



## Experience Wave Iowa: An Invaluable Community Link: Mature Volunteers

### Did You Know?

#### 435,220

The estimated number of people age 65 and over who were living in Iowa on July 1, 2005. This age group accounted for 14.7 percent of the total population.

#### 663,186

The projected population age 65 and older in Iowa in the year 2030. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this age group will constitute 22.4 percent of the state's total population at that time.

#### 84

The number of Iowa counties (out of 99) in 2030 in which at least 20 percent of the residents will be age 65 and over according to Woods & Pool Economics, Inc. In 2000 that number was 30.

Experience Wave Iowa is an initiative that works to raise awareness about the opportunities that mature Iowans provide to the workforce and community. Currently, traditional thinking and societal barriers are slowing progress in changing the opinions and understanding of what our state stands to gain from mature Iowans that are engaged in work, the community and education. Iowa is expected to experience a workforce shortage in the next few years, and mature Iowans are ready and willing to fill that gap. Experience Wave Iowa believes that mature Iowans need meaningful volunteer opportunities, workplace flexibility, and opportunities for lifelong learning to thrive and contribute to their full potential.

### Iowa's Mature Population

According to the State Data Center of Iowa and the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs, it is estimated that 435,220 people age 65 and over live in Iowa as of July 1, 2005. That is 14.7 percent of the state's total population. By the year 2030, the percentage of individuals age 65 and older in Iowa will surpass 660,000. By 2030, the state's population age 65 and older will represent 22.4 percent of the population. In 2005, just 30 of Iowa's 99 counties had at least 20 percent of residents age 65 and older. By 2030, it is projected that 84 Iowa counties will consist of at least 20 percent of residents age 65 and older.

Mature Iowans are educated: 79 percent of individuals age 65 and older have at least a high school diploma. This population is civically engaged. Eighty-three percent of Iowans age 65 and older were registered to vote in the 2004 presidential election. This population works. More than 68,000 Iowans age 65 and older were in the labor force in 2005, and just 3.2 percent of Iowans age 65 and older were unemployed.

### Mature Iowans Give Back

Typically, Iowans that contribute to the health and well being of their communities have a lifelong history of volunteerism, which provides a broad scope of experience and knowledge that adds significant value to service opportunities. The most utilized mature volunteerism resource in Iowa is Senior Corps. Senior Corps connects individuals over 55 with the people and organizations that need them most. Seniors become mentors, coaches, and companions to people in need, and contribute their job skills and expertise to community projects and organizations. More than 8,100 mature volunteers served in some capacity in their Iowa communities through Senior Corps in 2005.

Mature Iowans seniors serve in a variety of volunteer roles throughout the state. A small snapshot of these roles includes environmental project work, mentoring programs for young adults, assistance for homebound seniors, conducting safety patrols in conjunction with local police departments, responding to natural disasters, and tutoring youth with special needs. Iowa's mature volunteers fill the gap for thousands of organizations and groups throughout the state who would be left grasping for volunteers without the dedication of mature Iowans.



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Mature Iowans are also looking to add value to their communities in more unconventional ways. Given their vast experience and knowledge, Iowa's mature volunteers comprise a deep talent pool that is waiting to be tapped. These resources can easily be put to use in a workplace setting, during a governmental review process, or via a position on a not-for-profit board of directors. Mature volunteers provide decades worth of time-tested practices that can prevent headaches, promote productivity, or help an organization achieve sustainability.

### What Is Still Needed?

As mature Iowans seniors begin to transition from their work years to their retirement years, more and more of them relish the opportunity to give back to their communities. These opportunities need to be supported by local communities, trumpeted by educational institutions, and robustly championed by Iowa legislators. Volunteer opportunities must match the diversity and creativity displayed by Iowa's mature volunteers. This goal can be accomplished by developing resources throughout Iowa to provide viable volunteer networks and partnerships that will lead to a variety of tangible and intangible incentives and rewards.

### According to the Senior Corps website, nationally (2005):

- More than **540,000** U.S. seniors volunteered in their community.
- U.S. seniors served more than **590,000** youth and young people.
- U.S. seniors participated in more than **16,000** projects.
- U.S. seniors contributed more than **109** million volunteer hours.
- U.S. seniors mentored more than **9,000** children of prisoners.

### In Iowa (2005)

- More than **8,100** seniors volunteered in their community.
- Iowa seniors tutored more than **10,000** young people with special needs.
- Iowa seniors assisted more than **850** homebound seniors and adults.
- Iowa seniors responded to natural disasters, conducted safety patrols for local police departments, participated in environmental projects and mentored youth throughout **1,300** groups across Iowa.

### Keeping Mature Iowans Engaged

As baby boomers move into retirement age, it is clear that these individuals will play vital roles in strengthening America's communities. Throughout the country, mature Iowans will reshape the thinking about mature citizens by making themselves an irrefutable asset. Many seniors are seeking opportunities to stay engaged in their communities. Research has proven that adults who are active and engaged are healthier longer and less reliant on federal programs. It is important to continue giving mature Iowans the chance to stay involved in their communities, which is why Experience Wave promotes flexible workplaces, volunteer positions, and educational opportunities aimed at maturing Americans.