



What happens in Vegas...

By TRAIL Executive Director Christine Scheetz

2026

UPCOMING EVENT

AGING LIFE DESIGN: A Journey Captured in Morning Pages

Local author talk:
Tim Charles

Longtime Cedar Rapids resident Tim Charles has more than 40 years of experience in the health care industry, including many years as president and CEO of Mercy Medical Center in Cedar Rapids. His mission now is to address the needs of the aging community and the importance of the arts as we age.

Friday, January 30
1 to 2 PM

*In person, Iowa City Senior
Center, or on Zoom.*

Register **online** or call the Senior
Center at 319-356-5220



We've all heard the quip, "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas," but that's not the case with my recent trip there for the "Engaging With Aging" conference.

One of the most compelling speakers was Leanne Clark-Shirley (pictured below), president and CEO of the

American Society on Aging. Clark-Shirley issued several calls to action, emphasizing that aging isn't "someone else's issue"—it's a universal part of life that affects every individual, family, community, sector, and economy.

Far too often we focus on decline and loss and the "burdens" of aging. Instead, she advocated that we adopt and promote strength-based language and stories that recognize older adults for our diverse lifetimes of experience, exposures, dreams, desires, and accomplishments. This narrative and cultural shift is

essential to reducing ageism and building more inclusive communities, systems, and cultures where all people can thrive at every age.

Clark-Shirley called for stronger partnerships beyond traditional aging networks, including health care, technology, business, government, and academia. By broadening who's at the table, organizations can co-design more effective, sustainable programs and policies that support people across the life course.



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What happens in Vegas . . . *continued*

Finally, Clark-Shirley underscored the need for continued advocacy to protect and expand critical supports like Medicare and Medicaid and to influence public policy that affects older adults and caregivers. She said aging should be part of broader social justice and economic conversations, not siloed as a niche issue.

Living alone with dementia

Another important conference session focused on research about adults living alone with dementia. Research findings show that people living alone with dementia face significantly higher risks of:

- Missed medical appointments
- Medication mismanagement
- Malnutrition and dehydration
- Falls and preventable hospitalizations
- Financial exploitation and fraud

Fragmented systems fail these adults

- Health care, aging services, housing, transportation, and social services operate in silos, leaving individuals to navigate complex systems they increasingly cannot manage
- Eligibility rules often assume the presence of a caregiver, excluding people who live alone

Late identification and crisis-driven care is common

- Dementia is often identified late among those living alone—frequently during a crisis (ER visit, eviction, hospitalization)
- Crisis-driven interventions are more costly and lead to worse outcomes than early, coordinated support

Marginalized groups feel a disproportionate impact

Adults living alone with dementia are more likely to be:

- Older women
- People with lower incomes
- Members of historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups

Social isolation accelerates decline

- Chronic loneliness and isolation contribute to faster cognitive and physical decline
- Lack of regular social contact means warning signs often go unnoticed

The findings underscore the critical role of organizations like TRAIL in spotting risk early and providing trusted, human connection. Volunteer-driven models, support, and social engagement are uniquely positioned to delay crises, preserve independence, and improve quality of life.



TRAIL members and a guest enjoyed the holiday flower arranging workshop at Willow and Stock on December 16. Front row, left to right, Mary Mascher, Denice Connell, Ann Romanowski, and Pam Tied. Back row, Meghan Romanowski (Ann's daughter-in-law and guest), Rita Minchik, and Barb Stein.

Welcome 2026! We have plans...

Many of us have a paper calendar for 2026 and have already marked in events we are looking forward to—travel, a new grandchild, a wedding, or perhaps an anniversary celebration. We at TRAIL thought it would be fun to hear about the plans some of our members and volunteers are excited about in the new year.

