



Volunteer Iowa Awarded AmeriCorps Funding for 9/11 Day of Service

Volunteer Iowa received a grant of \$195,853 from AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, to expand Volunteer Iowa's ability to engage volunteers on 9/11 Day of Service. Ten local governments and twenty nonprofits across Iowa will be selected to receive training, coaching, and implementation funding to build their capacity to effectively engage volunteers. Participating governments and nonprofits will then host a Day of Service on September 11, 2024, where over 2500 volunteers will serve in projects meeting important needs in their community, while reigniting a commitment to volunteering year-round.

The September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance grant funding is to mobilize more Americans to engage in service activities that meet vital community needs and honor the sacrifice of those who lost their lives or family members on September 11, 2001, or who rose in service as a result of that tragedy.

With this new funding, Volunteer Iowa will enhance the skills and experience of local governments and nonprofits in organizing volunteers to serve, meeting the needs of the community, and honoring the 9/11 Day of Service in Iowa. Applications for cities and nonprofits to participate will open in the fall.

Governor's Volunteer Awards Ceremony - Storm Lake



The 2023 Governor's Volunteer Awards northwest regional ceremony will be held on Thursday, September 14 in Storm Lake. The ceremony will feature remarks from Governor Kim Reynolds. Four regional ceremonies were previously held in Cedar Falls, Vinton, Ankeny and Ottumwa.

More than 600 awards are being presented this year. It is estimated that more than 150 communities in Iowa were served by this year's honorees.

Coordinated by Volunteer Iowa, the Governor's Volunteer Award program—now in its 39th year—provides a meaningful way for Iowa nonprofits, charitable organizations, and

government entities to honor their volunteers with a prestigious, state-level award.

Storm Lake ceremony details:

- Thursday, September 14, 1:15-2:15pm, Buena Vista University, Schaller Memorial Chapel, Storm Lake

More information, as well as [a complete list of award recipients and photos from each event](#), is available at volunteeriowa.org.



Volunteer Iowa welcomes new Youth Service-Learning VISTA Kathlyn Wagner

Kathlyn Wagner is from Indianola. She graduated from Drake University in 2022 with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, with minors in Human Rights Studies, Japanese and East Asian Studies. She recently completed a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. As an ETA she taught English at two elementary schools and served as cultural ambassador for the U.S. through volunteering and being involved in the community. She previously worked at Boys and Girls of Central Iowa, and completed internships with Future Leaders in Action, the Virtual Student Federal Service Program, and the World Food Prize Foundation. In Kathlyn's free time, she enjoys playing flute & violin, traveling, and learning new languages. She looks forward to working with youth, schools, non-profits and other organizations & individuals across Iowa this year.

9/11 Day of Service Story Spotlight

September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance is a federally recognized day of unity and doing good. Its purpose is to encourage millions of people to remember and pay tribute each 9/11 through the spirit of unity and good deeds that help others and rekindle the extraordinary spirit of togetherness and compassion that arose in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy.



Volunteer Iowa invites people to share their service stories. Has someone inspired you? Share their story! By sharing acts of service, we can inspire others to get involved, and also recognize people for their service. [Share your story by completing this form](#).



Volunteer Iowa's Summer VISTA Program

This summer, 17 individuals served as AmeriCorps summer VISTA members, advancing the missions of 8 organizations throughout the state of Iowa by working on critical initiatives in their respected communities. Member activities included teaching the arts to underserved communities, providing disaster response resources to the elderly, planting and tending community gardens, creating spaces for individuals to learn music, managing volunteer databases, translating disaster resources from English to other languages, supporting homeless shelters, researching volunteer best-practices, supporting rural mental health initiatives, and so much more. Between the 17 of them, the summer VISTA members put in over 5,760 hours bettering their communities. Though it is impossible to fully encompass the value these individual brought to peoples' lives, we can use [Independent Sector's research](#) to estimate that they provided over \$161,000 worth of value to Iowa communities!

But perhaps a better way to measure their impact would be by measuring the number of children's smiles produced, mouths fed, skills taught, knowledge imparted, and overall betterment of the lives of those they worked with.

Thank you to all our summer members: Patricia Niyosaba, Oyeditiwa Vidjanagni, Tiffany Wunderlich, Angelica Hernandez, Ameen Taha, Rosie Baldus, Clara Wodny, Sydney Frank, Shahad Elnour, Casey Mack, Nicole Parks, Abi Ilavarasen, Amy Webb, Claire George, Chira McKee, Aliyah Penn, and Zach Cantrell.

If you want to learn more about what our summer members accomplished, or about our VISTA program, please email Caleb.Rigdon@volunteeriowa.org.



Left: Patricia Niyosaba served at United We March Forward, tending community gardens and teaching adult literacy.

Center: Members at ArtHaus in Decorah helped organize and put on a Shakespeare festival, teaching both acting and the importance of Shakespeare to young children.

Right: Angelica Hernandez with Disaster Prepwise helps put on an intervention, teaching disaster preparedness skills to residents of Johnson County.

Welcome Our New Team Members!

When Volunteer Iowa merged into the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in July, we gained new team members! The Iowa Department on Aging's RSVP program and staff, as well as the DHHS volunteer engagement coordinator, joined the Volunteer Iowa team.

Christina Bettini, RSVP Volunteer Coordinator for Iowa and Poweshiek counties

Christina grew up in Davenport and graduated from the University of Northern Iowa with a political communications degree. She works as a Program Coordinator for RSVP focused in Iowa and Poweshiek counties. She works with and actively recruits local organizations who utilize volunteers and helps connect them to volunteers who are 55+ years old. In her free time, you can find Christina at the yoga studio after work, baking or cooking up a storm, watching Iowa Hawkeye sports, or hanging with her cat Fanny!

Shelly Elrod, RSVP Volunteer Coordinator for Mahaska, Keokuk and Louisa counties

Shelly hails from West Des Moines, and graduated from Iowa State University, majoring in education. She currently serves Mahaska, Keokuk, and Louisa counties to help those who are ages 55 and better engage with their community. She enjoys learning about volunteers and connecting their time and talents to help meet community needs. Shelly finds it heartwarming to see the positive impacts that volunteering has on those who volunteer. Outside of her work time, Shelly spends time with family, attending dance events for her 13-year-old daughter, house sitting dogs, biking, and watching Netflix movies with her husband.

Jamie Lane, RSVP Volunteer Coordinator for Woodbury, Monona and Harrison counties

Jamie is from Des Moines. She graduated from Simpson with a bachelor's in marketing & management and has her master's in organizational development from Iowa State University. Jamie's focus is working alongside community organizations, connecting them with volunteers age 55 or better to help fill the gaps and achieve a positive impact in their community. Jamie enjoys spending her time outside of work with weights, biking, running, and doing anything outdoors.

Jan Schnack, RSVP Volunteer Coordinator for Pottawattamie and Mills counties

Jan's dad was in the Air Force so she and her three siblings were all born in different states. Jan was born in Fort Worth, TX and lived most of her life in Gretna, NE. Jan now lives on a farm near Crescent, IA. She graduated from Creighton University in Omaha with a bachelor's in health administration & policy; master's in health care ethics; master's in theology and attended Clinical Pastoral Education with CHI in Omaha. As the RSVP Coordinator for Pottawattamie and Mills counties, Jan is focused on continuing to build on the wonderful foundation laid by Connections Area Agency on Aging (where she formerly was the Family Caregiver Specialist). In her free time, you will find Jan enjoying time with friends and family, traveling and reading. As a recent first-time grandma, she is getting to experience a whole new world of joy spending time with her granddaughter.

Ingrid Stukerjurgan, RSVP Volunteer Coordinator for Cass, Shelby, Montgomery and Fremont counties

Ingrid is from Beloit, Wisconsin. She attended Luther College in Decorah, majoring in English (writing) and public communication. She has a master's in adult education, training and development from Drake University. Ingrid is the RSVP volunteer coordinator for Cass and Shelby counties and loves to learn about Iowa communities and its citizens,

what makes them unique, and help people make connections with their interests and each other. Ingrid likes to attend and watch sports with her family, especially college basketball, football and competitive swimming (she's a swim mom!). You can also find her camping, cooking and working with her hands (renovations, knitting, woodworking and always learning something new).

