



Volunteer Handbook

**Village Neighbors
Island Community House
6246 Mumford Street
Chincoteague, VA 23336**

www.village-neighbors.org

757-336-1993

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Welcome!

We greatly appreciate your commitment and we believe you will enjoy volunteering and offering your time to assist the senior residents of Chincoteague, VA, to stay in their homes and within their community. By bringing your heart and a sense of humor to this volunteer opportunity you will receive much more than you will give. We are so pleased that you have chosen to become a Village Neighbors' Volunteer.

The History of the Village Movement and Village Neighbors

The Village Movement began in Boston, MA in 2002. A group of Beacon Hill neighbors formed a non-profit membership organization designed to help seniors remain active and independent while living in their homes. Services offered included transportation, home assistance, health and wellness support, social activities and access to screened service providers. The Beacon Hill model inspired other communities to create similar organizations. Most villages are connected through membership in the Village to Village Network, a national organization formed in 2010 to maximize growth, impact and sustainability of villages.

Village Neighbors began in the summer of 2021 when Island Community House (ICH) President, Lisa Cannon, presented the idea of starting a Village on Chincoteague to the ICH Board. After researching other village affiliates, surveys were sent to island residents to see if a need existed. The initial responses from the survey were positive with an overwhelming reply from people eager to help make a positive impact in their community and to support the senior population. Volunteers are the heart and soul of Village Neighbors and Village Neighbors could not succeed without volunteers. However you choose to help, we are truly grateful!

Village Neighbors' Mission Statement

Village Neighbors is a program of the non-profit Island Community House dedicated to enabling seniors (age 60+) in Chincoteague to continue living safely and independently in their homes with meaningful connections to others. This mission is accomplished through volunteers who provide practical help and socialization.

Village Neighbors' Goals

To provide services to Chincoteague's senior residents through:

- Social, educational, and health and wellness programs
- Interaction with in-home visits
- Delivery of reliable minor handyman services
- Transportation to complete errands or attend appointments

Goals of the Volunteer Program

- To support the mission of Village Neighbors by providing effective and quality services so Chincoteague's senior residents have the means and confidence to live safely and independently in their homes for as long as possible;

- To ensure that Village Neighbors' Volunteers have a pleasant and rewarding service experience;
- To nurture and build a "community of all ages" on Chincoteague by involving volunteers of all ages with older island residents; and,
- To provide opportunities for new friendships to develop among volunteers and members as they participate in social programs, share experiences, and discover mutual interests.

SECTION 1 - VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH VILLAGE NEIGHBORS

Thank you for your interest in being a volunteer with Village Neighbors. Volunteers are central to our mission to support our members staying in their homes safely and independently and with continued connections to the community.

We encourage volunteers to get involved in whatever way that suits their time, schedule, skills, and desire to help. The best volunteers are those who enjoy sharing their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Please bring your interests to Village Neighbors!

1.1 Administrative Support Opportunity

Have you worked in a business office at some point in your career? Have you performed organizational and administrative tasks, and acquired skills that are essential to the functioning of an efficient organization? If so, Village Neighbors needs your help.

Areas of Village Neighbors' administrative support opportunities include:

- a. Answering phones
- b. Contacting members and volunteers to schedule appointments
- c. Bookkeeping and filing
- d. Processing forms and papers
- e. Data entry
- f. Writing and editing
- g. Post service follow-up with members and volunteers
- h. Serving on a Village Neighbors' committee

SECTION 2 - VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES, RULES, AND POLICIES

With any volunteer service organization there are guidelines, rules, and policies. Village Neighbors is no exception.

Due to the nature of the work done by volunteers, as well as the requirements of our insurance policy, all volunteers **are required** to have a criminal background check that

is done by a professional service which may include a driving record check if providing transportation services. Results from the background check(s) are confidential.

Volunteers will also be required to participate in an orientation, attend a few training sessions, and sign a Volunteer Agreement Form.

The volunteer's signature on the Volunteer Agreement Form will serve as the acknowledgment that they have read the Village Neighbors' Handbook and agree to the Volunteer Guidelines, Rules, and Policies as stated herein.

Volunteers with Village Neighbors should feel free to accept or decline particular assignments, depending upon their preferences, skills, personal schedules and commitments.

2.1 Volunteers Should:

- a. Attend orientation and training sessions
- b. Be prompt and reliable in reporting for duty
- c. Exercise good judgment
- d. Protect confidential information (all sensitive interactions with members are to remain confidential)
- e. Notify the Village Coordinator as soon as possible when unable to report for a scheduled assignment
- f. Notify the Village Coordinator promptly of any issues, concerns, or problems associated with a service
- g. Treat everyone with dignity and respect
- h. If providing transportation, properly maintain your vehicle and obey all vehicle/traffic regulations

A few additional guidelines while assisting members include:

- i. Always carry a cell phone
- j. Always wear your Village Neighbors' identification (ID) badge when with a member
- k. Always maintain professional boundaries
- l. Keep conversations and interactions with members positive
- m. Stay away from controversial topics like religion and/or politics
- n. Dress appropriately and do not wear heavy scented perfumes or lotions as allergies may be an issue
- o. Volunteers should have with them all relevant information about the member they will be assisting (phone number, address, etc.)

