

Maine Volunteer Leadership Conference

August 4, 2026
Augusta, ME

#MVL

Welcome to the 40th Annual **Maine Volunteer Leadership Conference!**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to the 2026 Maine Volunteer Leadership Conference!

This year's theme, "40 Years of Mainers Helping Mainers," honors four decades of community resilience, neighborly care, and collective action. Across four generations of service, the spirit of Mainers stepping up for one another has remained the bedrock of our towns and cities. Today, as our communities navigate evolving challenges, the commitment of volunteer managers, civic leaders, and local advocates is as critical as ever. This conference offers space to celebrate our shared history, strengthen our networks, and explore new ways to carry this legacy forward.

We are deeply grateful to the community members, volunteer leaders, and nonprofit professionals across Maine who show up every day to build stronger, more caring communities. Your dedication defines what it means to lead with purpose, and we are honored to stand with you.

Thank you for being with us today as we celebrate four decades of service, and here's to many more years of dedicated support for your neighbors and our state!

**Sincerely,
Volunteer Maine**

About the 2026 Maine Volunteer Leadership Conference



For 40 years, Mainers have come together to support one another through service, generosity, and community connection.

This year's conference celebrates that legacy while looking ahead to the future of volunteer engagement across our state.

We invite you to share your knowledge, experiences, and innovative ideas to help strengthen and sustain volunteerism in Maine.

Since 1986, organizers of Maine community volunteer efforts have gathered to learn, network, and share thought-provoking discussions with regional and national leaders in the volunteer sector.

The Maine Volunteer Leadership Conference (MVLC) is Maine's only statewide educational event focused on engaging citizens in volunteer service. The conference is organized by Volunteer Maine as part of its professional development for leaders of community volunteer programs.

Keynote Speakers



Kaira Esgate

Points of Light

Kaira Esgate serves as Senior Vice President, Reimagining Service at Points of Light. In this role, Kaira oversees the implementation of the National Volunteer Strategy that seeks to double volunteering in the United States by 2035. Previously, Kaira was the CEO of America's Service Commissions (ASC), the national association for the 52 governor-led state service commissions. Prior to leading ASC, Kaira served as the executive director of the initial Reimagining Service effort — a national multi-sector coalition dedicated to converting good intentions into greater impact through effective volunteer engagement strategies. With Reimagining Service, Kaira led efforts to bring new data and insights to volunteering and developed the nationally recognized nonprofit service enterprise model. During her tenure with California Volunteers, the state service commission in California, Kaira served in a variety of roles, including overseeing the agency's program development and grantmaking activities, leading planning efforts with the service and volunteering field in the state, and serving as Chief of Staff to the nation's first cabinet-level Secretary of Service and Volunteering.



Mary Herman

Community Volunteer, Former First Lady of Maine

Mary Herman served as the Director of Special Projects in the Office of the Commissioner. Some of her projects included staffing the Prevention Task Force of the Office of Opioid Response, working with Commissioner Makin on the Wabanaki History and Culture work group, revision and support of Children's Cabinet legislation and serving on the DOE staff support team for the Children's Cabinet, working with Maine DOE Student Cabinet, supporting our Office of Innovation projects such as ConnectKidsNow!, and the \$19.5 million U.S. DOE Grant culminating in Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV), COVID-response, expanding school-based health centers, supporting our pre-K—12 career exploration/career readiness and much more. Mary began serving her community as a middle school social studies teacher, and later became a special Ed/ learning disabilities specialist. After moving to Maine in 1973, she attended nursing school at University of Maine at Augusta and has enjoyed exploring all corners of public service, including healthcare, education, and public policy.



Schedule

Welcome!

**Morning
Panel &
Sessions**

08:00 AM - 08:45 AM

Registration & Breakfast

Networking Lab with Dr. Brenda Zollitsch

8:45 AM - 9:35 AM

Kaira Esgate - Keynote

Points of Light

09:45 AM - 10:35 AM

Panel 1

Volunteering Across Lifespans

Session 1.A

How Collaboration Leads to Increased Volunteerism in Your Community!

Session 1.B

Storytelling and Advocacy: Telling the Stories that Invite in the Community

15 minute break

10:50 AM - 11:40 AM

Panel 2

Service in Higher Education

Session 2.A

Engaging Corporate Partnerships: From One-Time Volunteers to Long-Term Partners

Session 2.B

Youth Engagement Workshop: The Youth Volunteer Advantage

Lunch & Networking

11:45 AM - 12:30 PM

Lunch Group A & Networking Group B

12:35 PM - 1:20 PM

Lunch Group B & Networking Group A

1:25 PM - 2:15 PM

Mary Herman - Keynote

Community Volunteer, Former First Lady of Maine

Afternoon Panel & Sessions

2:20 PM - 3:10 PM

Panel 3

New Mainers Volunteer Engagement

Session 3.A

Developing High-Impact Student Service Initiatives Powered by Community Partnerships

Session 3.B

Tech-Enabled Service: Optimizing Volunteer Management and Satisfaction through Innovation

15 minute break

3:25 PM - 4:25 PM

H.R.1 Update

Navigating Volunteerism and SNAP Benefits post-HR1

Plenary & Panel

Thank you!

