

Notes



Volunteer Handbook

Revised Feb 2017

YOUR PLACE TO
Connect

28 SOUTH LINN STREET • IOWA CITY, IA 52240
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Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to the Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center's volunteer program. We appreciate your interest and are grateful that you have chosen to share your time and talent with the Senior Center.

Our volunteers are a vital part of The Center's success. They are involved in virtually every aspect of The Center's operation. With the help of more than 500 volunteers annually, The Center is able to provide valuable services to seniors and the entire community.


We want your volunteer experience to be rewarding and enriching. This volunteer handbook will orient you and serve as an information resource, getting you acquainted with The Center and our volunteer program. Please feel free to ask questions.

We look forward to having you join our volunteer team!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linda Kopping".

Linda Kopping, Coordinator

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Emily Light".

Emily Light, Community Outreach Specialist

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michelle Buhman".

Michelle Buhman, Program Specialist

ABOUT THE SENIOR CENTER

MISSION

The mission of the Senior Center is to promote optimal aging by creating opportunities to support wellness, social connections, community engagement, and lifelong learning.

STRATEGIC GOALS FOR 2017-2022

- To raise community awareness and promote a positive image of the Senior Center.
- To enhance financial stability of The Center
- To promote inclusion and diversity among participants.
- To provide programs that promote optimal aging.
- To enhance administrative planning practices.
- To promote a positive image of aging and combat ageism.
- To provide leadership in Iowa City becoming designated as an age-friendly community by the World Health Organization.

OVERVIEW AND IMPACT OF SERVICES

Located in a beautifully restored historic post office in downtown Iowa City, the Senior Center is a gathering place for adults age 50+. Serving approximately 1,600 members and the community as a whole, The Center offers an array of programs, services, and volunteer opportunities that promote optimal aging.

Optimal aging involves more than physical health or the absence of disease. It is a comprehensive concept of wellness that supports the best balance of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, vocational, and spiritual health for each individual.

The Center's program components promote optimal aging by providing opportunities for education, social engagement, physical activity, and community involvement. Participation in these types of activities are known to reduce the risk of disease and disability, improve memory, enhance mobility, and provide a social network, which is a key factor in longevity and the ability to participate in and contribute to the culture and community.

HISTORY

The Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center opened in September of 1981. It began because a small group of seniors, including Arnie Arneson, Chick Forwald, Mary Rock, Thea Sando, and Rachel Dennis, wanted to have a place downtown where senior citizens could gather. This group spearheaded a movement that garnered the support of the community, the City of Iowa City, and Johnson County. Their work ultimately led to the City of Iowa City's purchase and renovation of the old post office building and the creation of an exceptional facility for people 50+ years of age.

The founders created a center that embraced change and innovation. They recognized that the interests, responsibilities, and expectations of members would change over time in response to different life experiences and social changes. The founders understood that people have a wealth of options for how they spend their free time, and The Center would have to provide programs and services that matched evolving community interests in order to stay relevant. As Bette Meisel, The Center's first coordinator, said, "Maintaining the status quo is a death sentence." A successful senior center needs to be dynamic.

While programs and services have continually evolved, the underlying principles that guide The Center's programming remain the same. Foremost among them is the belief that many losses commonly associated with aging are the result of lifestyle choices, not aging. Throughout The Center's history, the staff has acted upon this belief by facilitating a variety of opportunities for mental and physical exercise, social interaction, and community involvement to foster the health, wellbeing, and independent lifestyles of participants.

It is clear that The Center's founders were successful in building a strong, yet flexible, foundation. The Center has undergone many changes related to programming, building use, and funding. Some of these changes have been difficult. Nonetheless, The Center has continued to flourish. Today, as in the past, it is widely recognized for its innovative programming and its contribution to making Iowa City an attractive retirement destination for people across the country.

The Center was among the first senior centers in the country to be accredited by the National Institute of Senior Centers, a constituent unit of the National Council on Aging. This prestigious designation serves as an acknowledgement of the success of The Center's founders and everyone who has followed.

FUNDING

The Senior Center is owned and operated by the City of Iowa City. Operational expenses are supported by local tax dollars, participant cost sharing, donations of all sorts, and a grant from the Johnson County Board of Supervisors. Friends of The Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, was formed in 2003 to generate revenue through donations and bequests to help support The Center's operational budget and enrich programming.