2.2 Volunteers Should Not:

- a. Accept gifts or tips
- b. Enter a member's home when the member is not present

c. Use their cell phones to make personal calls, send texts, or respond to personal emails while with a member (unless it is urgent)

Our volunteer guidelines require that we are **unable to assist** with the following:

- d. Anything that requires a license other than driving (i.e., plumbing, electrical, etc.)
- e. Any handyman chore taking longer than two hours
- f. Personal hygiene or medical care (i.e., bathing, dressing, or dispensing medications)
- g. Anything fiduciary such as writing checks
- h. Giving any financial, legal, or medical advice
- i. Physically moving members from a wheelchair into a car, bed, or chair

2.3 Cancellation of a Service Commitment

When a volunteer commits to a service request, we ask that it take precedence over any other subsequent opportunities or situations that may arise. Of course, there may be emergencies beyond the volunteer's control. If so, please notify the Village Coordinator as soon as possible. **IT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO BE A "NO-SHOW"** A "no-show" compromises the integrity of the entire program and in some cases could endanger a member.

2.4 Media Releases

From time-to-time, Village Neighbors' officers, agents or employees may take photographs, and/or videos at events, programs or activities in which Village Neighbors' Members and Volunteers participate. Also, Village Neighbors' officers, agents, or employees may ask Members or Volunteers for statements about Village Neighbors' services, programs, events, and activities. These photos, videos and statements may be used in Village Neighbors' publications and on the Island Community House and/or Village Neighbors' website.

2.5 Contract Disclaimer and Liability Limitation

This Handbook is not a binding contract and may be changed by Village Neighbors or Island Community House at any time in their sole and exclusive discretion.

Neither Village Neighbors nor Island Community House will be liable to members for any injuries or damages of any kind directly or indirectly caused by services provided or withheld by Village Neighbors, Island Community House, or any of their volunteers.

SECTION 3 - PROVIDING SERVICES FOR MEMBERS

3.1 How Village Neighbors Works

Residents from Chincoteague who have reached the age of 60+ can sign up to be "Members." Volunteers like you, will fill out an application, pass a background check, attend orientation and training.

Each Volunteer will be trained on the use of the Village Neighbors' website www.village-neighbors.org which has been designed to manage a Member's requests for services.

Once the Volunteer is ready to begin providing services they will go online to www.village-neighbors.org and see what services Members have requested. The request will contain the Member's name along with a brief description of the requested service. If a Volunteer sees a request that they can fulfill, they will note it online. Once a request is accepted, the Member will receive an acknowledgement that their request was received and the Volunteer will receive a confirmation email containing the Member's full name, address, telephone number, and full service request details. The Volunteer will contact the Member prior to the requested service date to confirm the appointment and discuss any details or issues. The Village Neighbors' website also allows Volunteers to manage their Volunteer schedule and track their services.

SECTION 4 - SERVICES OFFERED FOR MEMBERS

4.1 Transportation

Transportation is one of the most requested services. Typical destinations include medical appointments, grocery stores, religious services, and social and cultural events. Driving may also include assisting members to and from their front door to the car, accompanying the member to/from the car to their appointment location, and possibly helping to carry groceries or packages into the member's house.

Drivers could be needed for regularly scheduled trips, periodic trips, and in rare instances last-minute trips. Drivers are **not required** to have handicap accessible vehicles.

4.2 Friendly Visits and Social Interaction

Friendly visits provide the member with short-term companionship. Isolation is one of the biggest problems and concerns for many members. Visits can include conversation, reading to the member, watching TV together, playing cards or board games, walking, cooking and any other activities both the member and the volunteer enjoy.

Friendly visits can be offered Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 4:00pm. Volunteers should anticipate that visits will occur no more than once or twice a week for a duration of approximately 1 hour.

4.3 Home Services and Maintenance Assistance

Many routine activities become difficult or even impossible for members as they grow older. Help with what was once simple household chores can mean the difference between a day of frustration and one of accomplishment. Home services are provided for occasional needs and are **not intended** to replace normal home-based services such as routine cleaning, a major fall leaf raking, power washing, or landscaping project.

Some examples of volunteer home services include:

- a. Changing light bulbs and smoke alarm batteries
- b. Closet organization
- c. Watering outdoor gardens or indoor house plants

- d. Offering gardening advice, light pruning, planting, and plant repotting
- e. Light handyman repairs
- f. Occasional light exterior maintenance (e.g., leaf raking, mulching, snow removal)

4.4 Convenience Services and Errands

Many times the members will need services that will not require transportation of the member.

