

# Making Connections

## *2025 Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference*

### **“Strategic Volunteerism: Connecting Passion with Purpose**

July 11, 2025 8:30 am — 4:00 pm  
University of Illinois Springfield  
Springfield, IL

#### ***Keynote:***

#### ***From Volunteer to Visionary —***

#### ***How Ordinary People Create Extraordinary Impact***

**Steve Koch**

**Board President, Habitat for Humanity of Sangamon County**

What separates people who volunteer once from those who change lives for decades?

In this powerful and personal keynote, Steve Koch shares how a lifetime of service—from political campaigns to building homes—taught him that strategic volunteerism isn’t just about showing up—it’s about showing up with purpose.

You’ll walk away inspired to lead, equipped to engage others, and ready to turn passion into long-lasting, legacy-level impact.

- ✓ Why strategy matters more than effort
- ✓ The #1 mindset shift that turns volunteers into leaders
- ✓ How YOU can be the spark for transformation—no matter your role

This is the session that will ignite your “why” and remind you exactly what’s possible when passion meets purpose.



**THIS CONFERENCE IS OPEN TO EVERYONE, WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS FOR:**

Nonprofit directors, staff, and board members  
Business and community leaders  
Volunteers in public, private, and nonprofit organization

National Service program participants  
Students interested in nonprofit/voluntary sector  
Members of service organizations

**Reserve Your Spot By Registering Online Today At:**  
[www.CIVconference.org](http://www.CIVconference.org)

## Workshop Session I: 10:40-11:50 am

### ***Ahead of the Curve: How to Use Volunteer Data to Work Smarter (Not Harder)– Gina Edwards, Strategic Engagement Specialist (Intermediate)***

Data isn't just for reports—it's a goldmine for engagement. Learn how to uncover what your volunteers really want, streamline your recruitment funnel, and make better decisions that increase turnout, retention, and satisfaction. Simple systems, big results.

### ***Overcoming Volunteer Barriers in Rural Communities – Jason Powell, Rural Volunteer Advocate (Intermediate)***

Think recruiting in rural areas is hopeless? Think again. This session flips the script, showing you how to turn geographic and cultural obstacles into powerful engagement opportunities. Discover the untapped potential hiding in your own backyard. You'll walk away with proven tactics to grow volunteer programs in small communities.

### ***The Staff-Volunteer Connection: The Fastest Way to Build a Thriving, Inclusive Team – Jenny Garver • Macon County Conservation District (All)***

Miscommunication and misalignment are the #1 reasons volunteers quit. In this eye-opening session, you'll learn how to build bridges between staff and volunteers, boost morale, and create a culture where everyone feels valued—and wants to come back.

## Workshop Session II: 1:10 – 2:20 pm

### ***Belonging in Action: How to Build a Culture People Never Want to Leave – Jill Hawkins-Wright • University of Illinois Springfield (Intermediate)***

If you want your volunteers to show up fully, they need to feel like they belong. This session shows you exactly how to create an inclusive, magnetic environment where people feel seen, heard, and committed. Walk away with a plan to transform your culture—fast.

### ***How to Turn Your Social Media Followers into Raving Fans – Kelly Gagnon Hernandez • Social Impact Strategist (All)***

If you're posting but not seeing action, you're doing it wrong. Learn how to turn scrolling into signups by using powerful emotional triggers, community-building tactics, and platform-specific strategies that convert your audience into your most vocal ambassadors.

### ***The Parent Mentor Program: How to Transform Your School with One Simple Framework – Lavonna Garner & Tanya Abbey • Lake County ROE / Woodland Consolidated School District 50 (All)***

Want to boost parent involvement, shift school culture, and solve staffing shortages—all without stretching your budget? This proven framework recruits and empowers parent volunteers to become your school's secret weapon. Walk away with a full blueprint for creating a welcoming, inclusive environment that fuels academic success and community impact.

## Workshop Session III: 2:30 PM – 3:40 PM

### ***When Skies Are Blue: How to Proactively Manage Disaster Volunteers – Gina Edwards (Intermediate)***

If you're waiting until disaster strikes to organize your volunteers, it's already too late. Learn how to build a disaster-ready volunteer force that's trained, trusted, and strategically aligned before the next crisis. This session gives you the tools to turn goodwill into action—without chaos—by engaging the right partners, prepping your people, and creating a volunteer plan as dependable as any emergency response system.

### ***Future-Proofing Volunteer Recruitment: Secrets To Building a Pipeline That Lasts – Kelly Gagnon Hernandez • Volunteer Engagement Expert (All)***

Tired of people ghosting after one shift? Discover why traditional recruiting no longer works—and what to do instead. You'll learn the 2025-tested strategies that attract high-quality volunteers who stick around, bring their friends, and actually want to come back.

### ***Passion with Purpose: How to Attract Loyal Volunteers Who Drive Real Change – Tiffany Holmes • IL Commission on Community Service (All)***

When people connect their passion to your mission, magic happens. This session reveals the psychology behind lasting volunteer engagement—and how you can use it to create stronger teams, deeper impact, and a more vibrant organization, including real-world tactics that anyone can implement immediately.

## Schedule

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM: Check-In & Morning Networking

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM: Keynote

10:40 AM – 11:50 AM: Workshop Session I

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM: Lunch & Networking

1:10 PM – 2:20 PM: Workshop Session II

2:30 PM – 3:40 PM: Workshop Session III

3:40 PM – 3:50 PM: Closing Remarks & Door Prizes

Register Online Today At:

[www.CIVconference.org](http://www.CIVconference.org)

Early Bird Registration Through June 20

**Quick And Easy Online Registration**  
**To register and pay online, please visit:**  
**www.CIVconference.org**

Lunch will offer a salad bar, hot/cold foods, and vegetarian/vegan options to accommodate dietary needs.

**Mail Registration**

If you wish to register by mail, please complete the form on this page and mail along with payment to:

Attn: CIV Conference  
Habitat For Humanity  
2744 S 6th St  
Springfield, IL 62703

Note: All checks should be made payable to: CIVC.

If you have to request a check from your organization that takes extra time – please submit a copy of your registration now to secure your reservation.

If you are sending one payment for a group of conference participants, please complete a copy of this form for each attendee.

If you have any questions, please email:  
civconference@gmail.com

**Fee Schedule: (Lunch will be provided)**

**Early Bird Registration: \$30**

**Regular Registration after 6/20: \$45**

Contact Abby Brooks at 217-552-9509 with any questions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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Hosted by:  
UIS VCEC  
(Volunteer & Civic Engagement Center)

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An Illinois Volunteer Management Network event, in cooperation with the Illinois Department Of Human Services and the Serve Illinois Commission.

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**"Strategic Volunteerism:  
Connecting Passion with  
Purpose"**

### **Conference Location**

University of Illinois Springfield,  
Student Union - Building #13  
One University Plaza  
Springfield, Illinois 62703

### **Date And Time**

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### **Questions? Comments?**

Please email: [civconference@gmail.com](mailto:civconference@gmail.com)

### **CIVC Steering Committee Partners**

Serve Illinois Commission • Habitat for Humanity of Sangamon County • Carle Foundation Hospital •  
Mid America Preparedness • Boost Tactical Marketing • John Wood Community College •  
United Way Central Illinois • University of Illinois Springfield • Macon County Conservation District