



Grace Wu, Volunteer Coordinator

DEVOTED VOLUNTEERS
POWER SALINE MAIN
STREET AND BRING
ABOUT INCLUSIVE
VIBRANCE DOWNTOWN

Photos and Story by Phil Eich,
Storyville Social, as part of the
Michigan Main Street Story
Series

I'm an administrator for the A. Alfred Taubman Medical Research Institute at the University of Michigan. We support physician scientists—those are people with MD PhDs who do clinical work and see patients, and they also have laboratories and do research. I came here from California to go to U of M, and I've been with the university since graduating in 2002. I got a temporary job at the university, then went back to grad school, but never really left U of M.

I met my husband in 2008—we've been married for 11 years, and we have three kids. We've lived in Saline for all of that time, and we moved here just before we got married.

We really fell in love with Saline. We liked the mix of people and decided this was

going to be our home and where we wanted to raise our family. It's funny, because our first date was at Mac's, right at the corner, and now we live a block away. Even though Ann Arbor is so close, it was my first time in Saline, so I was like, 'What is this Saline place?' I'd never even heard of Saline—partly because I didn't have a car when I was in college, so I really didn't go outside of town.

I got involved with Saline Main Street when we moved downtown seven years ago. I was on the website one day looking around at the City of Saline downtown, and I found Saline Main Street. From there, I decided to volunteer and then became volunteer coordinator. For the different Saline Main Street events, I work with the chair for each event to see what the needs

are, then go out and find people for those positions. A lot of times, it's just sending out emails to our loyal volunteers. I've also gone to different events and recruited people.

In order for our events to be successful and free to the public, we really need people to volunteer. Some events, like Oktoberfest, are a few days long and take thousands of hours. Or there are smaller events that last just a couple of hours—like Trunk or Treat—but there is a lot of planning beforehand and work to be done afterwards.

With volunteering, there are opportunities for different people, and I think that's what's so great about this—it's very inclusive. We have almost 500 people on our volunteer listserv. Sometimes people can't volunteer for an event one week, but they can for another. Some people can't walk around and lift things or set up a stage, but they may be happy to sell raffle tickets or check other people into different positions. It just depends on what you want to do and how much you

"WE WANT EVERYONE TO FEEL LIKE THERE'S A PLACE FOR THEM IF THEY WANT TO LIVE HERE, OR IF THEY WANT TO VISIT OR WORK HERE."

want to be involved.

I'm also part of the DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) committee for the City of Saline. As a task force for Saline, we get a little bit of funding from them. We want to partner with community members and businesses and make everyone aware that we're here to support them. Our community thrives on having people come to our city to enjoy dining, shopping or going to events here, so for me, the idea of having a welcoming, inclusive community is directly translated into success for our community. People feel welcomed and know this is a safe place to visit.

We have a lot of initiatives going on, like we're starting a book club in the fall that will meet once a month specifically about DEI-related books. We've also had the LGBTQ Pride Month flag raising ceremony down at City Hall. We've had picnics where we sell cookbooks or different ethnic foods, and some of it is just working with the schools or providing educational opportunities for community and business members and things like that.

At the end of the day, DEI is a human issue. It's about gaining access for everyone. We want everyone to feel like there's a place for them if they want to live here, or if they want to visit or work here. Personally, I would like to see Saline thrive because we have a really great town with really great people. I would like to see everyone feel welcomed and included here.

—Grace Wu, Volunteer Coordinator for Saline Main Street





Michigan Main Street Story Series



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION