from home for several months and then moved to the Senior Center in July of last year—where it was unnervingly quiet at first. But now she says, as the COVID pandemic eases, activity in the building is increasing and she is receiving more volunteer requests than ever, mostly for transportation.*

Jessica grew up in the Waterloo area and attended the University of Northern Iowa where she majored in communications/journalism. It’s also where she met Troy, now her husband of 27 years. In the early years of their marriage, the couple moved frequently for Troy’s career with Sears and Jessica was able to work for several bookstores. For the last 11 years they have lived in Solon, near Lake Macbride, where she loves to walk the nearby trails. The couple has two sons, Jack, a UI student, and Joe, a high school senior.

Before joining TRAIL, Jessica worked at Barnes and Noble in Coral Ridge Mall, scheduling readings and children’s activities and meeting local authors. Not surprisingly, she is an avid reader who enjoys fiction and nonfiction alike, and she keeps a list of books she hopes to read someday.

One of Jessica’s goals for 2022 is to make more phone calls to TRAIL members. “There are always more members to get to know,” she says, “new things come up all the time. So I know there will always be new things to learn.”

* *Jessica says an average of 50 transportation requests come in each month. Are you interested in being a volunteer driver—on your own schedule? Visit the [volunteer page](#) on TRAIL’s website.*

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Welcome to the TRAIL Board

Ellen Hallin, the newest member of the TRAIL Board of Directors, is a co-owner, CFO, and director of staff development at Meld Marketing. She is also a graduate of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program, which is designed to create growth strategies for businesses nationally.



Ellen grew up in the Chicago area, has a degree from Northwestern University in human development and social policy, and has a master's degree from Loyola University.

She enjoys gardening, hiking, going to the “bark park” with Indie, her boxer, and all things Chicago sports.

Member tip o’ the month

How to make a service request



A reminder: Full and Supported members receive unlimited volunteer services and Affiliate members are eligible for one service a year. To request a service, you can:

- ★ Send an email to membersupport@trailofjohnsoncounty.org. Please include as many details as possible and phone number for potential follow up.
- ★ Call the TRAIL Office at 319-800-9003 from 9 AM to 1 PM Monday through Friday to talk with Jessica or leave a message, with as much detail as possible and a call back phone number.

Calls and emails outside office hours will be returned the following business day, or the following Monday for those made after 1 PM Friday. We appreciate if you make your request at least a week ahead of time, although we will try to accommodate more urgent requests.

Thanks! We look forward to hearing from you!

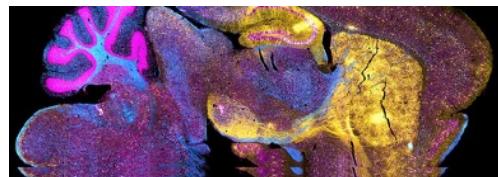
Eat right during National Nutrition Month and beyond

March includes St. Patrick's Day, and it's also National Nutrition Month. Take time to enjoy some corned beef and beer, but also consider how to eat more healthfully.



- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables, including those that are dark green, red, and orange. Look for reduced-sodium or no-salt-added canned goods. Eat fresh fruits or those canned in water or 100% juice.
 - Make half your grains those made with 100% whole grains. Look for those fortified with vitamin B12, a nutrient that decreases in absorption as we age or due to some medications.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese. Older adults need more calcium and vitamin D to keep bones healthy.
- Vary protein choices. In addition to lean meat, poultry, and eggs, choose seafood, nuts, beans, peas, and lentils in your meal planning. Eat proteins throughout the day.
- Limit sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars. Add spices or herbs instead of salt. Switch from solid fats to oils.
- Stay well hydrated. Choose water or unsweetened beverages.
- Be mindful of portion sizes. Older adults need fewer calories, so try using smaller plates, bowls, and glasses.
- If you can, cook more often at home where you are in control of what's on your plate. Eating out: save half the meal for later.

To learn more, visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at [Eat Right](#).



New UI health center brings hope

The University of Iowa is bringing hope to adults affected by neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Lewy Body dementia, frontotemporal dementia, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

The Iowa Center for Neurodegeneration, being established at UI Health Care, is the first of its kind in the state. It focuses on advancing patient care while integrating basic science and clinical research of these diseases, which will affect hundreds of thousands of Iowans and millions of Americans in the coming years. Researchers are also working to improve diagnostics and develop new treatments, which currently have no cures or disease-modifying therapies.