Benjamin Cohen, Department of Health and Human Services Volunteer Engagement Coordinator

Benjamin's family moved to Iowa from New York when he was a baby. He grew up in Chariton. He studied at UNI and moved to central Iowa after to work for the nonprofit Wildwood Hills Ranch, helping vulnerable youth overcome life's obstacles and grow as leaders. That is where he found his love for volunteerism and started understanding the impact we can all have just by focusing on how we spend our time. Benjamin's current role allows him to support high quality programs across the state and grow and expand how volunteerism can strengthen the impacts these programs have on communities. In his free time, Benjamin loves spending time with family and friends. He enjoys bringing groups of people together to strengthen a sense of "community," usually over food (he enjoys cooking!). Other hobbies include tennis, gardening, and building forts with his boys.



Top row: Christina Bettini, Shelly Elrod, Jamie Lane
Bottom row: Jan Schnack, Ingrid Stukerjurgan, Benjamin Cohen

Join Our Team!

Volunteer Iowa is seeking an AmeriCorps Seniors Program Specialist to join our team. The AmeriCorps Seniors Program Specialist will coordinate AmeriCorps Seniors grant activities including the identification and support of stations and sites, recruitment and support of AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers, and meeting compliance and reporting requirements of the AmeriCorps Seniors grant in assigned counties. The position will also provide leadership and promotion of volunteerism in the assigned counties, connecting community members with opportunities to serve and promoting volunteering as a potential solution to local needs, creating a local culture of volunteering and service. Details about the position, and how to apply, can be found on the [State of Iowa Careers website](#).

Skills-Based Volunteerism Bootcamp



Are you ready for the next steps of engaging skilled volunteers into your organization? Be one of 25 participants to join a cohort from across Iowa to build a greater understanding the impact of skilled volunteers can have at your organization in the 5-session series offered weekly on Thursdays from September 21 through October 19 from 10 a.m.-noon. Together we'll focus on project readiness and scoping while providing useful tools, activities, and resources to create a robust skill-based volunteer program.

Cost to participate: \$125 for the five in-depth sessions.

Presented in partnership with Volunteer Iowa and the Volunteer Centers of Iowa, with support from the Volunteer Generation Fund.

[Register today!](#)

Current Volunteer Iowa Opportunities

Volunteer with us! Volunteer Iowa is always on the lookout for individuals who want to give back and help support our work. Find [general volunteer opportunities with Volunteer Iowa](#).

Join the ranks of other AmeriCorps VISTA members serving in organizations across the state helping to alleviate poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA provides opportunities for Americans eighteen years of age and older from diverse backgrounds to dedicate a year of service with non-profit organizations or public entities (as a host organization) to create or to expand efforts designed to empower low-income individuals and communities. VISTA members serve for one year in full time position with a host organization. More information about joining VISTA and a current list of AmeriCorps VISTA openings in Iowa can be found on our [AmeriCorps VISTA page](#).

Other [Iowa AmeriCorps programs](#) supported by Volunteer Iowa are also recruiting now.

Volunteerism in the News

- [Otting is recognized for NAMI volunteer work](#)
 - [Dubuque AmeriCorps program holding food drive](#)
 - [Northwest Iowa RSVP Pen Pal Programs seeing growth, seeking more volunteers](#)
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Important Dates

- September: [National Preparedness Month](#)
 - September: [Hunger Action Month](#)
 - September 4: Labor Day (Volunteer Iowa office closed)
 - September 6: [National Read a Book Day](#)
 - September 8: Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast for Bloom Senior Center Volunteers, Glenwood
 - September 11: [9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance](#)
 - September 14: Governor's Volunteer Awards Ceremony, Storm Lake
 - September 19: [National Voter Registration Day](#)
 - October 22: [National Make a Difference Day](#)
 - October 27: [National Civics Day](#)
 - October 30: [National Speak Up for Service Day](#)
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We have a new website!

Volunteer Iowa has a new website! Visit volunteeriowa.org to check it out. Share your first impressions in the comments below! Problems with finding what you're looking for? Email us at info@volunteeriowa.org.

Looking for a way to give back? Visit [Get Connected](#) today to find volunteer opportunities. Organizations can [post volunteer opportunities](#) on Get Connected as well at no cost.

Get Connected!



1963 Bell Avenue, Suite 200 | Des Moines, IA 50315 US

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