



July 2022

Travelers Aid Activities Report

Washington Reagan
National Airport



Prepared by Travelers Aid-DCA

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Highlights

Travelers Aid volunteers assisted **49,710** passengers and provided **1,677.5 hours** of service for the month of July 2022.

10 new volunteer applicants attended orientations conducted on July 5th, 10th, and the 19th. They are currently working their way through our training process.

Long time Program Manager, **Leanne Omland**, has retired. Leanne spent 8-1/2 years with Travelers Aid at Reagan National. And 3 years prior to that with Travelers Aid at Dulles Airport. She and her husband will spend time traveling the country with their cute dog in tow.

Tina Mally has returned to Reagan National Airport as the new Program Manager. Tina began her time with Travelers Aid here in 2017, then spent almost 4 years as Assistant Program Manager for Travelers Aid at Dulles. She is incredibly happy to be back at DCA!

Korea West intern, **Junghyo 'Jamie' Song**, has completed her internship in America with our program. Jamie came to the program with a desire to improve her English skills and gain valuable airport experience to work towards her career goal of becoming an airline host for an international airline. Upon her completion here, she stated that her experience was “unforgettable”, that she “learned a lot” and would “not change anything” about her experience.



Scenes from the Travelers Aid Desks

Maggie Rindler and Amy Prahar, 4th of July

First off, the highest of praise needs to go to Travelers Aid volunteer, Amy Prahar, who had the shift just before mine and Airport Police Officer Garcia-Cruz. Without their interest and care, I can't imagine that this situation would have ended so positively.

Shortly after I reported for my 6:00 p.m. shift, Amy came to the desk with a young woman she'd been helping. It seemed the young woman had been ticketed from Mexico City, with a change of planes in Dallas where she boarded her flight to Ronald Reagan National. Unfortunately, she was supposed to go to Seattle, Washington.

Amy took great care of the young woman whose name is Marisol. To add to the difficulty Marisol spoke no English. With Marisol under her wing, Amy got her food, walked Marisol around to let her get her bearings and located a flight for early tomorrow morning. I understood from Amy that there were a number of difficulties in communication but with the help of the translating service Amy was able to get the information about the next morning's flight relayed to Marisol and her family in Mexico and Seattle.

Therefore, pending her family buying her ticket, Marisol was to spend the night in the airport and be at the airline desk when they opened. In the meanwhile, Amy had to leave and asked me to check on the young woman who was going to spend the night on the ticketing level.

About 8:45 p.m., Amy called to see how Marisol was doing but I hadn't gone up yet. A short time later, I found Marisol near the United counter and was able to ask her about the purchase of her ticket. She said she was still waiting to hear from family. In chatting with her, I came to realize that she was 17 years old and had no funds whatever on her. She had a US passport, her cell phone and hand luggage but not much else. Furthermore, she couldn't remember what airline she came in on.

As I waited with her, Marisol's family called and told us they were in the process of buying her a ticket. I asked them to make sure the ticket was from DCA and they confirmed that they would do so. Sometime later her mother called back and said they found a ticket from DCA departing in the morning, but they were having problems; it seems the airline would not allow a minor to board without the presence of a parent or guardian. As we were communicating, her family was in the process of trying to figure out what to do next.

We were about to head to the counter to see if the purchase of the ticket and travel authorization issues could be resolved when I saw Officer Garcia-Cruz going by (call him the Segway Saint, or Airport Angel – take your pick). I stopped him and asked if he knew if the airline counter was still open as the walk from one end of the airport to the other carrying Marisol's heavy belongings would be somewhat difficult. He kindly went to the counter and speedily returned to tell us that they were in the process of closing. It turned out that he also spoke Spanish which further facilitated communication.

We relayed to Officer Garcia-Cruz that Marisol's family was trying to buy her ticket and attempting to resolve the issue of her being an unaccompanied minor, and that in any event she wouldn't be able to leave until the following day thereby necessitating her spending the night at the airport. Officer Garcia-Cruz (despite already having worked 16 hours) had the presence of mind to ask if she still had the ticket/boarding pass that got her to DCA. She located these among her belongings

Officer Garcia-Cruz immediately recognized that the airline could assist with this and went with us to the counter. Even though they were closed, he was able to get the attention of the agent.

The airline quickly assisted in adjusting the flight. First, they scheduled Marisol for a morning flight through Chicago where she will change planes for a Seattle-bound flight. They then made arrangements for Marisol to stay in the secure unaccompanied minors' facility in the airport. They said she would be accompanied all night and tomorrow morning would be escorted through security and to her gate. Since she must change planes in Chicago, they said that arrangements were made for airline staff to meet her at the arrival gate and walk her to her departure gate.

After a few tears and a round of hugs, we watched as Marisol was accompanied by an airline employee to the secure location for the night.

