

The Book of Life

A project of the Vincentian System and its member ministries

A Guide Book for Volunteers

The purpose of the **Book of Life** is to capture memories by allowing our residents the opportunity to share their life stories, and in doing so— define him or herself through the milestones, accomplishments and oral histories that are memorable, engaging and informative.



VINCENTIAN
COLLABORATIVE SYSTEM

Welcome! Thank you for volunteering for our **Book of Life** program. Whether you volunteer for just a day, once a week or until the book is complete, we believe that this will be a rewarding experience for you.

1. All Book of Life volunteers complete the Vincentian volunteer application and screening process—either as an ongoing volunteer or a single-day-of-service event volunteer.
2. Volunteers receive assignment confirmation that includes: days, times and scheduling information for participating in the Book of Life.
3. During their first assignment, volunteers will receive a Book of Life Guidebook, as well as a copy of the facility's Book of Life Program volunteer procedure form. A representative of the Activities Department will review this information with them.
4. Volunteers may be assigned to a specific resident or they may follow the Book of Life Program volunteer procedure form to identify residents who wish to participate in the Book of Life. While each facility has times when residents are available to participate in the Book of Life, volunteers are asked to be flexible on those days when a resident chooses to do something else.
5. As with all information about our residents, the life histories that they share with us should be treated respectfully and with confidentiality. Residents give their consent to participate in this program. All photos and stories that you collect for *The Book of Life* are the property of the residents.
6. Always knock at the resident's door, introduce yourself, and explain the purpose (front cover of this guidebook) of the Book of Life program before you start. Be sure to wear your volunteer badge.
7. Ask permission to skim through pages of the resident's Book of Life binder. This may give you some ideas for discussion. As a quick refresher, review the letter to residents, family members, friends and volunteers on the first page. If you cannot locate the resident's binder, you may ask him or her where it is, but you are not permitted to look for it by opening doors or drawers.
8. Plan to interview and write in small sketches of time (30-60 minutes). Volunteers should allow the residents to lead the discussion, but they may also select a specific topic from the Book of Life Guidebook to break the ice or get the conversations flowing.
9. You may write your notes in a notebook or on a laptop. When you are done writing, add the stories you write to the resident's Book of Life binder. Page protector sheets have been provided. If you cannot find their Book of Life binder in a visible place and the resident cannot remember where it is, do not search for it. Simply turn in your stories (as instructed in the Book of Life volunteer procedure form) before you leave. Be sure and note the resident's name on your notes.

10. If you use a laptop, you may print out the Book of Life entry and return it to the resident on your next visit or mail your story back to your staff contact person on page 13. Please be sure to transfer your notes into a permanent document as soon as possible. Too much time between your interview and typing increases the likelihood of having notes misplaced or forgetting important details.
11. If your family or group would like to lead a group reminiscing activity that includes Book of Life activities, combined with scrapbooking or photo sharing, please contact the Activities Department at your facility.
12. While listening to or documenting life histories, you may come across a resident who has an amazing background, achievement, or story that you feel should be shared with others. Please contact the Director of Volunteer Services at 412.-548-4060 or jandrews@vcs.org to pass this information on.
13. Event volunteers who are recruited for a single-day-of-service may wish to continue in the program. They should notify the Director of Volunteer Services at 412.-548-4060 or jandrews@vcs.org who will help them schedule Mantoux testing and orientation and receive a volunteer name badge and a copy of the VCS Volunteer Handbook.
14. In addition to serving as “biographers”, volunteers are also needed to type stories and scan photos. Please contact the Activities Department at the facility if you are interested in performing these services.

Table of Contents

This guidebook has been prepared to help you. It includes helpful tips such as:

| | PAGE |
|---|-------------|
| <u>Wheelchair Transportation</u> Some volunteers and some residents who participate in The Book of Life wish to do so in a group setting. If you are going to share life stories as a group, you may need to help residents who are in wheelchairs be transported to a location in our facility. | 1 |
| <u>Communicating to Residents with Special Needs</u> As people age, all five senses become less acute. This section provides volunteers with tips on communicating to residents whose vision and hearing may be impaired. | 2 |
| <u>Listening Skills</u> Getting people to talk about their past starts with a commitment to being a good listener. | 3 |
| <u>Confidentiality</u> These important guidelines help to ensure that the information discussed by program participants is protected in accordance with Vincentian Collaborative System policies on confidentiality. | 4-5 |
| <u>2012 Book of Life Conversation Starters</u> Now, you're ready to get started! We've included some old photos to help spark those conversations, but feel free to consider using these same techniques with the photos a resident has in his or her room. | 6-11 |
| <u>Ice Breakers</u> There are no limitations to what you can learn and what our residents can share with you! Try these ice breakers to get the conversation started! | 12 |
| <u>Book of Life Contact Directory</u> | 13 |

Wheelchair Transportation

Speak to the resident. Introduce yourself and make sure she/he knows you are going to push the wheelchair before you begin any movement. Never surprise a person by coming up from behind and moving his/her wheelchair.

Feet must be on the footrests before you move the wheelchair. If they do not have footrests, ask the nursing staff to put them on.

Use lap throws as needed for women wearing dresses, making sure the throw and other clothing items do not get caught in the wheels.

Any type of tubing must be placed out of the way of the wheels.

Never escort a resident by pulling a wheelchair backward. The one exception would be when entering an elevator

When entering or exiting an elevator, allow other people to get off before entering.

Never push or pull more than one wheelchair at a time.

Always lock the wheels when "parking" a wheelchair or when a resident is transferring out of the wheelchair or going to stand. Do not help a resident into OR out of the wheelchair unless you have been instructed by nursing staff to do so.

Go slowly. There is a danger of running into other residents if you whiz down the hall. Do not cut corners.

Keep resident's arms and hands within the chair----watch elbows when rounding a corner.

Never let a wheelchair roll down an incline by itself or push and let go of the wheelchair. Your hands must always be on the hand rests of the chair.

Report unsafe or broken wheelchairs.

Avoid blocking doorways with empty wheelchairs.

Do not position a wheelchair in doorways or halls where someone may bump into it and fall.

Let the resident know when you are leaving him. Be sure the resident is within reach of a call button if no one is in the room with him.

If a resident gets up from a wheelchair and starts walking independently, encourage him/her to sit back in the wheelchair or walk with him/her until you can see someone who can assist the resident.

If the resident is sliding out of the wheelchair, anchor him/her until you can get an aide or nurse to reseat the resident.

Communicating to Residents with Special Needs

Visually Impaired

- Speak normally. There is no need to shout.
- Do not alter vocabulary. Words like “see” and “blind” are a normal part of speech.
- Use the resident’s name and a light touch to the arm when approaching.
- Speak promptly to let the resident know who is there and when someone leaves.
- Describe surrounds for the resident. Include positions of other people, furniture, weather, seasonal decorations, colors, etc. Unless blind from birth, these descriptions can bring happy memories.
- Speak before handing the resident an object. Explain the purpose and location of items such as food on a meal tray.
- Offer the resident your arm for assistance when walking. Pause before stairs, turns, etc. and mention them in advance.
- When seating the resident, place the resident’s hand on the back of the chair first so the resident knows his or her position.

Hearing Impaired

- Speak slowly and clearly, but not in an artificial manner.
- Use visual cues, such as direct eye contact and gestures. Help with the resident’s visual abilities with adequate lighting and clean eyeglasses.
- Face the resident to provide the opportunity for lip reading.
- Restate ideas with different words if the resident cannot understand.
- Always sit or speak toward the resident’s best ear.

Speech Impaired

- Ask questions that can be answered with a gesture such as a nod or blink.
- Speak to the resident as an adult, but do not speak loudly.
- Instead of asking the resident to repeat her/himself, use active listening techniques such as, “Are you saying that you wish to go back to your room?”
- Take time to listen and comprehend what the residents says instead of just smiling when you do not understand.

Disoriented

- Use a calendar, clock and clues from the environment to reinforce the time.
- Use familiar objects or people to reinforce place.
- Always use face-to-face communication.
- Address the resident by name and clearly state your name and purpose.
- Use short, simple instructions and give them slowly. Repeat if necessary, but do not shout.
- Reinforce and praise what the resident does well.
- Answer questions truthfully.
- Do not argue or try to correct residents.
- If a resident becomes agitated, demonstrate empathy by saying matter-of-factly, “I understand that you are upset”. Do not reprimand or dismiss their feelings.

