



Safe Winter Walkways Communications Plan for Implementation during Winter 2016

Communications Objective

To efficiently and effectively communicate the needs of the Safe Winter Walkways program to the citizens of Lawrence and to reach out to volunteer groups and organizations to participate in the Safe Winter Walkways program (SWW), to increase early registration in the program, and to increase the volunteer participation in the program and maintain the program at a size that is manageable for Douglas County Senior Services staff.

Assumptions

This plan is created with the assumption that the City of Lawrence and Douglas County Senior Services (DCSS) will again work together to coordinate the Safe Winter Walkways program. The city will provide assistance in promoting the program through various communication tools and DCSS will administer the program. This plan also assumes the city will continue to enforce the sidewalk snow removal ordinance that takes effect within 48 hours of a measurable snowfall.

This plan also assumes that interest from residents in need of assistance will continue to grow at a fast pace as it has for the past two years. The city continues to see relatively high interest among citizens to comply with the city's sidewalk snow ordinance and is directly correlated to the increase in participation rates for the Safe Winter Walkways program.

Background

The 2011/2012 winter season saw unseasonably high temperatures and little precipitation. There was no initiation of the city's sidewalk ordinance in 2011/2012. However, in 2010/2011, requests for assistance outpaced volunteers available (119 requests for assistance, 57 volunteers). In 2011, many volunteers accepted multiple houses as part of the Safe Winter Walkways program.

The table below shows participation versus volunteer availability:

	Volunteers	Participants	Waiting List
2009	52	60	0
2010	57	119	24
2011	38	124	40
2012	24	91	67
2013	41 (served 57 properties)	89	32
2014	53	81	14
2015	68 (78 properties matched)	84	6

Audience

City of Lawrence residents who qualify for the program as elderly or handicapped.

Volunteers who can support the program throughout the winter months (city residents, local volunteer organizations/clubs).

Local media representatives who can help promote and publicize the program for participants and volunteers.

Messages

Participant Messaging:

- The Safe Winter Walkways program is available to handicapped and/or elderly residents in Lawrence who need assistance clearing public sidewalks of snow and ice during the winter months.
- The city and DCSS partner together to create safer and more accessible pedestrian walkways through the Safe Winter Walkways program.
- The deadline for receiving assistance through the Safe Winter Walkways program is **November 18, 2016**. DCSS will not keep a waiting list after this time. Participants need to sign up early to avoid a rush of requests at the first sign of significant weather, and to avoid being turned away because of the program deadline.
- Home visits for verification will be completed each year.
- Participants can sign up for assistance through an online form at www.lawrenceks.org/safe_winter_walkways. You must reapply every year for assistance.
- This program is provided by volunteers. We make every effort to secure volunteers but no guarantees of service are made as part of this program.
- Snow removal is limited to public sidewalks and a walkway to the street from the front door. This does not include driveways, porches or walkways. Volunteers may choose to clear these areas but it is not an expectation of the program.
- This program is intended to assist individuals who are elderly or disabled.

Volunteer Messaging:

- The Safe Winter Walkways program is a great way to give back to the local community and assist those who cannot physically handle shoveling of snow during the winter months.
- Online sign up for volunteers is available at www.lawrenceks.org/safe_winter_walkways.
- Volunteers need to sign up early so that staff can pair residents with volunteers early in the season and avoid confusion at the first sign of significant weather.
- Volunteering in the program has minimal time requirements but volunteers must provide availability throughout the entire season to participate in the program.
- Every effort is made to pair volunteers with residents who live nearby to lessen travel time during winter weather.
- SWW is a great program for clubs/organizations looking for a way to give back to the community.

- A background check will be needed for new volunteers; previous volunteers will only need to have contact information verified to participate in the program.

Media Planning

Media interest in the Safe Winter Walkways/city sidewalk snow ordinance grows each year. There are many times when a request is made to the city of DCSS coordinator to provide an on-camera interview with a volunteer or program participant. It is recommended that three-to-four participants and volunteers are asked at the start of the program to serve as spokespersons for the program and contact information be provided to the city communications staff and DCSS coordinator for possible media interviews. In addition, DCSS staff should regularly update the city staff with program information including volunteer/participant levels, general unmet needs and issues that are affecting the program that may need attention for resolution.

Communication Tools

- City news releases
- City website
- DCSS website/publications
- City employee intranet
- Local, regional media outlets
- Letter/email to all previous volunteers in the fall soliciting support for program
- Youth groups and churches
- Public service announcements and media attention
- University publications
- Student Success lists for university groups and Greek organizations
- City hotline and online volunteer registration database
- Local volunteer databases and group distribution email lists (Roger Hill)
- Utility Billing message

Timeline

Tools

Proposed Date

Update city SWW hotline number (832-3338) with reference to DCSS main line (842-0543 x 115)

Sept. 2016

Generate a list of private contractors, volunteer groups or individuals that can be a reference once SWW deadline is reached (find out if DCSS can provide this legally)

Sept. 2016

Submit Utility Billing message for September cycles

Oct. 2016

Submit memo to City Manager for program approval

Sept. 7, 2016

Begin outreach opportunities for 2016/2015 SWW program

Oct. 9, 2016

- City news release
- City website
- DCSS website/calendar postings

Distribute flyers from DCSS on program enrollment

Oct. 2016

Enrollment of program participants

Oct. 9, 2016 – November 18, 2016

Recruitment of volunteers (goal for 2016/2015 is 80 to 100 volunteers by late November)

October – November 2016

Begin media outreach and target press releases to call for volunteers

October 9, 2016

- LJW
- Ch 6
- KLWN
- KUJH
- University Daily Kansan

Produce radio PSAs for use on KLWN

October 2016

Contact local volunteer resources

- United Way
- Roger Hill Volunteer Center
- Local Boy Scout/Girl Scout groups
- University groups (BIG Event)
- Greek organizations
- High school/junior high volunteer programs,
- Church youth groups
- City employee intranet posting
- LAN and Neighborhoods
- Organizations that provide support to elderly/disabled:
 - o The ARC, Cottonwood,

Trinity In-Home Care,
Independence, Inc.

Send emails to previous SWW program volunteers for 2013/2016 program	October 9, 2016
Prepare listing of media spokespersons for the program in preparation for winter weather	October 20, 2016
Deadline for program enrollment by participants	November 18, 2016
Send out letters of notification to persons who signed up but we could not provide a volunteer	December 1, 2016
Provide updates to city staff on program needs and provide participant info to check against sidewalk snow ordinance complaints	Ongoing, during times when sidewalk snow ordinance is enforced

Resources

Waivers:

<https://lawrence.wufoo.com/forms/safe-winter-walkways-volunteer-form/>

<https://lawrence.wufoo.com/forms/safe-winter-walkways-request-for-volunteer-help/>