4:25 PM - 4:35 PM

Conference Wrap Up

4:35 PM - 5:00 PM

Networking

Walk out snacks provided by UMaine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies

Sessions

Session 1.A

How Collaboration Leads to Increased Volunteerism in Your Community

Lead by Eden Martin, Sarah Seames, Doreen Fournier, Daniel Burson, and Emily Bollman

What more can you accomplish by working collaboratively to recruit and educate volunteers in your region? The Brunswick Area Volunteerism Collaborative provides a blueprint for fostering a culture of volunteerism in our community through inter-organizational collaboration. By aggregating our resources, it has allowed us to host multiple community events to help us recruit, retain, educate, train, and appreciate volunteers. Along with providing support to each other through consistent convening and connection, we help each other find solutions to challenges we might face, mobilize volunteers to meet emerging community needs, and provide community within our nonprofit volunteer management.

Session 1.B

Storytelling and Advocacy: Telling the Stories that Invite in the Community

Lead by Angela Stone

Social media can be used for good. Tell the stories that need to be told, connect with your community more regularly, reach new volunteers, new donors and build your network organically and authentically.

Session 2.A

Engaging Corporate Partnerships: From One-Time Volunteers to Long-Term

Lead by Elisa Fleig and Angie Viola

Corporate volunteer days can be powerful, especially when they're designed to last beyond a single event. In this session, we'll explore how to build, manage, and sustain meaningful corporate partnerships that benefit both nonprofits and businesses. From first contact to follow-up and long-term engagement, participants will learn practical strategies for aligning goals, planning impactful service experiences, and stewarding relationships that bring partners back again and again.



Session 2.B

Lead by Heidi Sumner

Youth Volunteer Engagement Workshop: The Youth Volunteer Advantage

This workshop equips volunteer managers with practical strategies for supervising and supporting youth volunteers. Participants will learn how to recruit, engage, retain, and recognize young volunteers; understand required documentation; design meaningful service projects and volunteer roles; provide mentorship, job shadowing, and workforce-readiness opportunities; and implement effective safety and supervision practices that create positive, goal-oriented experiences for youth.

Session 3.A

Lead by Trisha Mason and Susan M. Scacchi

Developing High Impact Student Service Initiatives Powered by Community Partnerships

What if your next big idea could become a lasting partnership? Join this inspiring workshop to learn how taking chances, thinking expansively, and being assertive turn ambitious goals into sustainable success. Hear from a university administrator and foundation executive director who came together to build a statewide program to address food insecurity. They'll share their successes, challenges and lessons learned - how their strategic partnership increased volunteer participation, meals produced and expanded food distribution statewide, gaining this Maine program national recognition.

Session 3.B

Lead by Jennifer Crittenden, Jennifer Jain, Rachel Coleman, and Cynthia Cushing

Tech-Enabled Service: Optimizing Volunteer Management and Satisfaction through Innovation

This evidence-informed session reviews national Census data and trends on virtual volunteering across the lifespan and highlights a study on older adult digital volunteers. The session will explore volunteer motivations, barriers, and management practices that maximize engagement. While focusing on older adults, it shares transferable strategies for accessibility, remote community-building, and real-world program experiences. Participants will gain actionable insights to maximize the use of technology for volunteer management.

Panels



Panel One

Volunteering Across Lifespans

Panelists:

Elisa Fleig, Noël Bonam, Rick Wilson, and Thomas Meuser

Explore how to engage volunteers at every stage of life — from youth to older adults. Consider strategies for working with families, mid-career individuals, and retirees, and how to adapt opportunities to meet different needs and motivations.

Panel Two

Service in Higher Education

Panelists:

Trisha Mason, David Gibson, Brenda Zollitsch, and Sarah Seames

Examine how colleges and universities promote service and civic engagement, support student involvement, and partner with communities to create meaningful impact. Topics of focus may include: leveraging student skills, managing community partner expectations, balancing school and service workload expectations, incentivizing student and institution involvement, increasing retention of

Panel Three

New Mainers Volunteer Engagement

Panelists: Carol Kalajainen, Sophia Doremus, Amy Titcomb, and Nathan Davis

Maine has a vibrant immigrant population that may face barriers to access volunteer opportunities that more established Mainers do not. This panel will focus on how we as the volunteer community can reduce these barriers to access and create infrastructure that is welcoming and sustainable for Maine's immigrant populations.

A photograph of a group of people at a conference. In the foreground, a woman with brown hair tied back, wearing a white sleeveless top and a lanyard with a badge, is smiling and talking to a woman with curly brown hair wearing a white long-sleeved shirt. In the background, a man with a beard in a dark blue shirt is also visible, along with other attendees. The image is slightly blurred and has a dark overlay.

Networking Opportunities

Breakfast Networking Lab *With Dr. Brenda Zollitsch*

Come with coffee and learn new skills you can use to help make more meaningful connections with others you meet today! Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, strategic connecting will help you make the most of networking opportunities. Learn strategies and come away with a set of resources to explore during and after the conference.

Grab Lunch & Connect

Grab your lunch and pull up a chair! Take this time to reflect on the morning sessions, meet new faces, and strengthen your community network.

Walk Out Networking *Sponsored by The UMaine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies*

Before you go, grab a snack provided by the University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies and use this final networking window to connect with fellow conference attendees — swap takeaways, recap the day, and build lasting connections with fellow nonprofit and volunteer sector leaders.

Thank you Sponsors!

Today's event would not be possible without the gracious support of our sponsors. Their partnerships and investment directly contribute to the success and growth of this year's conference.



Maine
Community Foundation



Check out

SERVE**MAINE**

A PROGRAM OF
VOLUNTEER MAINE

ServeMaine.Org is Maine's official statewide **volunteer-matching platform**. Our platform allows organizations to post open positions and volunteer opportunities. Volunteers can find local opportunities tailored to their interests and connect with non-profits across the state.





Volunteer Maine

MAINE VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Thank you for joining us!
Let's stay in touch!



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Volunteer Maine

Maine Commission for Community Service

A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism
