SILVEI COLD

Student Manual https://silvercord.wdmcs.org Updated April 2021

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https://www.wdmcs.org/silvercord #wdmcssilvercord

What is the Silver Cord program?

Program Overview

The Silver Cord program began at Valley High School in the fall of 2001 as a graduation incentive program to promote a lifetime of community service. A silver cord is given at graduation to West Des Moines Community Schools (WDMCS) seniors who complete program requirements.

WDMCS Community Education coordinates the Silver Cord program districtwide. Over 800 students from Valley, Valley Southwoods, and Walnut Creek Campus have earned this award by volunteering. All WDMCS high school students are encouraged to participate!

Why should a student participate?

The purpose of the Silver Cord program is to promote volunteerism and encourage students to experience the joy of giving back to the community. Volunteering is valuable use of time, fosters the exploration of career interests, supports students seeking employment and college admission, and gives new graduates confidence to serve in leadership roles after high school.

When can a student start volunteering to earn the award?

All WDMCS students are eligible to participate in the Silver Cord Program beginning the summer following eighth grade. To earn the Silver Cord Award, high school students must volunteer a minimum of 50 hours for three or more non-profits during every year of high school.

The Silver Cord year runs from June 1-May 31, with the exception of senior year, which ends May 1.

How does a student sign-up?

Starting May 1, incoming freshmen can complete the online application to set up their Silver Cord account. The application can be found on the WDMCS Community Education website (https://www.wdmcs.org/starting_sc) and is located under "Service" and then "Silver Cord."

Once the application has been submitted, students will receive an email with information on how to log in to their online account.

Students can start volunteering and submitting hours online for credit for the next school year beginning **June 1**. Hours submitted before June 1 for the next school year will be denied.

Students who would like to participate in the Silver Cord program who are <u>not</u> incoming freshmen will need to contact the Silver Cord coordinator.

How does a student find out about volunteer opportunities?

The best place to find out about volunteer opportunities is on the WDMCS Community Education website, where new service opportunities are posted several times each month and are well-suited for high school students. See pages 8-9 for more information.

Guidelines

- The official Silver Cord calendar year runs from June 1 to May 31, with the exception of senior year, which ends on May 1.
- Each student needs to volunteer a minimum of 50 hours per year.
- Each student must volunteer at three different non-profit organizations per year. Examples include but are not limited to: schools, local or state government, church, and community events.
- Volunteering at home—for family, extended family, or neighbors, with the permission of a parent—qualifies as one of the three required organizations. Students may volunteer at home for no more than 10 hours each year.
- Hours are credited by 15 minute intervals, with a limit of eight hours per day. Submitted hours may not include time for travel, breaks, meals, recreation, or sleeping.
- Submitting hours:
 - Students have 30 days from the last date of service to submit hours.
 - Submit hours for ongoing service opportunities monthly, within 30 days of the last date of service that month. Please report these hours in the "description of service" field on the online submission form; see page 11 for details.
 - Hours submitted after 30 days are awarded at half credit.
 - No credit will be given for hours that are submitted six months or more after the last day of service.
- It is each student's responsibility to check their online account to view their status and messages from the Silver Cord coordinator. Messages will appear as blue links on the student's dashboard.
- Students must document all service hours via the Silver Cord online system.
- Seniors must submit all requests for credit no later than May 1. Failure to do so will result in not receiving the Silver Cord award at Senior Honors Night.
- All of the service opportunities posted on the Silver Cord webpage have already been approved and will be listed (along with all prior preapproved activities) in the dropdown menu for the student to choose from when submitting their hours for credit online.
- If a service opportunity is NOT on the list, the activity must be preapproved before a request for credit can be submitted. This can be done by filling out a preapproval request through the student's online account.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Hours

Acceptable Hours

- Acceptable hours must provide a service or meet a clear need for a non-profit agency, church, school, park, senior living community, charity program, day care center, or community event.
- Up to 10 hours each year may be earned volunteering for family at home.
- Accepted religious activities include, but are not limited to: participating with Sunday/Wednesday school, Vacation Bible School, confirmation class, babysitting during religious services, working on a sound crew, recording/videotaping a service, or mission trips.