I can't stress what an anxiety-ridden experience this was for Marisol and I'm loathe to imagine what could have happened had not Amy and Officer Garcia-Cruz stepped in. Somehow, they need to be recognized for having gone way above and beyond the call.

Cheryl Robinson, Greg Snyder, 4th of July

Cheryl took a phone call from a woman calling from Rhode Island whose husband had flown out of Reagan that morning. He had called his wife from the plane saying he had left his wallet sitting on a chair at the gate. Cheryl immediately volunteered to go out to the gate area and the wallet was on the chair! Cheryl brought the wallet back to the Checkpoint and the caller arranged to have a family friend come to the airport and pick it up. Mission accomplished!

Phyllis Talbert, 7/6

Working at Checkpoint South this morning, a guy approached me asking where he could get coffee.

He told me he flew in yesterday but didn't get on his connection because he had a panic attack on the first flight. He is under a doctor's care. He didn't want to cause a commotion on the next flight because he feared getting on the no fly list. He tried to rent a car but none of the companies would do a one way to Norfolk.

I counseled him to go over to Terminal 1, have some coffee and breakfast and think about what to do next, then come back so we could come up with a plan.

He returned about 9:00. In the meantime, I was considering alternatives for him. In the end, I wrote out directions for getting on the Metro to Union Station and escorted him to the Metro Station to help buy a fare card. I also wrote out directions for the 2:35 direct train to Norfolk. He felt he was too tired and anxious to drive even if he could get a car.

Very grateful passenger.

Tammy Gore, 7/29

A very distraught woman arrived at the South Checkpoint desk asking for assistance regarding a Delta ticket she purchased over the phone from a third party vendor. She was to fly out in 2 days but

did not have any ticket information. She only had the phone number and name of the person she spoke with. No business name, no ticket number. When asked how she came to find the number, she said she went to the first number she googled.

I was worried she may have gotten scammed. I called the number and was happy someone answered. After speaking with a couple different people, I was able to get her ticket number. While still on the phone, I cross checked the ticket number on Delta's website. It didn't come up. It was then discovered her name was misspelled on the ticket. Tried again with the misspelled name and it came up, she did have a ticket!

Spoke with the agent about making a note on the ticket about her name so that she wouldn't have issues when she checked in. After the call, I directed her to the Delta service counter to ensure all was well with the notation on the ticket.

She was very thankful and appeared relieved.

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Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Mark Moscato



Mark moved from Buffalo, New York to Annandale, Virginia after completing his Master of Business Administration at the University of Buffalo. He admits that a big part of the decision to move was for better weather!

He worked as head of HR for a German software company and remained there for 29 years until his retirement in 2019. During that time, he also volunteered for the DC Central Kitchen for 18 yrs. Upon retirement, not one to remain idle, he started searching for more volunteer opportunities. A fellow volunteer at the DC Central Kitchen--also a volunteer for Travelers Aid-DCA, Larry Lee, told him to check us out. He did and since joining us in 2019, he's also recruited another new volunteer!

In addition to his volunteer work at Travelers Aid, he also volunteers with Signature Theater, Synetic Theater, the Medical Reserve Corps of VA, the City Open Tennis Tournament, a food bank, as a VA elections officer and ushers at the Kennedy Center.

Even with all this, when asked about what accomplishment he is most proud of, he stated it was his 3 week solo trekking trip through New Zealand that he took right after he retired.

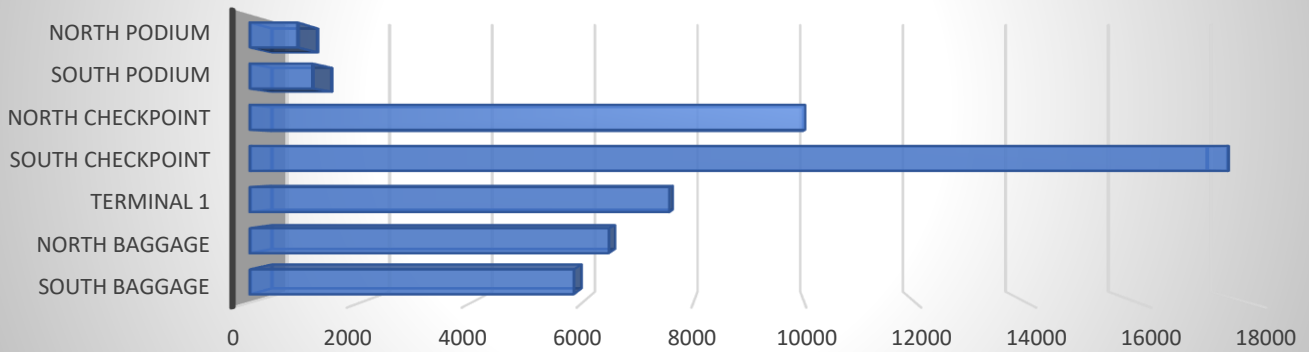
"Have you any insight or guidance that you would share with other volunteers to improve or support their experience?"

