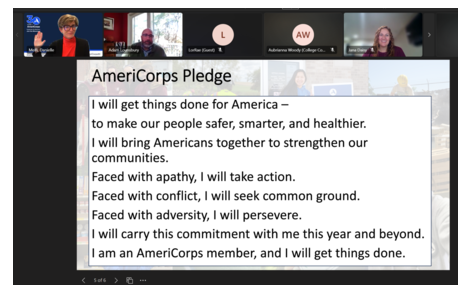
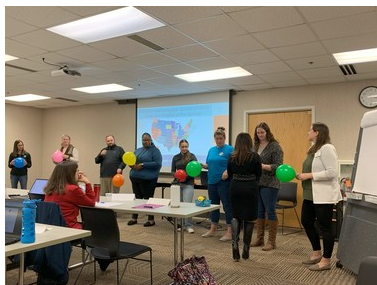




## AmeriCorps Program Launch and Swearing-In Ceremony

Volunteer Iowa hosted staff from 20+ AmeriCorps State operating programs and planning grantees for our annual Program Launch. This two-day gathering provided training and learning opportunities to AmeriCorps programs funded through Volunteer Iowa. Thirty-six program staff attended. Each program shared an overview of their program and highlights from the previous year. Programs shared innovations with their peers on how they are creatively addressing the needs of their communities, members and programs and Betsy Shelton, Communications and Engagement Officer provided branding information. The AmeriCorps team was pleased to bring in Sarika Bhakta from Nikeya Diversity Consulting, LLC. to lead sessions on leadership and effective communication, generational intelligence, and exploring programmatic collaboration workshops. Sarika has experience with AmeriCorps programming and shared her considerable experience and expertise throughout her sessions. We know this is a very busy time for recruiting and enrolling members in the new program year, but always appreciate the time program staff take to engage with Volunteer Iowa staff in this annual training.

Volunteer Iowa also continued the tradition of offering a virtual AmeriCorps Member Swearing-In Ceremony to help kick off the 2023-2024 program year. We were honored to have AmeriCorps Chief Program Officer Danielle Melfi join Volunteer Iowa's Executive Director Adam Lounsbury in welcoming the newest Iowa AmeriCorps members and swearing them into service. Watch a [recording of the ceremony](#) on Volunteer Iowa's YouTube channel.



## Honoring Kristin Honz

After 17 years of service with Volunteer Iowa, Kristin Honz will be departing for a new job opportunity with



the federal AmeriCorps agency, as Senior Portfolio Manager in the North Central Regional Office. Her last day will be November 3rd. Kristin shared that “It has been a pleasure to work at Volunteer Iowa for all of these years, supporting volunteerism and service. I know that you will continue this important work. I’ve lived through WBRS, eGrants, NSCHC, evaluation, COVID, waivers of all sorts, and a million other changes. But what has remained constant is the inspiration that I get from seeing people step

forward to serve their communities. Thanks to all of you for your passion and persistence. Although my new role will limit my ability to work with Iowa and its programs, rest assured, I will be cheering you on from a distance.” While Kristin won’t be going far, she will certainly be missed. We wish her the best in her new endeavor!

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## City Volunteer Engagement Peer Learning Network



Engaging community volunteers to help meet your city’s strategic goals and day-to-day operational needs can be both rewarding and challenging. You might have several staff members or departments connecting with volunteers using robust volunteer engagement practices – or you might be working solo in just one area of your city to start building new volunteer opportunities. Wherever you are in the process, you’re not alone! Local governments across Iowa are also working with volunteers in a variety of ways. Join us as we learn from each other by sharing resources, discussing challenges and possible solutions, and celebrating volunteer engagement successes.

This is a new peer learning network. Your input will be invaluable as we develop this network to best meet our needs. Please complete [this survey](#) by November 20th to share your information as we plan our next steps. Currently, we are planning our first meeting prior to the end of the year. For more information, contact [Jessica Link](#), City of Cedar Rapids/Library.

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## Announcing Funding Opportunities for Nonprofits and Cities

Applications open Friday, November 3rd for three “Training + Implementation Funding” programs to empower change through volunteer engagement, culminating in a 9/11 Day of Service. Ten organizations will be selected for each opportunity. At the heart of this initiative lies the belief that volunteering is a cornerstone of strong, vibrant communities.

When nonprofits and cities harness the power of volunteers effectively, they can achieve extraordinary results.

1. Service Enterprise Program- Funding of up to \$4,000 and access to a national, research-based organizational accreditation program in volunteer engagement designed to empower nonprofits to extend their mission and budget through strategic volunteer engagement.
2. City Volunteer Engagement Initiative- Specially tailored for cities and municipalities, this cohort-based program provides training and \$4,000 to support city staff to develop, implement, and enhance volunteer engagement strategies that align with their unique needs and objectives.
3. Youth Service Board Development- Each awarded organization will receive \$3,000 to develop a youth service board at their organization. This youth board will collaborate and plan a September 11th Day of Service for 9/11/2024 that inspires other youth in the community to volunteer and launch others into service beyond that day.

Each program includes comprehensive training and capacity building, implementation funding, and individualized coaching. Participants will implement what they learn and host a 9/11 Day of Service in their community. Applications open on Friday, November 3rd - watch for more information from Volunteer Iowa.



## Honoring a Hometown Hero – Celebrating 30 Years of AmeriCorps

Paula Falconer truly embodies the definition of “hometown hero.” Paula served as an AmeriCorps member in her community in 2021. During that time, Paula built a passion

for volunteer recruitment and ways to improve it. Wanting to ensure future members felt empowered in recruiting efforts, she developed a training on “How to Become a Volunteer Superstar: Simple Steps to help you recruit volunteers for your many projects,” which she shares with new cohorts of AmeriCorps members. Outside of her AmeriCorps service, Paula put her recruitment skills to work in getting a group of family and friends to sew nearly 1,000 bags for the Ottumwa Food Bank as a way to help the bank distribute fresh produce to lowans in need during the pandemic. Paula also established a partnership between the Eddyville Summer Lunch Program and local engineers from Cargill. In June of 2021 alone, the program provided 8,344 meals for families. This spurred larger discussions among the community’s service organizations, including Paula’s AmeriCorps program, United Way, and others, to think about future collaborations.

Today, Paula is the Community Relations Coordinator for Mahaska Health where she inspires others to “get things done” for their community. She continues to serve on the Board of Directors of the Mahaska Chamber & Development Group, seeking to promote,

improve, and enhance the business environment and quality of life in the Mahaska community. She has further demonstrated her commitment to coordinating a direct response for families by starting a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping families.

When asked about her AmeriCorps service, Paula said "Serving my community through AmeriCorps has opened my eyes to the resources and the needs that are available within my community, it allows me to get to know the community that has taken care of my family. AmeriCorps has helped me to be in the position that I am currently in, it has equipped me with the necessary skills to get my job done." Thank you, Paula, for serving with AmeriCorps and for being a hometown hero!

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## Maui Wildfires Response

In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out on the islands of Hawaii, predominantly on the island of Maui. The wind-driven fires prompted evacuations and caused widespread catastrophic damage in the town of Lahaina on Maui's northwest coast. On August 10, President Joe Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration and subsequently a mission assignment was created to request AmeriCorps Disaster Response Teams (A-DRT) to provide donations & volunteer management support. Volunteer Iowa Disaster Program Officer Michael Rojas was tasked as the Incident Commander for the mission and arrived on the ground on August 26th. Michael was integrated into the state volunteer and donations management taskforce while they awaited the first wave of A-DRTs.

Working in partnership with Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), they triaged the issues stemming from the fire. Primarily working through donations management and logistics once the A-DRTs arrived, the priorities shifted to the distribution of life-sustaining supplies to survivors of the fires. With close to 30 A-DRTs, over the course of a month they were able to distribute, sort and package over 200,000 pounds of donations, medical supplies, food, and water and supervised over 2000 spontaneous volunteer hours. Their work was highly praised by elected officials, HI-EMA, FEMA, and other partners working on the ground.

In a local interview, Michael Rojas stated "what distribution sites like this can do is provide a beacon of light, show people that they are not lost and that we are still thinking about them in their darkest times. We're really making sure we're providing not only the things that they need, but a smile and some joy. We are trying to do as much as we can to bring some levity to a tragic situation, and you can see that in our AmeriCorps members and the community that goes through here - a lot of hugs, a lot of love and a lot of aloha." The first A-DRT wave concluded on September 26th with a second wave tasked to operate until the end of October.



## New VISTA Leader Mia Dean

Mia Dean joined Volunteer Iowa on October 23 as an AmeriCorps VISTA Leader. She's originally from Muscatine and she graduated from the University of Iowa with a B.A. in Environmental Policy and Planning. Mia's previous AmeriCorps service was with Green Iowa AmeriCorps as an Education Coordinator. In that position, she hosted and held events teaching the public about general environmental resources. In her free time, Mia likes to spend time outdoors, play the guitar, and listen to podcasts. Welcome to the team Mia!

## Iowa Nonprofit Summit

The Iowa Nonprofit Alliance has taken over Iowa's premier conference for the nonprofit sector and you are invited!

Formerly hosted by Volunteer Iowa, the Iowa Nonprofit Summit has successfully brought together Iowa's nonprofit leaders, staff, funders, fans, allies, and supporters for 16 years.

Join over 400 of your nonprofit colleagues for two days filled with professional development, networking, inspiration, and celebration – curated specifically for Iowa's nonprofit professionals.

In addition to practical trainings, nonprofit thought-leader and rebel-rouser, [Vu Le from Nonprofit AF](#), will provide an intriguing keynote. And nonprofit leaders will explore important topics like DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion), advocacy, and collaboration.

[VISIT SUMMIT WEBSITE](#)

November 13-14, 2023  
Iowa Nonprofit Summit  
FFA Enrichment Center



[LEARN MORE](#)

Iowa Nonprofit Alliance members get a deep discount. [See the tuition rates here.](#)

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## 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](#).

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

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## Volunteerism in the News

- [Special Experienced Adults Edition: Active retirees matched with interests, skills to volunteer opportunities](#)
  - [Nonprofits struggle to recruit volunteers as demand soars](#)
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## Important Dates

- November 10: Veteran's Day Observed (Volunteer Iowa office closed)
  - November 11: Veteran's Day (Volunteer Iowa office closed)
  - November 13-14: [Iowa Nonprofit Summit](#)
  - November 15: [National Philanthropy Day](#)
  - November 13-21: [National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week](#)
  - November 20: [Family Volunteer Day](#)
  - November 23: Thanksgiving Day (Volunteer Iowa office closed)
  - November 24: [Native American Heritage Day](#) (Volunteer Iowa office closed)
  - December 7: [National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day](#)
  - December 7: Hanukkah begins
  - December 10: [Human Rights Day](#)
  - December 25: Christmas Day (Volunteer Iowa office closed)
- 

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!



Volunteer Iowa, administratively housed at the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services  
1.800.308.5987 | [info@volunteeriowa.org](mailto:info@volunteeriowa.org) | [www.volunteeriowa.org](http://www.volunteeriowa.org)

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