Unacceptable Hours

- Unacceptable hours include:
 - Valley High School and Valley Southwoods Freshman High School sport team managing or training
 - Service work for a group as part of your membership obligation
 - Hours earned to satisfy a class requirement
 - Rehearsing
 - Working from home
 - Walking/running/dancing/sleeping in a marathon or fundraiser (Valley High School Dance Marathon is exempt from this rule and may be counted)
 - Hours used for confirmation or other church membership requirements
 - Boy Scout Advancement
 - Participating in a march, rally, or walkout
- Silver Cord hours may not be directly involved with rituals, services, or ceremonies of any specific religion. Examples of invalid activities include, but are not limited to: singing in the choir, candle lighting, reading from religious texts, altar service, ushering, or passing out programs.
- Silver Cord hours cannot be earned while working for a for-profit business, country club, or while working for pay or compensation of any kind.
- Outside of at-home service hours, Silver Cord supervisors should not be immediate family members.

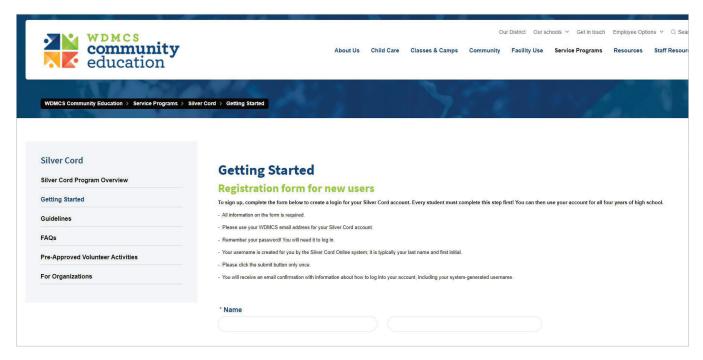
Process Overview

- Student signs up and establishes an online account by filling out the online application. Once the account is created, the student is able to log in and review their Silver Cord dashboard. The account is good for all four years of the program.
- 2. Student logs into Silver Cord Online and can view their dashboard, update their profile, enter preapprovals, submit hours for credit, and read important messages.
- 3. Student views the volunteer opportunities webpage or the "Organization-Activity" drop-down menu located on the "Submit Activity for Credit" form within their Silver Cord online account to select a service opportunity. If student is interested in a service opportunity that is not listed, the student requests a preapproval BEFORE they participate in the service opportunity. This step is required for every service opportunity that is NOT already in the "Organization-Activity" drop-down menu. Students will not be able to submit their hours for credit if the service opportunity is not preapproved.
- 4. Student participates in the service opportunity. At the end of their service, student should obtain the site supervisor's name, email address, and phone number. It is imperative to the process that the correct contact information is obtained. Submitting incorrect information will slow down the approval process and may prevent receiving credit for the hours completed.
- 5. Student submits hours for credit using the online system within 30 days from the last date of service. Once the form is submitted, an automatically generated email is sent to the site supervisor. The status of the student's service opportunity is marked pending on the student's dashboard and will stay as pending until it is approved by **both** the site supervisor and the Silver Cord coordinator. This process is not immediate and may take several weeks.
- 6. Site supervisor approves or denies the student's request via the online form included in the email they receive. They have the option to leave comments. If an incorrect email address is submitted, the supervisor will be unable to receive the submission for credit and will be unable to approve the student's hours.
- 7. Silver Cord coordinator reviews the submission for credit and approves or denies the request and has the option to leave comments. If submission is denied, there will be a message with an explanation for the denial. The student has the option to resubmit with corrected or updated information. It is each student's responsibility to check their online account to view important account information, including messages from the Silver Cord coordinator.
- 8. The system automatically updates student's hours.
- 9. Once a volunteer activity has been submitted and is visible on the student dashboard, no additional action is needed. If an activity is still pending after four months, please contact the Silver Cord coordinator.

Signing Up for Silver Cord and Acquiring an Online Account

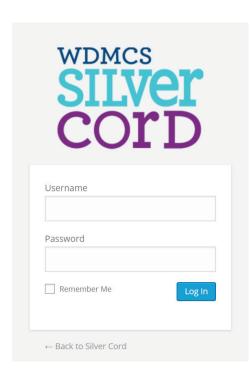
Every Silver Cord student needs to begin by filling out the Silver Cord registration form. Find this form on the WDMCS Community Education's website at: https://www.wdmcs.org/starting_sc

Filling out the Silver Cord registration form will officially sign you up for the Silver Cord program and create your account in the Silver Cord Online system.



