

Friends of the Riverfront

Trail Ambassador Program 2024

Thank you for joining us as part of the team!

Welcome to the Three Rivers Heritage Trail Ambassador program!

This Trail Ambassador program is an initiative of Friends of the Riverfront, a non-profit organization that works to protect and restore the riverfronts in the Pittsburgh region. Our mission is to build safe, clean, and accessible riverfront trails as part of the Three Rivers Heritage & Water Trail systems to create and maintain an outstanding experience for trail users while providing economic, environmental, and health benefits to the Pittsburgh region. The Three Rivers Heritage Trail is a designated National Recreation Trail system that spans 33 miles along both banks of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers. The Trail offers opportunities for recreation, transportation, education, and tourism, and connects to many neighborhoods, business districts, and attractions. Friends of the Riverfront works to expand the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, connecting to new communities, and creating large, interconnected Trail Networks like the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. As a Trail Ambassador, you will play a vital role in enhancing the trail experience for everyone who uses it and inviting in trail users to become a part of the Friends of the Riverfront community.

Roles and Responsibilities

As a Trail Ambassador, your main role is to be a friendly and helpful presence on the trail and connect trail users to Friends of the Riverfront's work. You will interact with the public in a courteous and professional manner, provide information and assistance, distribute maps and brochures, promote safety and etiquette, report problems and hazards, support events and activities, and represent Friends of the Riverfront and the trail in a positive way.

You are not responsible for law enforcement, trail maintenance, or emergency response. If you encounter any situation that requires these services, you should call 911, report non-emergencies to 311, and/or notify Friends of the Riverfront staff as soon as possible. For trail maintenance or safety issues, you may also use the feedback link: <https://wkf.ms/3rQ2GXL> to report trail conditions.

There are several ways to be a Trail Ambassador, depending on your interests and skills. Here are some of the ways you can engage as a Trail Ambassador:

- ***Cycling ambassadors:*** These are ambassadors who can ride the Trail on their bike, looking for and reporting maintenance or safety issues, filling map boxes, and helping people on the trail as needed. Cycling ambassadors also have the option of hosting group rides on the Trail. Cycling ambassadors are especially important for covering more ground and reaching more trail users.

- *Event ambassadors:* These are ambassadors who can represent Friends of the Riverfront at events and community festivals through tabling. Event Ambassadors are responsible for setting up and taking down the table, displaying materials, engaging with the public, answering questions, and collecting contact information from interested people. In some cases, Event Ambassadors will assist staff in tabling and will not be responsible for tabling or set up alone.
- *Trail-gating Ambassadors:* These are ambassadors who can volunteer by “trail-gating”, which is setting up a small table and visitor information sign and provide visitor information, maps, and giveaways for trail users at designated locations along the Three Rivers Heritage Land and Water Trail launches. Trail-gating ambassadors are friendly and welcoming, and can provide directions, recommendations, and tips to enhance the trail experience. As a Trail-gating ambassador you can bring your favorite chair, a few cold drinks, sit back and enjoy the peaceful nature of the trail while engaging and interacting with trail users who need maps, support, or guidance. Some may want to consider bringing a small pop-up canopy tent but many of the trail locations have trees for shade making a pop-up tent optional.
- *Trail Guide Ambassador:* These are ambassadors who can lead walks, runs, or rides along the Three Rivers Heritage Trails. Programming can be educational, artistic, recreational, or for health. We love to hear your creative ideas and will support you in leading small groups in programming that you wish to host.

Training and Requirements

To become a Trail Ambassador, you need to complete the following steps:

- 1) Attend an in-person training session where you will learn background information about the Trail, updates on trail development, frequently asked questions about the trail system, as well as the policies and procedures of the Trail Ambassador program.
- 2) Sign a waiver form where you will agree to follow the rules and guidelines of the program.
- 3) Complete a free background check and submit to Friends of the Riverfront.
- 4) Commit to volunteer for a minimum of 8 hours per month during the trail ambassador program season (April – November).

You can choose your own shifts and locations based on your availability and preference. Volunteering for more than 8 hours a month is welcome and encouraged. As Ambassadors accrue hours above the minimum requirement, they can earn swag as a thank you.