People come to you because they're confused and looking for a friendly face for guidance. Sometimes they're hurried, you may not get a thank you, but when you get one it makes you feel like you made a difference in someone's life that day.

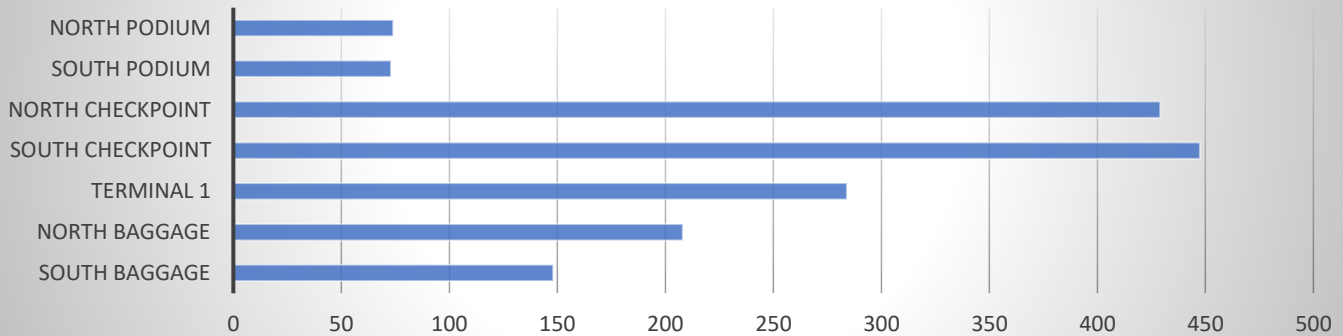
What's your most memorable Travelers Aid moment?

"While working at North Checkpoint, a woman came through the doors from the post-secure area pushing her wheelchair. She came to the desk and said she thinks she needs to buy a new phone and asked where to go. I asked why she needed to buy a phone, and she said she lost hers. Turns out she had wheelchair service to her gate but then came out with it when she realized she didn't have her phone. I asked her to wait while I go check the TSA checkpoint. It was not there. Then I saw she had an iPad in her bag. I asked to use it for the 'find my phone' feature. Turns out she left her phone at home! I called her friend who had a key to her house. The friend said she would bring it to the airport. I gave her directions to parking garage 2 and told her to call me when she got there, and I would pick up the phone. In the meantime, I asked the woman to have a seat in her wheelchair and pushed her back to her gate. I told her I would bring her the phone but that it's better she waits by her gate. When the friend arrived, I went to the parking garage to meet her, got the phone, then took the phone to the gate. When I got there, she had the BIGGEST smile on her face".

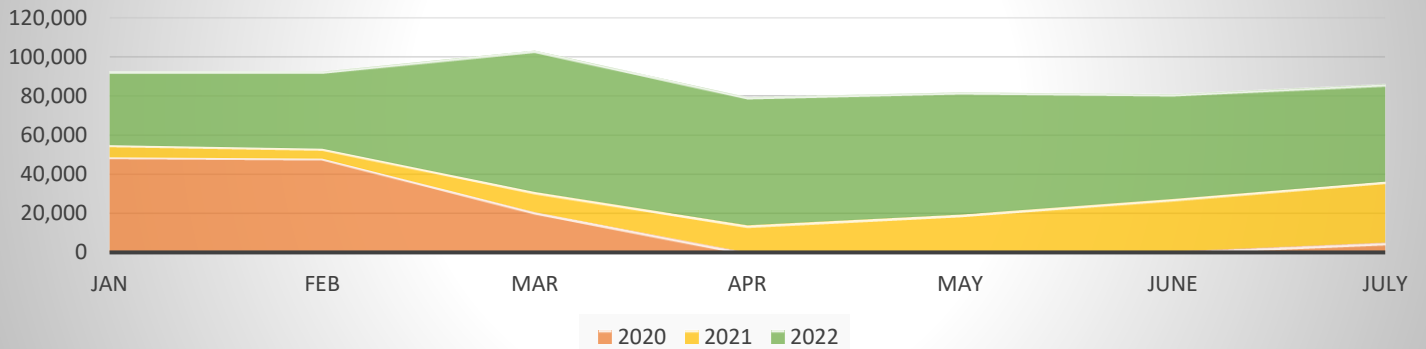
Passenger Assists by Location Total 49,710



Hours Served Per Location Total 1677.5 hours



Passenger Assists, January-July 2020, 2021, 2022



End of Report.