Page view of the Silver Cord registration form on the WDMCS Community Education website

- 1. All the information on the form is required.
- 2. Choose an email address that you check regularly. This email address will be associated with your student account and used to communicate with you throughout the duration of your participation in Silver Cord.
- 3. Password—Remember this, as you will need it to log in to the online system. Your user name is created for you by the system, typically your last name and first initial.
- 4. Freshman Starting Year
 - 2020 = graduation year 2024
 - 2021 = graduation year 2025
 - 2022 = graduation year 2026
 - 2023 = graduation year 2027
- 5. Click the submit button once.
- 6. You will receive an email confirmation with information on how to log in to your account, including your system-generated user name. Write down this information down if you need help remembering it.



Logging In To Your Account

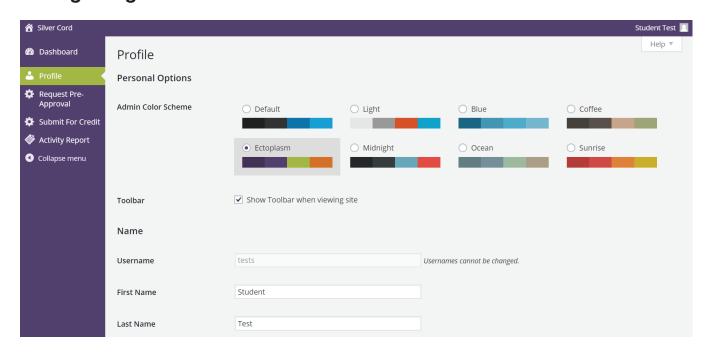
Log in to the application at:

http://silvercord.wdmcs.org/wp-login

or access it through the WDMCS Community Education website at https://wdmcs.org/commed. Click on "Service Programs" and select "Silver Cord" from the options on the Service Programs main page. This will take you to the Silver Cord Program Overview page. From here, you can access Silver Cord Online from the vertical menu on the left side of the page or under the heading "Silver Cord Resources."

- Username—Typically last name and first initial (the system generates this for you)
- Password—You determine this when you set up your account.

Navigating Silver Cord Online

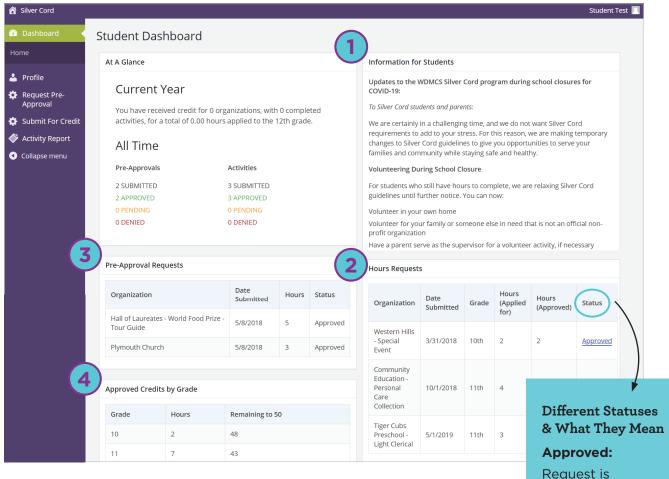


Profile—the first page you will see when you login. Here you can:

- Review and edit your basic profile and contact information
- Get creative and change the color scheme
- Change your freshman starting year if entered incorrectly
- Change your password

Dashboard

Your student dashboard is a great place to find useful information about Silver Cord and your hours and preapprovals. Check out our numbered guide (below) to navigate it!



1. Information for Students

Current information regarding the Silver Cord program will be posted here. Check this spot every time you log into your account.

2. Hours Requests

- Listed in chronological order by date with a status of pending, approved, or denied.
- Hover your cursor over any status link in <u>blue and underlined</u> to see Silver Cord Coordinator comments.
- If you need to respond to the Silver Cord coordinator, you may do so through email or by stopping into the office.

3. Preapproval Requests

- Listed in chronological order by date.
- Hover your cursor over any status link in <u>blue and underlined</u> (i.e., approved or denied) to see coordinator comments.

4. Approved Credits by Grades

View awarded credit activity per grade. You will see information that displays the remaining credit balance.

approved and there is nothing further to do.