Benefits

As a Trail Ambassador, you will receive many benefits such as:

- Invitations to social events with other trail volunteers and staff via monthly Ambassador email updates and bimonthly social events for Friends of the Riverfront volunteers.
- Staying up to date on trail development projects and trail expansion initiatives.
- Being in the know on upcoming local events, festivals, art fairs, sporting events, and more!
- The opportunity to socialize with others in a meaningful way!
- Professional networking opportunities with other organizations and partners on and off the Trail.
- Support in leading group rides or walks on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail.
- Volunteer appreciation celebrations with the larger group of trail volunteers.
- Discounts with our partners such as Three Rivers Outdoor Company and awards for outstanding volunteers.
- TRHT Swag Gift Levels for reaching a certain number of volunteer hours each season- First level- Holographic Sticker, 2nd Level- Bumper Sticker/Magnet, 3rd Level- T-shirt, 4th Level-Sweatshirt or Hoodie
- 20% Discount to our Autumn annual fundraiser.
- A sense of pride and satisfaction in contributing to a valuable community asset.

Equipment and Resources

As a Trail Ambassador, you will receive the following equipment and resources to use while on duty:

- 1) A vest with the trail ambassador logo that identifies you as a volunteer.
- 2) Maps, Friends of the Riverfront Feedback/Volunteer Cards, email list sign up forms, You should distribute these materials to interested trail users or leave them at designated kiosks or map boxes.
- 3) A stack of QR code cards that lead to our feedback form that you can use to mark any hazards or obstacles on the trail that may pose a risk or inconvenience to trail users. Urgent dangerous trail conditions may also be reported to Friends of the Riverfront staff using text or a phone call. Trail conditions can be reported to 311 when appropriate. Feedback forms will also include opportunities to share observations about trail experience and space to share personal narrative about your experience on the Trail and engaging with trail users. QR code cards will contain a link for giving feedback and information about our volunteer programs and can be distributed to interested trail users.
- 4) When needed, all materials related to event tabling including tent, table, flag, chair, and printed tabling materials.
- 5) Trail-gaters will provide their own table and chair as needed but will be provided with a pop-up yard sign and printed materials. Trail-gaters may bring a pop-up canopy tent but this is optional.

Policies and Procedures

As a Trail Ambassador, you need to follow these policies and procedures while on duty:

1) Trail Ambassadors signing up to table at events are required to schedule your shifts at least 1-2 weeks in advance using volunteersignup.org/M7EEB - You can choose events that take place during times and locations that suit you best. You should also notify Friends of the Riverfront staff if you need to cancel or change your shift. For most events, Trail Ambassadors will be assisting full-time staff at the table and will not be responsible for event set up or tabling alone.

2) Trail Ambassadors who are cycling do not need to sign up in advance for scheduled shifts leaving flexibility for weather, trail conditions, etc. You may choose shift times and segments anywhere along the trail that work best for you, but please consider that it's most fruitful to take shifts during peak trail usage (evenings and weekends). All ambassadors who are doing a shift on the trail should keep track of their hours and are required to fill out a feedback form after every shift to track hours, monitor trail conditions, and to have the opportunity to share stories and experiences.

3) Trail Ambassadors who are trail-gating do not need to sign up in advance for scheduled shifts leaving flexibility for weather, trail conditions, etc. You may choose shift times and segments anywhere along the trail that work best for you, but please consider that it's most fruitful to take shifts during peak trail usage (evenings and weekends). All ambassadors who are doing a shift on the trail should keep track of their hours and are required to fill out a feedback form after every shift to track hours, monitor trail conditions, and to have the opportunity to share stories and experiences. Trail-gating must take place on one of the designated locations on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail as indicated in the appendix. Please be sure trail-gating set up is out of the way of trail users through ways and traffic.

2) All Trail Ambassadors should report your volunteer hours using the general feedback and reporting form at- <https://wkf.ms/3rQ2GXL> - This helps Friends of the Riverfront track your activities and achievements as well as gives you the opportunity to report on trail conditions or share stories about your trail experiences.