Although many residents have physical limitations or disabilities, do not do for a resident what the resident can do for himself or herself. Always ask, “What can I do for you?” or “Would you like me to do that for you?” or “Would you like some help?”

Listening Skills

We all know people who are natural listeners or counselors. People we or others turn to in times of crisis. Here are some of the listening skills they employ:

Establish eye contact

This is the primary thing to do in every encounter. Eye contact opens the door through which we all communicate. Maintain this eye contact throughout the conversation.

Introduce yourself and begin to establish rapport

Briefly introduce yourself and the reason for you being present. When the individual starts to introduce themselves and let you know who they are, it is important to give them your full attention. Nod your head or sit in a manner that allows the person to know they are the focus of your world at this particular time. This assists in breaking down barriers at the onset of your time together.

Rephrase and reflect

It is always helpful to rephrase or reflect on what the individual has shared with you. Two things are accomplished when we do this, one it clarifies what the persons has said and it conveys your interest and empathy.

Allow Silence

Do not be afraid of silence. There are times when this is actually an essential part of the communication taking place. It is a time for gathering thoughts and deciding where to go next.

Never be Judgmental

You are talking to a friend who confides that he can't cope without a drink or two every day. Lecturing him about the "evils" of alcohol abuse will simply alienate him and he won't confide in you so quickly again. But telling him, "Boy, it must be hard to get through the day," will allow him to open up to you, relieved that you "understand." This doesn't mean that you are giving your blessing to his drinking – no one asked you for it. You are there as a friend. If he asks, "What should I do?" he's signaling that his drinking troubles him. This is a perfect opportunity for you to say that at some time in our lives we all need professional help.

Don't feel as if you need to fix things

What are people looking for when they talk to you? For the most part they want to be reassured that they are normal or that their feelings are valid. Fear sometimes makes people feel out of control or unable to cope. It's important to remember that our residents have years of experience in dealing with problems and hardships, and sometimes we have to remind them of their inner strength. If they are religious people, you may offer to pray with them. You might also offer to be a sounding board so that they can work out a solution. You are there to offer support and to understand that crying and expressing grief and anger are healthy ways of venting.

Accept Their Reality

The essence of good listening is to accept whatever we're told as that person's truth. It makes no difference if it jibes with our perception of reality. For that moment, for that second that we are let into his world of feelings, we must accept it as is.

Confidentiality

The Vincentian system and our member ministries believe confidentiality to be an essential component of quality healthcare. Vincentian Collaborative System (VCS) maintains a strict policy of confidentiality to safeguard the privacy of resident, employee, volunteer and organizational information. The policy applies to verbal, written and electronic communication.

Definitions:

Confidential Information means (1) resident personal demographic and medical information; (2) employee / volunteer demographic and medical information; and (3) organizational information not generally known and relating to the business activities of VCS.

All information related to those who receive volunteer care will be treated as confidential. "Confidential" means that any materials seen or heard while in service to VCS as a volunteer are not discussed or shared in any manner without the written consent of the individual.

VCS will maintain all volunteer records in a confidential manner. Volunteer names, addresses or other personal information will not be released to outside organizations and groups unless identified by the volunteer or with written permission by the volunteer.

Volunteers, groups and program partners shall be diligent in safeguarding resident's protected health information. Volunteers are also asked not to try to find out any medical information such as which doctor a resident is seeing, or what medications they are receiving. This may be more difficult than it sounds at first, because as we develop relationships with the residents, we begin to care for them deeply, and we want to make sure the best things are happening for them. We want to know that they are receiving the best possible medical care, and we want to make sure they are on the best medications. Unfortunately, however, this type of information is not appropriate for us to pursue, and we must focus primarily on the interpersonal needs of the residents.

More importantly, any information about health status, provision of health care, or payment for health care that can be linked to a specific individual is considered Protected Health Information (PHI). This is information that relates to the past, present or future physical or mental health or condition of a resident such as the medical record, lab test results, MARs which identifies the resident by name or which provides information that can be used to identify the resident (social security number, home address, phone number, etc.)

Do not share information that is discussed with a resident. Remember, to the patient, ALL information that they share with us is private. This includes all information that they provide in any format: spoken, written or electronic.

General Instructions:

1. Resident PHI (Protected Health Information) shall not be disclosed or shared with individuals or other entities unless there is signed authorization and/or it is for:
 - The treatment of the resident
 - The payment for resident care
 - The business operations of the facility
2. Conversations regarding PHI between volunteers that are not necessary for the treatment of a resident or for the payment of services are strictly prohibited.
3. The sharing of PHI will be the minimum necessary to provide optimum care.

Ensuring Resident Privacy

1. Patient records are confidential. Volunteers should not look up information or read information even if it has been left on a copier, fax machine or desk because this information is not required in order to fulfill any volunteer responsibilities.
2. Employees, volunteers, physicians, students and independent contractors shall be diligent in safeguarding resident's Protected Health Information (PHI) in a manner designed to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of such information.
3. Even if you notice changes to a resident's care, it is not acceptable to discuss or inquire about these. If you have general questions of how these changes relate to your volunteer duties, you may discuss these in private with a nurse.

Book of Life Stories

While "interviewing" a resident for the *Book of Life* program, volunteers may hear and record information that is personal and private. All facts, oral histories, accounts, or opinions expressed by the resident are collected by the volunteer for the sole purpose of this program and all written accounts made by the volunteers are the property of individual residents and their families. Only through expressed permission of the resident and/or families will Vincentian Collaborative System (VCS) use Book of Life stories.



Conversation Starter - Birthdays

Show the resident this photo. Ask the questions and record their answers on the next page. Feel free to let the conversation flow naturally.

Questions for discussions:

1. When is your birthday?
2. How do you usually celebrate your birthday?
3. What do you like most about birthdays?
4. Do you remember a special birthday party that you had? What made this celebration special?
5. Did your family have any special birthday traditions?
6. What was your favorite age? Why?
7. Do you recall special "milestone" birthdays – 18? 21? 40? What other birthdays are important?
8. Does life begin at 40? Why or why not?



Conversation Starter - Your First Car

Show the resident this photo. Ask the questions and record their answers on the next page. Feel free to let the conversation flow naturally.

Questions for discussions:

1. Describe your first car. Was it new or used?
2. How have cars changed since your first car?
3. Who taught you how to drive? How old were you?
4. What is the longest trip you made in a car? Who were you with?
5. What was your favorite car? Why did you like it so much?
6. Do you remember drive-in restaurants and drive-in movies?
7. What were the things you had to do to take care of your car? Were you a good mechanic or did you rely on someone else?
8. Did you drive anything else besides a car (motorcycle, tractor, etc.)? What did you like the most or the least?