The center builds on significant progress UI Hospitals and Clinics has already made as one of only two Parkinson's disease research centers of excellence in the United States with planning grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

"Establishing a dedicated center focused on Parkinson's disease and other neurodegenerative diseases will help us pursue transformational discovery," says Dr. Nandakumar Narayanan, associate professor of neurology at the UI Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine. He adds, "It better positions us to compete for national funding, catalyzing research breakthroughs that will make a difference in the lives of patients affected."

The new center is housed within the Iowa Neuroscience Institute and is funded by NIH grants, the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust, and additional philanthropic support. For more on information, visit [UI neurodegenerative research](#).

Continuing notes on COVID

As infections in most parts of the country slow, keep in mind these Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations:

- ✓ If you are [at high risk for severe illness](#), talk to your healthcare provider about whether and where you need to wear a mask and take other precautions
- ✓ Stay [up to date](#) with your COVID vaccines
- ✓ [Get tested](#) if you have symptoms

Want to know COVID levels in Johnson County? Visit the CDC website [COVID-by-county](#) and enter the appropriate information.

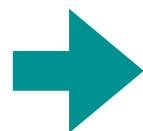
Have you ordered your four free at-home COVID tests? Now you can order four more. Just visit [covidtests.gov](#).

On page 4 of this *TRAIL Guide*, you'll find a brief note about TRAIL's face-to-face events.

NOTE: Some of these events are virtual, while others are in person. Locations, full details, and registration information 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 those hosted by and for TRAIL members. **GREEN** events (virtual) and **YELLOW** (in-person) are hosted by other organizations but may be of interest to TRAIL members.



As we ease back into face-to-face events, we are ever mindful of safety. In the short term, we ask that if you register for in-person events, please bring proof of vaccination and wear a mask. We will continue to evaluate and look forward to a time when this will not be necessary.

[AARP Lecture: "America's Cereals"](#) (via Zoom)

Tuesday, March 15, 5:30 to 6:30 PM

Noted food historian Francis Segan will share fascinating stories about America's most popular breakfast foods.

[Iowa History 101 Series: "Irish Iowa"](#) (via Zoom)

Thursday, March 17, noon to 1 PM

Join author and presenter Timothy Walch to trace the history of Iowa's second-largest immigrant group, filled with heroes, rebels, clergy, and criminals.

[AARP "Movies for Grownups" Awards Show](#) (live on PBS)

Friday, March 18, 8:30 to 10 PM

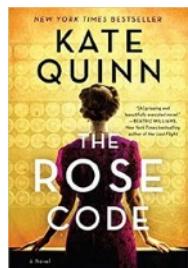
AARP includes in its awards categories that you won't see in the Academy Awards, such as "Best Time Capsule" and "Best Intergenerational Film."

[Brunch at Iowa River Power Company](#) \$

Sunday, March 20, 10 to 11:30 AM

Iowa River Power Company, 501 First Avenue, Coralville

Join other TRAIL members for a fabulous brunch. *See the online calendar for event-specific COVID recommendations.*



[Book Club—Read Together "The Rose Code" by Kate Quinn](#) (via Zoom)

Monday, March 21, 1 to 2 PM

This gripping novel tells the story of three women who work in the WWII British code-breaking effort at Bletchley Park and who come together after the war to expose a traitor.

[Figge Artist Talk with Photographer Robert Misrach: "Border Cantos | Sonic Borders"](#) (via Zoom)

Thursday, March 24, 6:30 to 7:30 PM

Border Cantos | Sonic Borders is a collaboration between influential photographer Robert Misrach and Mexican-American artist and composer Guillermo Galindo; it explores the complexities of our country's southern border.

[New Member Orientation](#) (via Zoom)

Friday, April 1, 1:30 to 3 PM

In the informal meeting you can learn about TRAIL services, benefits, and resources and get your questions answered.

[Photography in the 1920s and '30s](#) (via Zoom)

Wednesday, April 6, 10:30 to 11:30 AM

The 1920 and '30s are considered a period of great innovation in photography. Cosponsored by the Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center.

[Conversations with Bob](#) (via Zoom)

Wednesday, April 13, 2:30 to 3:30 PM

TRAIL Executive Director will share a recap of activities and field your questions.

[TRAIL Book Club](#) (location TBD)

Thursday, April 14, 1:30 to 3 PM