

Mill Valley Village Getting Started as a Service Volunteer



The Basics

- Definition of a volunteer -- according to our members you are:
 - Angels
 - The glue that binds us together as a community
 - Ambassadors that embody the village mission in deeds
- Confidentiality

Providing a service to a villager is a gift of your time and company and our members deeply appreciate everything you do on their behalf. In turn, we need to always respect and preserve their privacy and the confidentiality of their situations and disclosures.
- Safety first - yours and your member's

Your safety, and that of your member, is paramount. If you are concerned that you are being asked to do something you are not confident you either can or want to do, it is appropriate to tell the member and notify the office. Use the same guideline for the member's safety. Use your good judgment and don't hesitate to ask for support or advice. Remember, we are volunteers, not magicians nor are we always perfect. Do your best and take pride in your efforts.
- Appreciating our members

Volunteers are the engine that makes the village work so beautifully, but we would have no mission, no "prime directive", without our members. Please do thank your member for asking for services and for their support of the village.

We hope you will have some fun getting to know your neighbors and enjoying being an ambassador. Your good spirit and willingness to help is our best village asset.

The Big Picture

- **Marin Villages** – incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit in 2009, is one of more than 250 villages nationwide. As of mid-2021, Marin Villages had more than 750 members and volunteers. Villagers, whether volunteers or members, choose a local village affiliation from one of the local villages that have emerged. Typically they choose a village aligned with their geographic location, unless family, friends or work considerations make another village affiliation preferable. Each local village has its own local leadership team and calendar of events and programs. Marin Villages' San Rafael-based staff, led by Executive Director John Power, provides, among many other services, centralized administration and support, such as enrolling new members, coordinating new volunteer vetting, matching volunteers to member requests and supporting **the Dashboard** used by volunteers to review and sign-up for member service requests.
- **Homestead Village** - one of the local villages with the most longevity and consistently dedicated volunteers and members, worked hand-in-glove with Mill Valley Village to serve members of both villages for many years. Upon the retirement of long-time village chair and leader Christina Oldenburg, in late Spring of 2018, the Homestead Village leadership merged with Mill Valley Village to form a single entity.
- **Mill Valley Village** - the fourth local village to emerge within the Marin Villages network has been providing services and programs since 2012. With more than 225 villagers we have a robust set of services and program offerings (www.mvvillage.org). Our more than 160 members ask for a wide range of services each month. While transportation and friendly check-in phone calls are the most often requested, the range of requests is broad, from tech help to decorating for the holidays, sorting papers, dog walking, handyman services, grocery shopping, running errands, companionship visits, walks and more.

Resources for Volunteers

- Marin Villages - Helpful Village (**the Dashboard**) Overview
- Marin Villages - Volunteer Manual
- Marin Villages office staff - [415-457-4633](tel:415-457-4633)
- Mill Valley Village Volunteer Coordinator Karen Robbins – [415-519-3420](tel:415-519-3420)

Important Phone Numbers

- Marin Villages: [415-457-4633](tel:415-457-4633)
- Mill Valley Police non-emergency wellness check: [415-389-4100](tel:415-389-4100)
- Serious Emergency: [911](tel:911)

Tips - For a Successful Assignment

We want you and your member to have a positive experience. A bit of preparation in advance may well pay off:

- **Confirm with your member in advance.** Even more than once if memories are short. And please notify the office of any updates.
- **Be prepared.** The Scouts have it right. The better prepared you are, the less disruptive and stressful any lost address, forgotten appointment or mistaken time may be. While the exception, issues can arise so it is worth thinking about what to do in advance:
 - Bring your cell phone, the member's address and phone #s as well as the office # (**415-457-4633**).
 - Consider storing the office # and the Mill Valley Police non-emergency phone # (**415-389-4100**) in your phone.
 - If your member does not respond to the doorbell or your knock when you arrive at their house, first realize that the member may have forgotten, been delayed, or may simply not have heard you. After trying again and making sure you have given your member a few minutes leeway, try calling them on their home and /or cell #s. If you are sufficiently concerned, and are worried about the member's well-being call the office as they may have some updates about the member's whereabouts, emergency contacts to try or other suggestions based on their knowledge of the member. If none of these steps yield a satisfactory result and you remain concerned, consider calling the police non-emergency number and requesting a "wellness check". If you take this step please wait for the officer to arrive and advise the Marin Villages office of steps taken and any resolution.

Tips - For Working with Us Members

Who are we?

- We members range widely in age. From youngest to oldest is more than a thirty-year difference!
- Along with our ages our fitness levels and capabilities vary greatly.
- For many of us, asking for help is a new experience, and not easy.
- Maintaining as much independence as possible is vital to our sense of well-being. Please respect that while offering your assistance.
- We are juggling new volunteer names and faces as well as appointment times and phone numbers. Reminders are usually good.

- Our comfort zones vary greatly. Some of us get chilled (or overheated) more easily than you might. Check in with us as we walk or ride.
- Skin may be more fragile than it used to be, which means we bruise easily. If we accept a helping hand, please guide gently.
- Vision, hearing and balance undergo changes with time. Speaking slowly and clearly is always helpful. Not hurrying gives us time to mind the steps, cracks and curbs.

Take your time getting to know us, observe what we may need in the way of help. A gracious offer of your arm, a flashlight pointed in the right direction, a car parked a bit closer to the door, or help reading small print can make a huge difference. Just refrain from presuming until your offer is accepted, and don't be offended if your offer is declined. Sometimes we just need to do things for ourselves.

When Things Go Awry

- Most important, keep your head. Your phone may be your greatest asset, along with your good judgment. If you or your member are ever in true distress don't hesitate, call 911 immediately. If you are able, call the office as well as they may be able to offer assistance and advice.

PLEASE Keep the Office Apprised

- You are the eyes and ears of the village. If you notice something that causes you concern or may impact others volunteering with the member, please let the office know. For example, if the member needs extra time, is often late, uses a device that was not mentioned in the request (like a walker) or needs help carrying groceries or the like, this is information worth passing on to the office. If there are lots of steps up to the member's house, or the driveway is difficult to navigate, or other issues that may make it difficult for a fellow volunteer, again, let the office know. Office staff can then decide what is appropriate to pass on in future requests. Some volunteers may not be prepared to carry groceries for example, or have room in their car for a walker, so your feedback is valuable to help them select future assignments.
- If you are ever concerned about your member (physically, emotionally or otherwise) notify the office. They will handle the concern with respect and sensitivity.
- If you provide a service for a member that was not arranged through **the Dashboard** please notify the office. This is both for insurance coverage as well as to ensure we have an accurate picture of the services your member is receiving and how many total services we as an organization are providing. This is key information as we present ourselves to the larger community and apply for grants.

- At the end of this document is a copy of the list of categories into which member requests are divided. When you signed up as a volunteer you selected some of these categories. **The Dashboard** selects and shows you only services that fall into the categories you selected. If at any point you are curious what other kinds of services are being requested by members and think you might be able to help out in other areas please contact the office to ask them to add additional categories to your profile. Some requests fall between categories as our members learn to ask for more help so the more you can see and consider the better. There is no obligation implied in seeing additional categories. Conversely, if at any time you wish to no longer see services in certain categories just ask the office to remove those categories from your profile.

Tips for Drivers

- **Plan ahead**, making sure you know the location(s) and directions of your destinations, even phone numbers if you are not clear on the directions is a good precaution. Members may forget, so bring this information along.
- **Leave enough time**, allowing for your member to collect their belongings, walk to and get in and out of the car safely, and for you to negotiate unexpected detours and/or traffic, and catch up with your member.
- **Make sure your member has all their belongings with them**, especially house keys, wallet or purse, before leaving home. Also, as they get in/out of the car or go from one errand, store or appointment to another. A quick “Got everything” and your own discreet look around may help.
- **“Mind the Curb”**, and pay attention to leaving enough space for your member to comfortably get in and out of the car. We are all taught to park tightly to the curb. This may work fine, even with a passenger, if you have a higher vehicle where it helps the member get in or out stepping from the curb. But with lower vehicles the curb may become an obstacle to easy access. You may want to park a bit away from the curb to allow you and the member (along with any canes or walkers) to step up or down from the curb to the street to be right next to the car when getting in or out.
- **Take it slow when getting in and out.** Those of us with sore backs, knees or the like, reduced vision or assistive devices such as a cane or walker, may appreciate a few more minutes to make the transition in and out of the car. Offering us a hand, watching our head, pulling out the shoulder belt, steadying the door so it does not swing away or close on us, and just being patient is much appreciated. We may prefer to keep our cane beside us, between the seat and the door, but if not, securing it in the back seat or trunk is advised. If a walker is involved, being close as we leave the safety of the walker and move to get in the car is especially helpful. The same when getting out without the aid of the walker. Ask us first though, as many of us both cherish our independence and want to manage on our own to keep ourselves strong.

- **Pay attention to the member's comfort** (temperature, drafts, bright sun, visor positions), even more so than when in the member's home and speak clearly as you travel.
- **Working with a walker.** Many of our members use walkers. The simpler models without wheels fold easily by just pulling the arms in. The wheeled models ("rollators") may be more complicated to fold and put in your car. Typically there are brake levers to secure and several parts are removable such as a seat and basket. To collapse the walker you may find a pull-strap under the seat that when pulled upward lifts the center, folding the walker in on itself and making it easier to store. Or you may have to pull up on the seat itself. Instructions vary by maker. There are good videos available online that describe types of walkers as well as how to use and transport them. Try searching for topics like "How to fold your walker" or "How to work with your rollator".
- **Policies regarding wheelchairs and members being ambulatory.** To receive transportation services from a village volunteer, a member must be "ambulatory", meaning they must be able to get themselves to and from your vehicle of their own accord, using any assistive devices (cane or walker) they can propel or use on their own. That does not mean you cannot offer your arm or a hand at a step or hold a door, but it does mean we cannot transport or push wheelchairs nor lift a member, etc. If you have any questions about where your member fits into this policy please contact the office.