Examples of such services can include:

- a. Prescription drop offs, dry cleaning and laundry pickup and drop off
- b. Temporary pet care
- c. Miscellaneous errands including the pickup of convenience items from local businesses
- d. Mail pickup or trash disposal to the curb

4.5 Computer and Technology Assistance

Many of us have troubles today with technology. Our members are no exception, so if you are a volunteer with a special skill, or just have a good understanding of some simple technologies, there will be opportunities. Volunteers can assist members by answering questions and helping members understanding how their computer works, how to use common software, and organize computer files and email. Volunteers may be asked to provide assistance in setup, technical and end-user support for computers, smart phones, tablets, printers, televisions, cable and internet services, as well as assistance with helping with online tasks.

We also can't forget set-up and end user assistance for programmable devices such as thermostats, light timers, and small appliances.

4.6 Social Outings, Events, and Programs

Two of the top ten requested areas in our recent survey included get togethers with other Village Neighbors' members and social and cultural events.

Examples include:

- a. Trips to local sites of interest
- b. Lectures and Seminars
- c. Restaurant Outings
- d. Game Days

Volunteers can plan, organize, and produce these social outings and get-togethers. Volunteers are also encouraged to suggest new programs and activities based on their own particular interests.

SECTION 5 - WORKING SAFELY WITH OUR MEMBERS

It is the policy of Village Neighbors that all service requests should be undertaken with the utmost safety. It is expected that all volunteers use good judgment and put safety above all else.

Note: A home visit will be required before anyone can become a Member; this helps us to understand the Member's needs and to also determine that the residence is physically sound and accessible for Volunteers.

5.1 Personal Contact

Volunteers may often come into close personal contact with members as they provide transportation, help with minor in-home services, work in yards, and offer technical expertise. It may also be necessary at times to offer a hand or elbow (light arm support) to help members with their mobility. Please be mindful that assisting aging and frail members to a greater degree physically can endanger the member, and perhaps even you. Also be careful not to offer advice about a member's health or safety. Do not attempt to move or medically assist a member who has fallen. **Call 911 Immediately.**

5.2 Insurance Coverage

Village Neighbors has substantial liability insurance for all volunteers. If you are providing transportation it is important to keep your personal automobile coverage up-to-date and in force while serving as a volunteer.

SECTION 6 - EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

6.1 If a Member is Injured

If a member has an accident, such as a fall, while you are with them, **DO NOT** attempt to move the member. **Call 911 Immediately!**

Tell the dispatcher that you are a Chincoteague Village Neighbors' Volunteer, the nature of the emergency, the identity of the Member, and the exact location of the emergency. To the best of your ability answer any additional questions the dispatcher may have.

Stay with the Member until Emergency Medical Service (EMS) arrives, reassuring the Member that help is on the way while encouraging them to relax and be as still as possible so as not to aggravate any injury.

Notify the Village Neighbors' Coordinator (757-336-1993) as soon as possible to report any accident or injury.

6.2 If A Member Does Not Respond When You Arrive At Their Home

Never enter a Member's home without their permission. You may however, look in the windows or even walk around to another door to knock, or check the back yard. If after performing these steps and the Member has not been located, call both their home phone and their cell phone numbers.

After waiting for 5 minutes with no response from the Member, Contact 911. Tell the dispatcher that you are a Chincoteague Village Neighbors' Volunteer and that you are at the Member's home for a visit or transport but the Member has not responded to repeated phone calls or knocks at the door. Tell the dispatcher that you are requesting a "welfare check".

While waiting for emergency personnel to arrive, contact the Village Neighbor's Coordinator (757-336-1993) to inform them of the situation.

SECTION 7 - PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves the Island Community House, the Village Neighbors' program, a Village Neighbors' member, a nonmember, a client of the Village Neighbors' program, or another volunteer. Such information should not be shared outside the organization during informal conversations.

When appropriate, Village Neighbors collects personal information directly from the person concerned or with the knowledge and consent of that person. Village Neighbors does not sell, rent, exchange, or share personal information for use by third parties in marketing or solicitations of any kind.

SECTION 8 - REPRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAM

Volunteers should not act on behalf of or make statements representing the official position of the Village Neighbors' program unless they have been authorized to do so by an officer of the Board of Directors. For example, volunteers should not make statements to the press or on social media without prior authorization. Volunteers are not authorized to sign any agreements involving contractual or financial obligations for the Village Neighbors' program.

SECTION 9 - EXTENDED ABSENCES AND RESIGNATION

Volunteer assignments are not permanent. A volunteer may decide to stop volunteering at any time. Volunteers are asked to inform the Village Neighbors' Coordinator and to give as much notice as possible if it becomes necessary to interrupt the volunteer assignment for either a brief or an extended period of time. To help the program grow and learn from its experiences, volunteers may be asked to complete an evaluation before leaving the volunteer program.

SECTION 10 - VOLUNTEER DISMISSAL

We all hope that we are a good fit for one another as a program and as individuals. Sometimes we are not. Village Neighbors' reserves the right, in its sole discretion to terminate the Volunteer Agreement at any time if Village Neighbors determines that it is in the best interest of Village Neighbors, its members, the volunteer, employees, and/or other volunteers. Reasons for dismissal may include: failure to fulfill the duties of the position, failure to meet the basic standards of professionalism set by the organization, and/or failure to follow Village Neighbors' volunteer guidelines, rules, and policies.