Denied:

Request is denied. See notes as to why, and resubmit if applicable

Pending:

Submission is still being processed by either the activity site supervisor or the Silver Cord Coordinator

Finding a Preapproved Service Opportunity

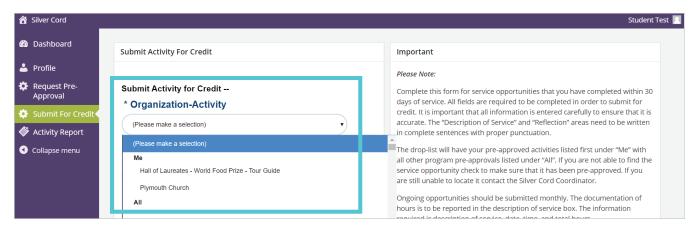
Preapproved service activities are activities that are **already approved** by the Silver Cord program. All preapproved activities can be found in one of two places: the Silver Cord online system or the WDMCS Community Education website.

The activity listed has to be the exact service opportunity in which you are to participate. Not every opportunity at every organization has been preapproved. When in doubt, contact the Silver Cord coordinator.

Finding Preapproved Service Opportunities within Silver Cord Online

Best for: finding independent (not event-based) activities, activities throughout the year

- 1. Login to Silver Cord Online.
- 2. Select the the "Submit for Credit" form on the left side of the page.
- 3. Click the "Organization-Activity" drop-down menu to open a complete list of preapproved activities. Activities are listed by Organization Name-Name of Activity.



Finding Preapproved Service Opportunities on the WDMCS Community Education Website

Best for: finding upcoming or new preapproved service opportunities

- 1. Visit the WDMCS Community Education website at https://www.wdmcs.org/commed
- 2. Hover your cursor over the "Service" option in the menu at the top of the page. When the drop-down menu opens, select "Silver Cord."

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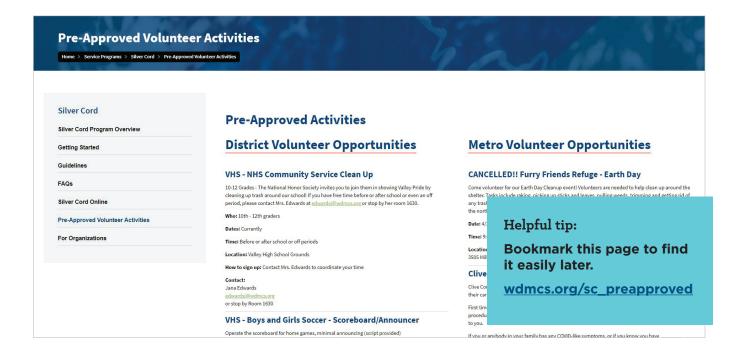
3. When you arrive on the Silver Cord home page, select "Pre-Approved Volunteer Activities" from the "Silver Cord" menu on the left side of the page.



- 4. The "Pre-Approved Volunteer Activities" link will take you to the Pre-Approved Activities page. There, volunteer opportunities are divided into two columns:
 - WDMCS District Volunteer Opportunities
 - Metro Area Volunteer Opportunities

Newly-created volunteer opportunities are listed first.

If an activity that you are interested in is not listed in one of these two places, you must submit a request for a new preapproval (see next page).



Requesting a Pre-Approval

All service opportunities posted on the WDMCS Community Education website are already approved. Service opportunities listed in the "*Organization-Activity" drop-down menu (in the "Submit for Credit" form in Silver Cord Online) are also already approved. If a service activity is NOT listed in one of these two places, you must request a new pre-approval for it.

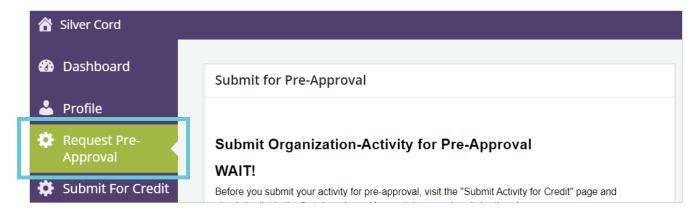
It is the <u>student's responsibility</u> (not the organization's) to secure preapproval before participating in an activity. You otherwise take the chance of having your hours denied. You will not be able to submit your hours for credit if your service opportunity has not been preapproved, because it will not be a choice in the drop-down menu.

You only have to be preapproved for a service opportunity once. However, if you volunteer at the same organization with a different activity, that activity will need to be preapproved separately (if it is not already approved).