There are services available in Marin that specialize in transportation for those in wheelchairs or others who cannot manage public transportation. We have experience in assisting members research and sign up for these services. If you or your member want to explore available options the best way to do so is to call the county [Travel Navigator line at 415-454-0902](tel:415-454-0902). A travel navigator can provide information on the various transit options in Marin and walk through the eligibility criteria with your member on the phone.

- **Enjoy the company.** This can be a good time to either chat or sit comfortably and reach your destination. Don't feel you need to fill every moment. Quiet can be a form of companionship too.

Working with “the Dashboard”

- A little history:

The Dashboard is a software application developed by Helpful Village, a Start-up of the University of California Accelerator 2016 (Berkeley). Helpful Village was designed specifically for use by villages, by those familiar with the village concept and with first-hand experience with the challenges of volunteer matching. Nicknamed **The Dashboard**, it was rolled out within Marin Villages in the summer of 2016 to a very positive reception.

- How **the Dashboard** fits into the member request and volunteer matching process within Marin Villages:
 - Member calls the office with a request
 - Staff puts the request into **the Dashboard**
 - Daily emails from **the Dashboard** alert volunteers to open (unassigned) services in the categories they have signed up for
 - Volunteer either clicks through from a link in that daily email or checks **the Dashboard**, at any time of the day, at www.marin.helpfulvillage.com.
 - **TIP -- You may put the Dashboard on your cell phone or tablet by going to the Helpful Village website, click on the icon that allows you to bookmark a site but instead click on “Add to Home Screen”. The Helpful Village icon will be placed on your home screen and you can click on that icon to see member service requests.**
 - Volunteer logs onto **the Dashboard** (click “Remember me” to avoid logging in each time), views the list of open requests, asks to VIEW details for those that fit their schedule and clicks I CAN DO IT, I VOLUNTEER to sign up.
 - **TIP -- Make sure to read the MEMBER NEEDS section when you VIEW a service request. This is where volunteers are apprised of any assistive devices a member may need with them (cane, walker), if the member has physical limitations, if access to their home is difficult, etc.**
 - **The Dashboard** immediately confirms the assignment showing the volunteer the member’s details (phone #, address and destination, if it is a ride) and sends the volunteer an email confirmation with the same.
 - Staff calls the member to confirm the assignment and give the member the volunteer’s contact information.
 - **TIP – If you accept an assignment over the weekend (or over a holiday) when the office is closed, and you have the time, call the member yourself to confirm that you have signed up and notify the office you have done so.**

- **The Dashboard** sends the volunteer an email reminder the day before the assignment
- Volunteer calls and confirms the service with the member the day before the service, notifying the office of any changes or cancellations
- Key Features of **the Dashboard**:
 If you are unfamiliar with, or would like a refresher on **the Dashboard** features, contact Karen Robbins ([415-519-3420](tel:415-519-3420) or karobbins@comcast.net) and she can arrange a walk-through of **the Dashboard** features, including:
 - Service matching just for those categories for which you have signed up
 - Default listing of requests in your local village(s), in our case Mill Valley Village
 - Ability to click on REQUESTS IN ALL LOCAL VILLAGES to see and sign up for services needed by members in other villages
 - Value of the VIEW option to see more details including a map of the member location, and destination if a request for transportation
 - Immediate sign-up with further details (exact address, phone #, etc.)
 - Email confirmation with details
 - Reminder email the day before the service date

Sample Service Categories Available for Volunteering

Please tell us what you might like to do in your volunteer capacity. Check all that apply:

- ☐ Companionship Visits/Phone Calls
- ☐ Computer/Technology Assistance (*computer/tablet/phone/printer/other*)
- ☐ Drive/Provide Rides (*medical appointments, groceries, events, etc.*)
- ☐ Errands/Shopping (*meal delivery, pick up rx, groceries, etc.*)
- ☐ Gardening (*watering plants, raking leaves, planting flowers, etc.*)
- ☐ Handyman/Simple Fixes (*change batteries/light bulbs, hanging pictures, fixing leaky faucets, etc.*)
- ☐ Home Organizing/Decluttering
- ☐ Office Help/Paperwork (*filing, sorting, reviewing mail/records*)
- ☐ Pet Care/Dog Walking (*walk/feed/help with meds/litter box*)
- ☐ Walking Companion (*friendly walks around the neighborhood*)
- ☐ Special Requests Other: _____
- ☐ Local Village Support (*Steering committee/leadership*)
- ☐ Marin Villages Support (*administrative support, projects/events*)

Special training or skills I can share: _____

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