SENIOR CENTER STAFF AND ORGANIZATION CHART

Senior Center staff contact information, as well as our organization chart, are included in this packet on separate sheets. Volunteers may review these to become familiar with The Center's staff members and organizational structure.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A copy of the *Senior Center Operational Handbook* is available at the reception desk for anyone to review. The operational handbook serves to identify information, policies, and guidelines that are applied in the day-to-day operation of The Center. These policies and guidelines are periodically updated to ensure consistency with The Center's mission statement, goals, and objectives, and to make certain that they reflect the evolving status of the facility, the community, and the interests and concerns of the population served.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Business Hours

8 AM – 5 PM, Monday – Friday

Extended Member Hours

7 AM – 7 PM, Monday – Thursday

7 AM – 5 PM, Friday

10:30 AM – 1:30 PM, Saturday – Sunday

Building hours are often extended to accommodate evening and weekend programming.

HOLIDAYS

The Senior Center is closed on all holidays observed by the City of Iowa City. This includes:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving and the Friday following Thanksgiving
- Christmas and one floating holiday in December that is selected by the City Manager

SEVERE WEATHER ALERTS AND CLOSINGS

When Iowa City public schools close for the entire school day due to severe weather, the Senior Center cancels all Center sponsored classes, activity groups, programs, and special events. When the public schools are not in session, early morning decisions to cancel programming due to severe weather are made by the Senior Center coordinator. Whenever Senior Center sponsored programming is canceled, it is announced over local radio and television stations.

Despite the cancelation of all Center sponsored programming, the facility remains staffed and open to the public between the hours of 8 AM and 5 PM. All interior office, classrooms, and common areas remain unlocked and member access to the computer lab, fitness areas, Senior Center Television, and pool room is maintained. There is no extended member or evening access to the facility at these times.

During extreme weather events, when travel is not advised and other city services are suspended, The Center may close and cancel all activities. This decision is made by the coordinator or designee and announced over local media outlets.

Outside agencies, like VNA, Johnson County Task Force on Aging, AARP, Retired School Personnel Association, and Senior Dining will make decisions independently of The Center about whether or not to cancel a scheduled event due to extreme weather. Each agency is responsible for conveying its program cancelations to their participants and the Senior Center staff.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

For volunteer positions that require a thorough knowledge of Senior Center emergency procedures, training will be given. In the event of a fire or severe weather emergency, volunteers are expected to follow staff instructions and may be asked to assist with emergency procedures. Volunteers who witness a medical emergency should act immediately to offer assistance and notify Senior Center staff members of the incident.

If a volunteer needs to call for emergency help from a Senior Center telephone, it is important to note that you must dial 9-911 in order to complete the call.

Building maps of each floor, included in this packet on separate sheets, highlight important emergency-related information. Each floor of the Senior Center has at least one emergency exit (red arrow), weather emergency safe area (blue shaded area), fire pull alarm (yellow circle), fire extinguisher (green square), emergency phone (orange box with the letter 'P' inside), automated external defibrillator, and first aid kit. Volunteers are encouraged to become familiar with the location of these items in case of emergency.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Center shall not discriminate against any person in employment or public accommodation because of race, religion, color, creed, gender identity, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, marital status, or age.

PARKING

Parking is available at the Tower Place parking ramp on Iowa Avenue, and volunteers receive free parking validation while volunteering at The Center. Volunteers may bring their parking ramp tickets to the Senior Center lobby to receive parking validation. Volunteers must sign in at the reception desk in order to receive parking validation. For those volunteering outside of regular business hours, parking validation is issued at the building supervisor desk on the ground floor next to the Washington Street entrance between the hours of 5 – 7 PM, Monday – Thursday and 10:30 AM – 1:30 PM on Saturday. Parking is free in the Tower Place parking ramp on Sundays.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Activities at The Center may be photographed to obtain images for promotional purposes. Due to the public nature of our facility and programs, the media may take photos or videotapes of events at The Center. The Center is not responsible for images taken by the media. If you have concerns about photos or video images taken by Center staff or volunteers, please contact The Center's coordinator.

SMOKING

Iowa's Smokefree Air Act mandates that City buildings and the grounds around them be smokefree. Smoking is prohibited anywhere inside The Center; in any entryways; on the lawn surrounding the building; on all walkways, stairs, and ramps attached to the building; on the north side loading dock; and around the waste receptacles in the alley north of the building.

ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

PURPOSE OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The intent of The Center's volunteer programming is to provide volunteers with meaningful opportunities to use personal experiences and talents to address community and Center needs, develop new skills, expand social contacts, and extend or reestablish meaningful roles at The Center or in the community.