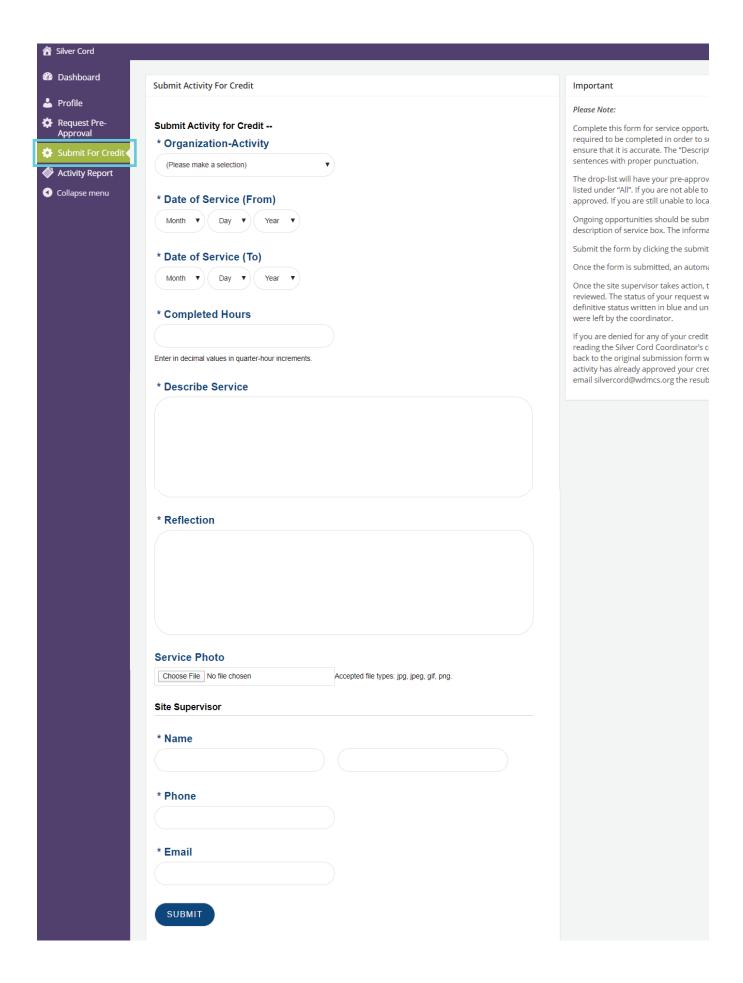
Proceed <u>only</u> if an activity is <u>NOT</u> listed on the WDMCS Community Education website or in the "*Organization-Activity" drop-down menu of the "Submit for Activity Credit" form located in your online account.

How to Request a Pre-Approval

- 1. Log in to Silver Cord Online.
- 2. Select the "Request a Pre-Approval" form from the menu on the left side of the page.



- 3. Fill out the form, completing as much information as possible. The description of service opportunity should contain enough information for the Silver Cord coordinator to make an informed decision.
- 4. The request will default to a 'pending' status on your dashboard upon initial submission.
- 5. The Silver Cord coordinator will review your request within three business days. The status of your request will update automatically on your dashboard. You may hover the mouse over any status link in blue and underlined (i.e., approved or denied) to read any comments that were left by the coordinator.
- 6. Please respond to any questions from the Silver Cord coordinator about the requested preapproval via email; you cannot respond directly to a question within the online system. The Silver Cord coordinator will then approve or deny the requested preapproval.
- 7. If any of your preapprovals are denied, you must create a new request with the updated or new information if requested by the Silver Cord coordinator. If an issue cannot be dealt with in the system, please contact the Silver Cord coordinator by email, phone, or in person.
- 8. Once the activity is approved, you may participate in the service opportunity.



Participating in the Service Opportunity

- When you volunteer, you must obtain the site coordinator's name, phone number, and email. Please note that this person might be different than the person you signed up with. If the correct email in not submitted, your supervisor will not receive the email approval request and cannot approve your hours.
- Students should tell the supervisor they will be receiving an email and will be asked to
 approve or deny the request. It is beneficial for the student to submit hours for credit
 shortly after they volunteer.

Submitting Hours for Approval

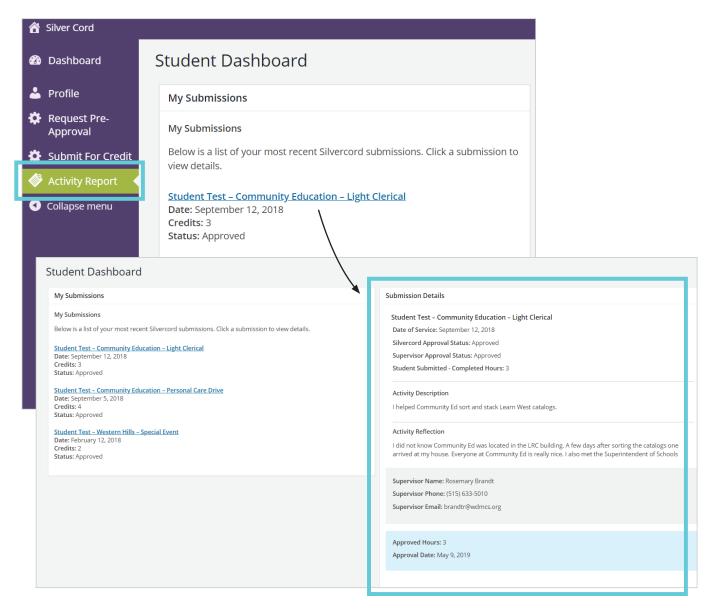
- 1. Log in to Silver Cord Online.
- 2. Select the "Submit for Credit" form from the menu on the left side of the page.

Helpful Tips for Submitting Hours

- The "Organization-Activity" drop-down menu will have your preapproved activities listed first under "Me" with all other activities listed further down under "All."
- The preapproved activity you select must be an **exact match** for the activity you completed; <u>similar matches will not be accepted</u>. Failure to select an exact match will result in a denial of request, and the hours submitted will not be counted. If you are not able to find the activity on the drop-down, you must submit a preapproval.
- All fields are required to be completed in order to submit for credit. It is important that all information is entered carefully to ensure that it is accurate.
- Smile! Take photos while you are volunteering and upload them when you submit your hours. The photos will be used on social media and/or website.
- You must submit all hours for credit within 30 days of service being completed.
- Submit ongoing activities monthly within 30 days of the last date of service that month. If you have volunteered for the same activity multiple times in a month, please list each occasion of service, with the date, start and end times, and number of hours. You can list this information in the "Describe Service" field.
- Once the hours have been submitted, an automatically generated email will be sent to the site supervisor. The system will default to a "Pending" status upon initial submission.
- Once the site supervisor approves or denies the request, the Silver Cord coordinator will be notified, and they will review your submission.
- The submission status wil remain as "Pending" until **both** the site supervisor and the Silver Cord coordinator have approved or denied the hours. If the supervisor's email is incorrect, the hours will remain as "Pending" until the correct email address is provided.
- As soon as the submission has been approved or denied by the Silver Cord coordinator, the status will automatically update on your dashboard. Hover your cursor over any status <u>linked</u> <u>in blue and underlined</u> (i.e., approved or denied) to see comments left by the coordinator.
- If your credit request is denied, you may resubmit the request by hovering over the status, reading the Silver Cord coordinator's comment, and clicking on the link to resubmit this activity. This will take you back to the original submission form where you can update the needed information.
- If the issue cannot be dealt with in the system, please contact the Silver Cord coordinator by email, phone, or in person.

Activity Report

The Activity Submission Information allows you to view some of your past submissions. Click on the "Activity Report" tab and it will take you to a list of your most recent Silver Cord activity submissions. You can then click on the individual submissions and view even more information. Please note that you are not able to edit your submission, and you will need to contact the Silver Cord coordinator to make any updates.



Changing or Resetting Your Password

If you need to change your password, you should log in to your account and change it in the profile tab of the dashboard.

If you have forgotten your password and need it reset, please contact the Sliver Cord coordinator via email. Once you receive confirmation that your password has been reset, you will need to log in to your account with the temporary password provided and change it to something you will remember. Do not keep the temporary password that was given to you.

Things to Remember

- The Silver Cord coordinator works 15 hours a week and even fewer in the summer months. Preapprovals will be reviewed within three business days, and credit for hours submitted will be reviewed and approved within two weeks.
- All service opportunities posted on the WDMCS Community Education website are
 already approved. Service opportunities listed in the "Organization-Activity" drop-down
 menu (in the "Submit for Credit" tab in Silver Cord Online) are also already approved.
 If a service activity is NOT listed in one of these two places, you must
 request a new pre-approval for it.
- You will NOT be able to submit your hours for credit until the opportunity has been preapproved. This will also prevent any misunderstanding of qualifying hours.
- Make sure to select the correct activity from the drop-down list when submitting hours. Credit will not be awarded if the description and activity do not match.