

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 general feedback link: <https://wkf.ms/3rQ2GXL> to report trail conditions or report issues in your Trail Ambassador post-shift volunteer report: <https://wkf.ms/3OwCfyz>

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/Walking/Paddling ambassadors:*** These are ambassadors who can ride the Trail on their bike, paddle on the river, or walk along the Trail looking for and reporting maintenance or safety issues, filling map boxes, and helping people on the trail as needed. Roaming 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.
- **Tabling on the Trail 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. Tabling on the Trail ambassadors are friendly and welcoming, and can provide directions, recommendations, and tips to enhance the trail experience. As a Tabling on the Trail 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.
- **Group Trail Guide Ambassadors:** 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.
- Awards for outstanding volunteers.
- 20% Discount to our Autumn biannual fundraiser.
- Free admission to members-only summer solstice event.
- TRHT Swag Gift Levels for reaching a certain number of volunteer hours each season:



50 hours logged: Friends of the Riverfront 2024 Special Edition Enamel Pin

75 hours logged: Three Rivers Heritage Trail T-shirt or hat

100 hours logged: Three Rivers Heritage Trail Sweatshirt or Hoodie

Additional Perks:

- 10% off purchases at Three Rivers Outdoor Company.
- Free Admission into Member's only Summer Solstice Event.
- Opportunities to attend Free Workshop Series for volunteers.
- Opportunities for Giveaways Monthly for Volunteer of the Month.



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 Information, email list sign up forms and additional printed resource materials and publications are released over the season. You should distribute these materials to interested trail users or leave them at designated kiosks or map boxes.
- 3) When needed, all materials related to event tabling including tent, table, flag, chair, and printed tabling materials.
- 4) Trail Ambassadors who would like to set up a chair and/or small pop-up table will need to provide their own table and chair as needed or table on a location along the Trail where a table, bench, or chair are already located on the Trail. Tabling on the Trail Ambassadors will be provided with a pop-up yard sign and printed materials. Tabling on the Trail volunteers 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) **Event Ambassadors:** signing up to table at events are required to schedule your shifts at least 5 days 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 at least 48 hours in advance. Trail Ambassadors will be assisting full-time staff at the events and will not be responsible for event set up or tabling alone. If you are experiencing any cold or flu symptoms, please contact Friends of the Riverfront and cancel your shift.
- 2) **Cycling/Walking/Paddling Ambassadors:** 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 independently digitally or on paper and are required to fill out a post volunteer shift reporting form after every shift to track hours, monitor trail conditions, and to have the opportunity to share stories and experiences. <https://wkf.ms/3OwCfyz>
- 3) **Tabling on the Trail Ambassadors:** 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. Tabling on the Trail must take place on one of the designated locations on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail as indicated in the appendix. If you have a suggestion for a new tabling location, please reach out to Lavender@friendsoftheriverfront.org via email first to get a new tabling location approved. Some parts of the Trail are considered private property or do not have enough space to table, please confirm a tabling site with Friends of the Riverfront before setting up in a new location.
- 4) **Group Trail Guide Ambassadors:** may lead group experiences in partnership with Friends of the Riverfront as well as potentially other groups, businesses, non-profits, artists, etc. Trips must be approved by Friends of the Riverfront staff before an official collaboration is established. Once group trail experience programming is approved, the Ambassador will serve as the leader to the trip and Friends of the Riverfront will support with promotion of the event, sharing on the events page, social media pages, and in the newsletter. Friends of the Riverfront may also help develop marketing materials which will be determined on a case-by-case basis as well as provide assistance with co-host and additional volunteer support as needed. Those who already lead group experiences independently from Friends of the Riverfront on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail are also welcome to collaborate via the Trail Ambassador role to cross promote and receive support from Friends of the Riverfront when hosting group Trail experiences.
- 5) 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.

6) 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.

7) 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.

8) 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 link: <https://wkf.ms/3rQ2GXL> is a great way to direct trail users to ask questions directly to staff when you don't know the answer.

9) How to get more materials- maps, stickers, email lists, informational cards, brochures, etc: You can pick up materials at the office by arranging a time with the Trail Experience Coordinator at least 48 hours in advance (Lavender@friendsoftheriverfront.org). You can also arrange to pick up materials at one of the public events where Friends of the Riverfront will be tabling. Occasionally, on Trail days will be offered where Friends of the Riverfront staff will pick a location along the Three Rivers Heritage Trail for convenient materials pick up. Those dates when offered, will be shared via email.

10) Communicate with Friends of the Riverfront staff point person Lavender Sedlock at Lavender@friendsoftheriverfront.org or 412-313-4448 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 post- volunteer shift reporting link: <https://wkf.ms/3OwCfyz>

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

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 Tabling on the Trail locations, Volunteer Reporting and Feedback form links. 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>

Tabling on the Trail 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)

Ambassadors are welcome to suggest locations for tabling on the Trail to the program manager. Please reach out to Lavender@friendsoftheriverfront.org if you have an idea for a tabling location that works best for you. Approval of tabling location is essential as some parts of the Trail are private property or do not have enough space to accommodate a stationary tabling effort and keep open a right of way for Trail users.

Important links and QR codes:

Trail Ambassador Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/683021370113805>



Post-Volunteer Shift Reporting Online form (required after every shift):

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



Sign up to volunteer as a Trail Ambassador for upcoming outreach events:

volunteersignup.org/M7EEB



General Feedback form link (to provide for Trail Users with additional questions or concerns to directly send to Friends of the Riverfront staff):

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



Reporting Trail Maintenance Issues or City of Pittsburgh managed issues using 311:

<https://pittsburghpa.qscend.com/311>