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING WITH THE CENTER

- **Personal Satisfaction**
Many of our volunteers report that their greatest reward comes from helping others. Volunteering offers opportunities for personal and professional growth, learning, leadership, community involvement, and lasting friendships.
- **Recognition**
Senior Center staff members strive to informally recognize the efforts of volunteers on a regular basis. A formal volunteer recognition event is held annually, and volunteers receive a gift in appreciation of their service. All who volunteer in a particular fiscal year are recognized by name in The Center's *Annual Report to the Community* for that year.
- **IRS Deductions**
Federal income tax regulations allow some tax deductions for non-reimbursed expenses incurred while providing service on behalf of a charitable organization. Since these regulations change frequently, please check with your accountant or the IRS for the most current information.

VOLUNTEER QUALIFICATIONS

All volunteers must be 18 years of age or older, unless authorized by the coordinator or designee. Each volunteer position has specific qualifications, which are detailed in the position description. Volunteer placements are determined by individual qualifications and based on the needs of the Senior Center.

All Senior Center volunteers should have:

- A genuine desire to serve older adults, The Center, and the community.
- A sense of responsibility to fulfill their volunteer commitments.
- A willingness to accept people as they are.
- An ability to be friendly, warm, and courteous to everyone.
- An ability to use good judgment, tact, and patience.
- A sincere interest in creating an environment of inclusion.
- A positive attitude and a sense of humor.

VOLUNTEER ROLE WITHIN THE CENTER

Volunteers are truly the pulse of The Center. With a small staff and lots of volunteers, we are able to deliver an abundance of outstanding programs and services to the community.

Volunteers work directly with the staff and are considered to be co-workers and an integral part of the team. They may be included in training, informational sessions, and meetings that pertain to their work. Volunteers should expect to give the same careful attention to assignments as a paid employee. Staff members are available to offer appropriate volunteer support, as needed.

Each volunteer is expected to act as a positive ambassador for The Center's programs and services. Our volunteers help promote positive images of aging and accurate representations of The Center throughout our community.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND LIABILITY

Volunteers should report working conditions or situations that they feel to be unsafe to their supervising staff member. Volunteers who experience an accident or injury during work hours are required to report the accident to their supervising staff member without delay, regardless of whether the injury is apparent or suspected.

The Center relies on volunteers to take responsibility for their own safety and the safety of other participants. Volunteers are encouraged to use care in their work, pay attention to detail, and be observant of their surroundings in order to minimize the risk of danger.

Volunteers should never leave purses, wallets, or other valuable items where they may be taken. Ask your supervisor where you may store them safely. The Center is not responsible for lost or stolen personal property.

Volunteers are required to sign a Volunteer Waiver of Liability, included in this packet on a separate sheet. Volunteers under the age of 18 must also have the form signed by a legal guardian.

VOLUNTEER POLICIES

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Each volunteer position has a written job description outlining the position's role and responsibilities. The following elements are included: position title, purpose of the volunteer position or program, supervising staff member, responsibilities of the position, volunteer qualifications, training required, time/term commitment required, benefits of position, and a description of how the project and the volunteer will be evaluated. Position descriptions may be updated periodically to fit the changing needs of The Center's programs and participants.

RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

The Center welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds. Senior Center volunteers are recruited through several different methods, including: self-referral, referral by a Senior Center volunteer or participant, quarterly program guides, posters at The Center and throughout the community, Senior Center website, press releases, and social media.

Individuals interested in volunteering may complete a volunteer application and will be interviewed by the appropriate staff person. The Center places an emphasis on selecting a volunteer position that is a good fit for both the volunteer and the organization. In order to determine the best role for each volunteer, The Center may utilize the following volunteer screening tools: application form, résumé, interview, reference check(s), qualifications check, trial periods, and performance reviews. Proof of professional licenses or certifications may be required for certain positions. The Center, at its discretion, may conduct a criminal background check.

Because our focus is on meeting volunteer needs, when a suitable volunteer position is not available at The Center, staff refers the potential volunteer to a more appropriate organization or agency. A referral to another agency is made with the individual's consent.

In accordance with the City's Personnel department policies, The Center will not provide volunteer assignments in fulfillment of court-ordered community service. Interested individuals may inquire about community service projects with the City by contacting the Personnel department at 319-356-5020.

The Center reserves the right to decline any volunteer applicant.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Orientation will be provided to all volunteers and may occur on a formal or informal basis. Through the orientation process, you will become acquainted with The Center's mission, goals, and your volunteer responsibilities. Each volunteer is provided with a volunteer handbook and a tour of The Center.

