

# The Village Common of Rhode Island

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*Aging Better Together*

## Member Handbook

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## WELCOME

The Village Common of Rhode Island (TVC) is a volunteer-driven membership organization. Every day our members and volunteers come together to provide mutual support and create purposeful and powerful opportunities for what's next as we grow older. Many of our members are themselves volunteers, offering their time and energy for the benefit of their fellow members and the organization. Our members find volunteering to be a very rewarding experience.

As a member of TVC, you are also a member of a local village in your community. Through TVC and your local village, you have access to many kinds of practical support to help you stay in your home, as well as access to many social connections and activities to help you stay engaged in life.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of The Village Common of Rhode Island is to fundamentally change the experience of growing older here in Rhode Island by fostering the creation of communities of mutual support – villages – across the state and by directly supporting their long-term sustainability.

## OUR CORE VALUES

### **Generosity**

*Generosity is the lifeblood of The Village Common. Members and friends volunteer their time and resources to support one another.*

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

*The Village Common thrives on diversity and inclusiveness. We welcome all to join us, regardless of factors such as age, gender identification, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, faith, socio-economic status or income.*

### **Engagement**

*Engaging with others is central to our health and well-being. Our members and friends are active participants in social activities and volunteer work that nourish our connections to one another and to the larger community.*

### **Collaboration**

*We embrace the spirit of collaboration. We contribute to and benefit from working with each other, and with other organizations and communities.*

### **Sustainability**

*Our sustainability rests upon good governance and fiscal responsibility. Our communities of mutual support remain strong through the financial and volunteer support of members and friends.*

## **BECOMING A MEMBER**

To start the membership process, call Member Services at 401-441-5240 to speak with a service coordinator. Service coordinators are TVC volunteers who are on duty Monday-Friday, 9am to 5pm. A service coordinator also covers calls (via voicemail) on weekends. The service coordinator will arrange for a local membership ambassador to contact you to begin a conversation. The membership ambassador will answer any questions you may have and review member benefits, dues and other membership information. If you decide you would like to become a member, the membership ambassador will help you fill out your membership application.

## **MEMBER DUES**

Because TVC welcomes people of all backgrounds and economic means, we offer a pay-what-you-can dues structure. A membership ambassador will review the options with you so that you can determine what dues are affordable for you.

## **PAYMENT METHODS**

Membership dues may be paid annually or monthly. Members have a choice of payment methods: bank payment (which you arrange with your bank), bank withdrawal (which TVC transacts using your bank routing and account numbers), credit/debit card, personal check or money order. For questions about dues, members should contact the TVC office ([office@villagecommonri.org](mailto:office@villagecommonri.org), 401-228-8683).

## **DONATIONS**

In order for member dues to be affordable for all, TVC needs to rely significantly on charitable donations. We ask that members also consider making an annual tax-deductible donation to TVC.

## **TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

The member and TVC each have the right to terminate the agreement by giving notice in writing or by email. In the event of termination, the member will receive a refund of any dues which have been paid in advance for any full 30-day periods.

## MEMBER BENEFITS

TVC members lead lives of growth and discovery. Membership in TVC gives you access to a supportive community of social engagement and to practical support that can help you stay safely and confidently in your home. Some of the benefits vary across local villages, reflecting the interests and requests of members in a given village and the availability of volunteers. Other benefits are common across all local villages.

### Examples of Practical Support

*Check with your local village for specific types of support that are available to you.*

- Transportation in a volunteer's vehicle to and from medical appointments, for shopping and for other personal needs.
- Errands – the volunteer picks up/drops off groceries, prescriptions, etc. after making arrangements with the member.
- Technical assistance – help with devices such as computers, phones, tablets and TVs.
- Friendly calls or visits.
- Household chores and maintenance, minor repairs.