I am looking forward to another great year, enjoying our wonderful TRAIL community. I am also looking forward to a trip to Japan in February. It is a **photo tour to photograph birds, snow monkeys, and landscapes**. We will take a side trip to Hiroshima. It should be a wonderful time. Happy New Year, everyone. **Victoria S.**



I have one goal I hope to complete soon. It is a **photo-based family genealogy project, that spans six generations of my family**. I've worked on it for more than a year and it's very close to finished but remains just out of reach. **Art F.**

Below: Art's great-grandfather, born in 1840, who joined the Union Army in the Civil War.



I'm looking forward to celebrating the academic achievements of my niece and nephew as they graduate from college and high school, and to **visiting my daughter in Venice, Italy, as she completes a research project** on stalactites and stalagmites. It is so fun to watch these kids grow into amazing adults. **Janene P.**



I'm looking forward to **my family's annual summer vacation** in northern Minnesota, where the old resort cabin we've been staying in for 60+ years will have been replaced by a brand-new structure. **Susan S.**

Looking forward to remaining healthy, a **granddaughter's college graduation**, our **45th anniversary**, possible travel, good music, and being with friends and family. **Jim R.**

I'm looking forward to **City Park Pool reopening** and all the afternoons my daughter and I will spend splashing around and running into friends and neighbors. **Hayley C.**

My husband and I had a **new great-nephew** born Dec. 21, and we look forward to meeting him sometime in the spring. **Denice C.**

I'm looking forward to **vacationing with my two daughters** who will be on break from teaching. We are returning to Canada in June for our fourth stay at the same bed and breakfast. **Mary R.**

We are looking forward to a **tour of Scotland in September**. It will be our first time there. **Joy S. and David R.**

I am going on two tours sponsored by Hills Bank. One is Celtic Adventures to **Scotland and Ireland** in April. The other is in December to **New York** for the Rockefeller Lights & Broadway Nights Tour. **Pat S.**

UI Women's Basketball and the **Indiana Fever** (with a healthy Caitlin Clark!). **Nancy W.**

Considering an assistive device?



There's no need to feel overwhelmed when shopping for an assistive device to support your communication needs, mobility, or tasks of daily living.

Start with a discussion with your doctor, occupational therapist, or physical therapist about the specific tasks you want to accomplish, such as cooking or navigating outdoors. Professionals can also ensure the device fits your body (such as cane height) to prevent strain or injury.

When selecting a device, consider these factors:

1. **Focus on simplicity:** The simplest device can often meet your needs, making it best for ease of use and maintenance. Low-tech solutions are often easier to maintain than high-tech alternatives.
2. **Prioritize comfort and safety:** It's important to make sure the device is comfortable and fits your body. Also consider whether the device will work in your home environment. (A four-wheel walker may work well when shopping but may be too bulky for narrow hallways at home.) Check for non-slip grips, stable frames, and reliable braking systems for mobility aids.
3. **Try it before buying it:** Although this isn't always possible, make sure there is a return policy so you can use the device on a trial basis. Consider the product's size, weight, and battery life.
4. **Consider cost:** The most expensive device may not always be the device that you need. Factor in ongoing costs like maintenance, batteries, and future repairs.
5. **Read real user reviews:** Look for devices that offer first-hand insights on the product's functionality and durability. Verify the availability of user manuals, video tutorials, and technical support before purchase.

Welcome new Board members!

Two new volunteers are beginning three-year terms on the TRAIL **Board of Directors** this month. They bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, and community connections to our Board.



Bart Floyd, a financial professional with 35 years of experience, serves as the Chief Banking Officer at Central State Bank. He and his family have called the Iowa City area home since 2003. Bart has invested in the community through involvement with numerous local

organizations, including Junior Achievement, the Community Foundation of Johnson County, Grace Community Church, Brotherhood Prison Ministries, Iowa City Area Development Group, and United Way. He holds degrees from Cornell College and the University of Iowa, where he is also currently an adjunct professor at the Tippie College of Business



Mary Nicknish graduated from the University of Iowa with a BS in computer science and spent 40 years working at software startups in Silicon Valley. Mary retired in 2023 and decided to move back to Iowa City in 2024 to be closer to family. Most of her career was spent working at

data analysis, education, and file-sharing software companies. Her father was an internal medicine doctor at Mercy Hospital and her mother an active volunteer in Iowa City. Mary spends her time now volunteering at Big Brothers Big Sisters, catching up with old friends and family, hiking, and biking.