Training specific to each volunteer position is provided to ensure that volunteers have the knowledge and tools to fulfill their responsibilities successfully. Periodically, volunteers will be expected to participate in training update meetings. Volunteers should never hesitate to ask staff members questions or seek help, when needed.

NAME TAGS

Volunteers who perform regular duties at the Senior Center will be issued name tags and are expected to wear them while volunteering. If you have lost your name tag or did not receive one, please inform your supervising staff member.

RECORDKEEPING

All volunteer hours should be recorded and submitted to your supervising staff member. This data is important for The Center, as it demonstrates the community's involvement and commitment to the organization. The volunteer information collected includes:

- Name of the volunteer
- Date of each volunteer visit
- Times and/or number of hours worked during volunteer visit
- Volunteer program or activity

Volunteers working at the Senior Center should record this information on the sign-in sheet at the reception desk or on the monthly time record for the specific volunteer activity. Volunteers working independently or off-site should track this information and compile it in an individual monthly report to be submitted via email or hard copy.

ATTENDANCE

Volunteers are an essential part of our team, and they are relied upon for the successful day-to-day operation of The Center. Therefore consistent attendance is very important. When you are scheduled to work:

- Please be on time.
- Please be prompt in reporting for and carrying out your assignment. Your fellow volunteers and staff are depending on you.
- Please plan to serve your entire shift.
- If you are unable to work your scheduled shift, please notify your supervising staff member as soon as possible.

- Please provide at least one week advance notice of scheduled absences, such as travel or medical appointments.
- Please remember to record your volunteer hours on the sign-in sheet at the reception desk. If your volunteer activity occurs off-site, remember to track your volunteer hours and submit them to your supervising staff member at the end of each month.
- Please inform your supervising staff member if you feel something is not working properly, you have questions regarding your assignment, there is a condition or situation you feel is unsafe, or you have an idea that may improve Senior Center operations.

APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOR

As a volunteer, you are part of the impression that members and visitors develop of The Center. There is no uniform or dress code for volunteering at the Senior Center, but it is suggested that you dress nicely, appropriately, and comfortably for your duties. Clothes should never be ragged or excessively revealing.

Volunteers are asked to please refrain from wearing strong perfume, cologne, or lotion, as they may impact the comfort of participants with physical sensitivities to fragrances. Good personal hygiene is also very important.

We strive to treat our members and visitors with a professional and respectful attitude, while keeping our atmosphere friendly and light. Volunteers help create a welcoming atmosphere at The Center, extending courtesy and warmth to all participants.

USE OF THE CENTER'S PROPERTY

Volunteers are asked to report any damages or defects to Senior Center equipment promptly upon discovery in order to prevent deterioration of the equipment or injury to participants.

Equipment, supplies, and services (such as computers, cameras, telephones, mail services, and office supplies) may be provided to assist in performing volunteer duties. These items are intended to be used for business purposes, and should not be removed from The Center or used for personal business, except as authorized by Senior Center staff.

VOLUNTEER CONDUCT

- **Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy**

Volunteers are expected to follow the Senior Center's code of conduct, which protects the interest and safety of all Center participants, volunteers, and staff. The Center's code of conduct and progressive disciplinary policy, included in this packet on separate sheets, are provided to each volunteer for review during the orientation process.

- **Alcohol and Drug Use**

The Center provides a drug-free, healthy, and safe environment. Reporting for work under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or consuming alcohol or drugs during work is not permitted and may lead to immediate dismissal. The legal use of medication is permitted during volunteer service only if it does not impair a volunteer's ability to perform the essential functions of the volunteer position effectively and in a safe manner that does not endanger other individuals in the workplace.

- **Solicitation**

Volunteer presenters affiliated with a business may not solicit their services or fundraise for another organization while at the Senior Center. These volunteers may not collect personal contact information of participants at the Senior Center for the purpose of making commercial solicitations. Volunteer presenters may display informational materials and business cards on a table during their presentations for participants to collect voluntarily.

- **Political Activities**

As representatives of The Center, volunteers, while on duty, cannot campaign for or endorse a political candidate or cause, including the wearing or distribution of political attire and accessories.

- **Acting as a Representative of The Center**

Volunteers shall not make statements or seek contributions on behalf of The Center, verbally or in writing, unless appropriately authorized.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers are expected to honor and respect the privacy of the participants, volunteers, and staff of the Senior Center. Personal information to which you may be exposed while serving as a volunteer should be handled with sensitivity and discretion. It is important that participants are protected against exploitation and undue embarrassment.