### Examples of Social, Cultural and Educational Activities (some in person and some via Zoom)

*Check with your local village for information about specific activities.*

- Neighborhood Circles for small-group social interactions.
- Webinars and lectures on a variety of timely topics.
- Interest groups such as book clubs and film clubs.
- Walking groups and yoga classes.
- Gatherings for picnics and potlucks.

## VOLUNTEERS

TVC is a volunteer-driven organization, with both members and non-members serving as volunteers. We encourage our members to volunteer and offer an array of volunteer opportunities that members find rewarding. It's the generosity of volunteers, members and non-members alike, that makes all the benefits of our villages possible. Our volunteers contribute time, skills, expertise, energy and thought to support the organization at all levels. They decide when, where and how often to volunteer, and they choose the volunteer activities that interest them. For more information on becoming a volunteer, contact the TVC office ([office@villagecommonri.org](mailto:office@villagecommonri.org), 401-228-8683).

## REQUESTING A SERVICE

To request a service (e.g., a ride, an errand, handy help at home), a member calls Member Services (401-441-5240) and speaks to a service coordinator. As noted above, service coordinators are TVC volunteers who are on duty Monday-Friday, 9am to 5pm. A service coordinator also covers calls (via voicemail) on weekends.

The service coordinator asks questions (or calls the member back if responding to a voicemail) to collect all the necessary information and enter it into a database. After entering the request, the service coordinator sends the request to volunteers in the member's village. Once a volunteer responds saying they can take the request, the volunteer and member both receive a confirmation email for the service. The volunteer also calls the member to confirm the service and discuss any necessary arrangements.

Our local villages strive to fulfill every request for a service, but it's not always possible to find a volunteer to take a specific service. We thus encourage members to call well in advance of needing a time-sensitive service, such as a ride to a medical appointment. This will increase the likelihood (although not guarantee) that we find a volunteer.

Members get to know volunteers over time as volunteers provide services and socialize with members at village and TVC events. TVC of course encourages friendships between members and volunteers. However, all service requests *must* come through Member Services (401-441-5240).

## TVC WEBSITE AND CALENDAR

The TVC website ([www.villagecommonri.org](http://www.villagecommonri.org)) provides a wealth of information about TVC and its local villages. This information is available to the public and does not require signing in as a member. The website also contains a TVC member directory, whose access does require signing in. Every new member receives a username and password (which can be changed) with instructions on how to sign in. A member can call Member Services (401-441-5240) and speak with a service coordinator for assistance navigating the website and signing in.

An important feature of the TVC website is the TVC calendar. The calendar lists the various activities offered by TVC and its local villages, and it provides a way to register for activities. Some activities require registration; others do not. Whether registration is required is listed with the individual activity on the calendar. A member can call Member Services (401-441-5240) and speak with a service coordinator for assistance with the calendar and registration.

## TVC NEWSLETTER

TVC publishes a monthly newsletter that provides updates, stories, reflections and more about TVC and its local villages. All members receive the newsletter, with a choice to receive it via email or have a printed copy mailed to the member's address.

## **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

TVC is a volunteer-driven non-profit membership organization that is operated by and for its members. In accordance with the bylaws of the organization, the members of TVC elect the governing board of directors and its officers. TVC's operations are dependent on the input of its members and the support available from its volunteers.

Each local village within TVC has a steering committee (or comparable leadership group) consisting of village members and volunteers. Steering committees devise policies and procedures for their village; plan social and community events; engage in outreach initiatives and volunteer recruitment; and are actively engaged with the welfare of village members. Representatives from each village's steering committee participate in the TVC coordinating council, which is convened by the executive director.

The executive director, a small professional staff, the coordinating council and the village steering committees all have important roles to play in the management and operation of TVC and its local villages.

## **SUGGESTIONS AND CONCERNS**

TVC encourages members to offer suggestions about improving any aspect of the organization and to report any concerns that arise. To do so, members can contact their local village's steering committee (or comparable leadership group) or the TVC office ([office@villagecommonri.org](mailto:office@villagecommonri.org), 401-228-8683).