We look forward to introducing Bart and Mary to the TRAIL community at our 9th anniversary event later this spring. Stay tuned for more information about date, time, and place!

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Thursday, Jan. 22, noon to 1:15 PM



Community Conversation Senior Support

In 2024, the Community Foundation of Johnson County (CFJC) began hosting its “Community Conversations” series—and this month, the spotlight is on Senior Support. We hope you’ll join the conversation via Zoom on **Thursday, Jan. 22, from noon to 1:15 PM.**

The event is free and open to the public, but you’ll need to sign up in advance to receive the Zoom log-in details. To register, visit the event page on the [TRAIL calendar](#) or the CFJC website at <https://cfjc.org/community-conversation-senior-support/>.

The January event will include a panel discussion with local organizations—TRAIL among them—that focus on the needs of older adults in our community. In addition to TRAIL, panel participants include the Iowa City Senior Center, Horizons/

Meals on Wheels, Cycling Without Age, Iowa City Hospice, Johnson County Livable Community for Successful Aging, and ThinkJoy.

CFJC’s Community Conversations gather community members, experts, and local organizations to discuss pressing issues facing our community. Past topics have included food insecurity, housing, childcare, mental health, and immigrant and refugee support.

The Conversations serve as a platform for education and connection, bringing together folks interested in specific topics with experts working on community solutions to share knowledge and resources. The goal is to foster increased awareness of important issues in our community, collaborative problem-solving, and new and deepened partnerships.



Regaining
your quality of life
begins when you
CHOOSE
exceptional results
in rehabilitation.

For those recovering from a stroke, injury or illness, regaining your best quality of life begins with your ability to choose. Choose us for exceptional results.

IOWA
HEALTH NETWORK | Rehabilitation
Hospital
a venture with
Encompass Health

Talk to your medical professionals
about choosing us for rehabilitation.

THANKS

to Iowa
Rehabilitation
Hospital for
sponsoring this
month’s newsletter.

encompasshealth.com/coralvillerehab



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.

Upcoming TRAIL Events Calendar

The TRAIL office will be closed January 19 for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

MLK Jr. Day of Service Project: ICSC Food and Boot Drive

Monday, January 19, 10 AM to 2 PM

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

Book Club: *The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans (via Zoom)

Monday, January 19, 1 to 2 PM

Pup-A-Rama Playhouse

Wednesday, January 21, 2 to 3:30 PM

Pup-A-Rama Playhouse, 4852 Sand Road SE, Iowa City

Community Conversation: Senior Support (via Zoom)

Thursday, January 22, noon to 1:15 PM

Play Pool with John

Tuesday, January 27, 1:30 to 2:30 PM

BowlDogs, 1355 Haynes Lane #3, North Liberty

Let's Talk Books: Cookbooks (via Zoom)

Tuesday, January 27, 7 to 8 PM

ALZ Talks: Take Charge of Your Brain (via Zoom)

Thursday, January 29, 10 to 11 AM

2025-2026 Grant Wood Fellows: Artist Talks and Panels

Thursday, January 29, 6 to 8 PM

UI Stanley Museum of Art, 160 West Burlington Street, Iowa City

Aging Life Design: A Journey Captured in Morning Pages

(in person or via Zoom)

Friday, January 30, 1 to 2 PM

Iowa City Senior Center, Room 302, 28 South Linn Street, Iowa City

Member Happy Hour \$

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

Monica's, 303 2nd Street, Coralville

Functional Exercise to Improve Daily Life (via Zoom)

Wednesday, February 4, 1 to 2 PM

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