When volunteers discuss the Senior Center with family or friends, they are expected to keep in confidence personal information they may have learned about individuals. Participant information used for training or staff discussion should be conveyed in such a way that the individual cannot be identified.

All information collected by The Center, with the exception of personal medical information, is considered to be a public record in the State of Iowa. **It is not the role of a volunteer to dispense a participant's personal information. Volunteers should direct requests for public information to the coordinator or supervising staff member.**

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTICIPANTS

In working with Senior Center participants, it is important for volunteers to maintain appropriate and professional boundaries. The volunteer role requires you to be friendly to all Senior Center participants, but not necessarily to become friends.

Volunteers have no obligation to meet participants outside of The Center and should use their judgment in deciding whether or not to share their personal contact information with the participants whom they serve.

For the safety of both volunteers and participants, The Center generally does not offer volunteer services in the homes of participants. Volunteers are discouraged from visiting or providing services to Senior Center participants in their homes.

PAYMENT AND GIFTS

Volunteers may not accept payment or gifts of any significant value for services rendered as part of their volunteer role. Donations offered in appreciation of volunteer services may be directed to the Senior Center or Friends of The Center. Volunteers may not give, offer, or promise (directly or indirectly) anything of significant value to a Senior Center participant.

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

Volunteers are encouraged to share feedback related to their volunteer experience with their supervisor on an ongoing basis. Supervisors provide individual feedback to volunteers, as needed. Informal evaluation meetings between a volunteer and supervisor are held periodically to provide opportunities to discuss the following:

- The volunteer's level of satisfaction with their volunteer position
- The volunteer's job performance
- The volunteer's goals for their volunteer experience and an assessment of progress
- Identification of any new volunteer interests or goals

GRIEVANCES

In situations where differences arise among volunteers or between volunteers and participants or staff, it is advised to first try to resolve these differences amongst the parties involved. If a satisfactory solution cannot be achieved, the volunteer is encouraged to discuss the situation with their supervising staff member. If they prefer, they can speak with the Senior Center coordinator. If informal attempts to resolve the issue are not successful, the volunteer may initiate a formal grievance procedure as described in section 9 of the *Senior Center Operational Handbook*.

RESIGNATION AND RETIREMENT

When a volunteer decides to discontinue their service to The Center, our staff would appreciate two weeks advance notice, when possible. The supervising staff member may invite the volunteer to participate in an exit interview or questionnaire, which allows the volunteer to state reasons for leaving and reflect upon their volunteer experience. This is a valuable tool for strengthening The Center's volunteer program.

RETURN OF PROPERTY

Volunteers may be responsible for Center property, which includes all materials, files, keys, access cards, passwords, or any other written or electronic information issued to volunteers. All Center property must be returned to the supervising staff member at the conclusion of the volunteer service.

REASSIGNMENT AND TERMINATION

Volunteer positions may be eliminated as a result of changes in program needs. When this occurs, volunteers in the eliminated positions will be offered other available volunteer positions and whatever training is necessary.

If a volunteer's work effort or behavior detracts from the quality of service offered at the Senior Center and efforts to correct the situation through discussion and training are unsuccessful, it may be necessary to reassign or terminate the volunteer.

When the supervising staff member observes or receives a complaint that a volunteer's performance or conduct is inappropriate, the following steps will be taken by the supervising staff member:

1. Investigate the situation and identify any extenuating circumstances that may have caused the volunteer's performance or conduct to depart from the expected standards of their position. The supervising staff person must substantiate all complaints and observations.
2. If complaints and observations are substantiated, the problem will be discussed with the volunteer, and, if appropriate, retraining and/or reassignment will be offered. Work performance will be re-evaluated shortly thereafter.
3. If the supervising staff person determines that termination is necessary and no alternative reassignments can be identified, the situation shall be reviewed and discussed with the Senior Center coordinator. Coordinator approval must be obtained prior to taking any final action.

CONCLUSION

We appreciate your attention to the topics discussed in this handbook. We hope it will serve as a helpful resource during your volunteer placement. Don't hesitate to ask questions of your supervising staff member if you are not sure about something.

Please review the supplemental materials included in this packet. Complete the Volunteer Agreement Form and Liability Waiver, and return these to your supervising staff member.

Thank you for choosing to serve your community at The Center!