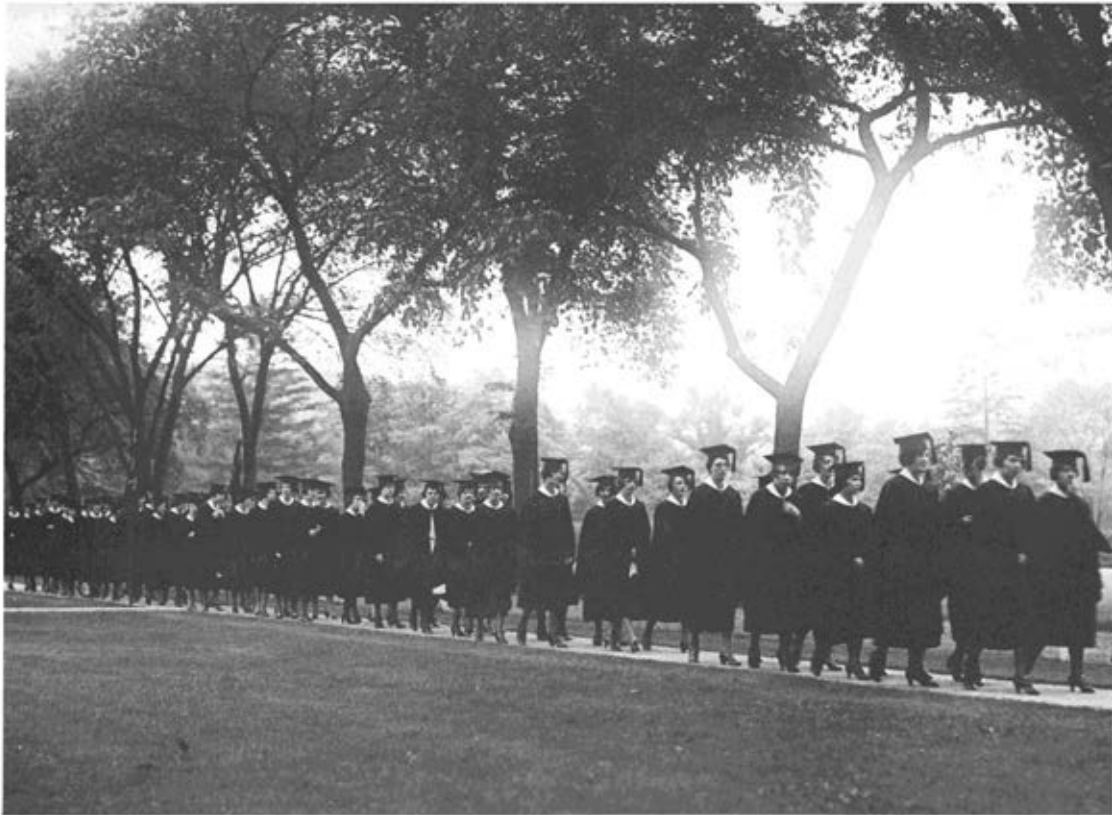


Conversation Starter - Homes

Show the resident this photo. Ask the questions and record their answers on the next page. Feel free to let the conversation flow naturally.

Questions for discussions:

1. Describe your first home. (Where was it located? What did it look like? Who lived there with you? How old were you?)
2. What did you like about that home?
3. Have you ever lived in the city? Have you ever lived in the country? Have you ever lived outside of the US?
4. How many homes have you lived in? Of these, which was your favorite? Why?
5. If you could live anywhere, where would it be?
6. Describe your dream home. How many rooms would it have? What special features would make it a dream home?



Conversation Starter - School Days

Show the resident this photo. Ask the questions and record their answers on the next page. Feel free to let the conversation flow naturally.

Questions for discussions:

1. Did you like school? Why or why not?
2. What subjects did you like best in school? Did you choose a career because of your favorite subjects?
3. What was your greatest educational achievement (graduating high school or college)? Why was this so special to you?
4. What did you do after high school or college?
5. What do you wish you'd learned in high school or college that you didn't?
6. Did you have a sweetheart in high school or college?
7. Have you ever gone to a high school or college reunion?
8. Did your children graduate high school or college? How important was this to you?



Conversation Starter - Jobs

Show the resident this photo. Ask the questions and record their answers on the next page. Feel free to let the conversation flow naturally.

Questions for discussions:

1. Describe your first job. How old were you? How did you apply for the job? Did you like your boss or co-workers?
2. Did your early employment help shape your future career or life in general? What job was the most interesting?
3. Describe other jobs you've held. Were any dangerous? Did any require traveling? What made each job enjoyable?
4. What was your chosen career? Why did you choose that line of work?
5. If you had to choose a career today, what would it be?
6. Describe your best boss. Why was he or she special? Describe your worst boss.
7. Did you ever turn a job offer down? Why?
8. What advice would you give a younger person about finding a job?



Conversation Starter - Pets

Show the resident this photo. Ask the questions and record their answers on the next page. Feel free to let the conversation flow naturally.

Questions for discussions:

1. Did you have a pet when you were a child? What type of pet was it? (If you didn't have a pet as a child, tell me about a pet you owned anytime in your life.)
2. What was the pet's name? How was that decided? Did the pet's name fit with their personality?
3. Could the pet do any tricks? What did you love most about the pet?
4. Where did the pet sleep? Did it stay indoors or sleep outside?
5. How did you care for the pet? How did you play with the pet?
6. If you could have any type of pet you wanted, what would it be? Why?
7. What makes pets so special?
8. Tell me about "pets" that you liked watching on movies, television or in the comics (Rin Tin Tin, Lassie, Sandy from Little Orphan Annie, etc.)



Book of Life Conversation Starter – Serving Our Country

Show the resident this photo or ask them to show you photos of themselves as either a member of the armed forces or as a family member of a soldier. We have provided two sets of questions to prompt discussion, but feel free to ask questions that come naturally as part of your conversation. Record the resident's answers on your laptop or notebook:

Did you serve in the armed forces?