3) Communicate with Friends of the Riverfront staff point person Lavender Sedlock at 412-313-4448 or other volunteers by text or phone if you have any questions or concerns, need assistance or support, encounter any problems or significant incidents. If you have direct feedback - you can document that along with any significant events or interactions using the reporting and feedback link <https://wkf.ms/3rQ2GXL>- If there is an emergency – do not contact Friends of the Riverfront, please use 911 and alert emergency services. Many issues that are non-emergencies can be reported using 311. https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/trc/Residential_911-311_final.pdf

4) Adhere to safety protocols such as wearing appropriate clothing and footwear, carrying enough water and snacks, applying sunscreen and insect repellent, wearing a helmet if biking, staying alert and aware of your surroundings, avoiding confrontations or conflicts with anyone on the trail, respecting wildlife and plants, and following traffic rules and signs.

5) Respect privacy and confidentiality by not disclosing any personal or sensitive information about yourself, other volunteers, staff, trail users, or the organization. You should also ask for permission before taking or sharing any photos or videos of anyone on the trail.

6) Follow ethical standards by being honest, respectful, responsible, and courteous to everyone on the trail. You should also avoid any actions or behaviors that may harm or offend anyone or damage the reputation of Friends of the Riverfront or the trail. Friends of the Riverfront has a zero-tolerance policy

for discriminatory behavior or actions towards trail users based on their race, class, color, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, mental illness, or housing status.

7) Know when to say, “I don’t know”. There will be many instances where you may not have enough information regarding a trail user’s request, complaint, or comment. You should be prepared to defer questions to Friends of the Riverfront staff when appropriate. The feedback form card and QR code is a great way to direct trail users to ask questions when you don’t know the answer.

8) How to get more materials- maps and stickers and cards: You can pick up maps, stickers, and volunteer/feedback cards at the office by arranging a time with the Trail Experience Coordinator (Lavender). You can also arrange to pick up materials at one of the public events where Friends of the Riverfront will be tabling. If you are unable to pick up supplies from the office, contact the Trail Experience Coordinator (Lavender) to make other arrangements.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Our organization is committed to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and has a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory language or behavior. What do we mean by that:

- We do not discriminate against anyone based on race, class, color, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, mental illness, or housing status.
- We are careful with the language that we use so that we do not assert assumptions about anyone’s experiences or identities or contribute towards stereotypes.
- We are willing to listen and apologize for wrong-doing if a person lets us know that they have been hurt or feel uncomfortable by our words or actions.
- We bring an open mind to listening to the experiences of trail users and try to refrain from judgements or criticisms.
- If you are not sure how to respond to a person’s stories or experiences, or not sure what is appropriate in a conversation with a trail user, feel free to say, “I don’t know.”, “I am not sure.”, “I don’t feel comfortable discussing that.” or “I don’t have enough information about that to comment on that.” “

We ask that all Trail Ambassadors follow these guidelines when representing Friends of the Riverfront as Trail Ambassadors.

Appendices

This section includes additional information or documents that may be useful for you as a trail ambassador, such as contact numbers, event calendar, designated trail-gating locations, Volunteer Reporting and feedback form link. You can request any Ambassador materials from Friends of the Riverfront staff.

Contact Information:

Trail Experience Coordinator (Managing Ambassador Program) - Lavender Sedlock- 412-313-4448, Lavender@friendsoftheriverfront.org

General Friends of the Riverfront phone number and email where all staff can be reached- 412-488-0212, friends@friendsoftheriverfront.org

311 and 911 when to call: https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/trc/Residential_911-311_final.pdf

Tips on preparing to know your options on your phone for emergency services:

<https://www.ecoatm.com/blogs/news/how-to-share-your-location-on-iphone-and-android>

Trail-gating Locations:

- Westhall Water Trail Launch
- Southside Riverview Park Water Launch
- Millvale Water Trail Launch
- Duck Hollow Water Trail Launch (Parking Lot)
- Lawrenceville Water Trail Launch
- Eliza Furnace Trail (Second Ave entrance)

Sign up for upcoming tabling events:

volunteersignup.org/M7EEB

Online form for tracking hours, giving feedback, reporting incidents and/or monitoring trail conditions:

<https://wkf.ms/3rQ2GXL>