Were you drafted or did you enlist? If you enlisted, why did you join?

Why did you pick the service branch you joined?

Do you recall your first days in service? What did it feel like?

Tell me about your boot camp/training experience(s). Do you remember your instructors?

Which war(s) did you serve in (WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf)?

Where exactly did you go?

What were some of the most challenging adjustments you had to make?

What was your job/assignment?

Did you see combat?

Tell me about a couple of your most memorable experiences.

Were you awarded any medals or citations?

How did you stay in touch with your family?

What was the food like?

Did you have plenty of supplies?

What did you do for fun?

Was there something special you did for "good luck"?

Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual event?

What did you think of officers or fellow soldiers?

Tell me about the relationships you made from your years in the service.

Did a loved one serve in the armed forces?

How did you feel when your loved one decided to join the armed forces?

What branch of the military did they join and why?

What was it like not having them around?

Were there any sacrifices that you had to make?

How did you stay in touch with them?

How did you support the troops while your loved one was in the military?

What were birthdays and holidays like when your loved one was away?

How much information about their assignment did they share with you?

Did this experience change you? How?

Did you make friends with other military families?

Book of Life Ice Breakers

You'll be amazed at the wealth of stories and experience that older adults can share. There is no limit to the memories that you can help preserve in our residents' Book of Life. Grab a notebook or laptop and enjoy yourself:

- How many brothers and sisters do you have? How were you alike or different?
- What is the one thing you were afraid of when you were a small child? What are you most afraid of now?
- If you could live your life over again, would you change anything?
- Where did you grow up?
- What song makes you feel happy?
- What is your favorite holiday? Why?
- Who was your best friend when you were growing up? Tell me about that person.
- If you could have any view in the world from your bed, what would it be?
- Looking back, if you could have been nicer to one person in your life, who would it be?
- What was the craziest (or dumbest) thing you ever did in your youth?
- If you had to describe yourself as a child in one word, what would it be?
- If you had to pick one thing in your life that turned out just as you expected it would, what would it be?
- Who chose your children's names?
- What is the most unexpected thing about how your life turned out?
- What one thing about your country makes you proudest?
- What was or is your favorite amusement park ride?
- What is meanest thing you ever did as a child?
- What are you most grateful for today?
- Who is the person you miss the most right now?
- What was the job that you enjoyed the most and the least?
- What are three things that bother you the most?
- What is the thing you know the most about?
- What is the best thing you ever tasted?
- Who is the most amazing woman you know, personally? Why?
- What is the least amount of money you'd have to have to consider yourself rich?
- What one thing would you most like to happen tomorrow?
- What is the thing that gives you the most joy in the world?
- When did you have the most fun in your life?
- What are you proud of that you have done in your life?
- What is the one invention that amazes you the most?
- What is something that no one knows about you?
- If the phone were ringing right now, who would you want it to be?
- What hidden talents do you wish you would have developed more?
- What places (cities or areas) have you lived or visited?
- If you could have had any job, what would you have liked to do?
- Describe a perfect day.
- How did you meet your closest friend? What is her/his name?
- What food do you never get tired of eating?
- What gives you the creeps?
- Do you like your first name? If not, what would you have changed it to?
- What makes you laugh?
- How are you like your mother? Your father?
- What 3 people (living or dead) would you like to have dinner with?
- Do you remember what were you doing when you heard (pick one) World War II ended? Pearl Harbor was attacked? JFK was shot?

| |
|---|
| Book of Life Contact Information |
|---|

Marian Manor

2695 Winchester Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15220

Contact:

Patty Robel
probel@vcs.org
412-440-4369

Vincentian de Marillac

5300 Stanton Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Contact:

Mollie Harper
mharper@vcs.org
412-361-2833 x 30

Vincentian Home

111Perrymont Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Contact:

Marleen Dean
mdean@vcs.org
412-366-5246

Vincentian Home Personal Care

111Perrymont Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Contact:

Kathy McKinney
kmckinney@vcs.org
412-348-2372

Vincentian Regency

9399 Babcock Blvd.
Allison Park, PA 15101

Contact:

Denise Calkins
dcalkins@vcs.org
412-366- 8540 X 129



VINCENTIAN
Communities and Services