



February 2019

Journeys

A monthly newsletter of Travelers Aid International

THE VOLUNTEERS' EDITION

In this edition:

- Board begins crafting new strategic plan
- New *Impressive* feature
- Member news

About this Newsletter

This new Volunteers' Edition of *Journeys* is an effort to keep you, our volunteers at our 43 members and service locations, informed about the larger world of Travelers Aid International. The volunteers edition will feature stand-out volunteer assistance stories from each contributing member. We will select the best example of a volunteer going above and beyond for publication in our monthly members and new donors editions.

If you do not want to receive future newsletters, please let us know by writing to info@travelersaid.org. In the subject line, write: Unsubscribe - Volunteers Edition.

Thoughts from the President's Desk



I am writing to you in my third week as your President. I am very excited to be here and for the challenge of leading this wonderfully complicated, interesting, impactful, and long-standing (dare I say old?) organization. I am beginning to meet staff and volunteers, and I am tremendously impressed with the caliber, enthusiasm, and commitment I have encountered everywhere I have visited. The staff and volunteers are TAI's greatest asset; I am so fortunate to have been chosen to work with all of you—staff, volunteers, and members. Together there's nothing we can't accomplish.

In the coming weeks I will be concentrating on learning all I can about what we do and how we do it. I will work to meet and get to know all of TAI's staff members — I can't stress enough how fortunate TAI is to have this amazing team of people. And then, in my spare time, I will begin visiting as many member agencies as possible. How handy that I love to travel!

I would love to hear your thoughts and ideas about TAI. My door (proverbial,

virtual, and actual) is open. Come on in! *Kathleen*

While at JFK, I had a chance to meet Larry Zeluck, a 14-year volunteer!

Board to Start Charting New Direction

The Travelers Aid International Board of Directors will meet next week in Washington to begin crafting a new 3-year strategic plan for the organization. “As community service agencies and the travel industry continue to evolve, the board and I think it is time to chart out our future so TAI can best serve its member agencies,” explained our new president, Kathleen Baldwin.

As part of the background research needed for the discussions, the board conducted an online survey of the membership, volunteers and staff. It is anticipated that the new strategic plan will be released for approval in June at the Annual Conference in Charlotte.

By the Numbers

A random review of year-end and monthly reports submitted by Travelers Aid members.

Travelers Aid/Chicago – Passenger assists at Chicago O’Hare were up 20% in January to 71,809. It is suspected that the large number of flight cancellations drove up number of passenger assists.

Travelers Aid Dulles – Volunteers at Washington Dulles International Airport assisted 128,881 passengers in January, including assisting 28,762 international passengers with U.S. Customs.

Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire – Volunteers at Ontario International Airport assisted 6,685 guests in January.

Travelers Aid/Oklahoma City – Volunteers at Will Rogers World Airport contributed 567 hours staffing the information booths and assisted 7,839 visitors

Travelers Aid/Reagan – Volunteers at Washington Reagan National Airport assisted 42,287 passengers in January, a 60% increase over last January. Since last January, the airport opened two more information desks on the baggage claim level.

Travelers Aid/Tampa – The 33 volunteers at Tampa International Airport assisted 21,800 passengers in 2018.

Travellers Aid/Toronto – Volunteers provided 808 hours at Toronto Union Station to assist 15,848 travelers in January.

Impressive

Travelers Aid Going Beyond Expectations

Making Connections

Chicago, JFK Tag Team to Get Expat Home to Peoria

In February, **Travelers Aid/Chicago** was asked by the U.S. State Department to assist in repatriating a former central Illinois resident who had been in Germany since the mid-1980s as he had overstayed his papers. Travelers Aid found a transitional housing shelter and awaited flight information. The State Department booked the Frankfurt-New York-Atlanta-Peoria flight with less than 24-hours' notice to the individual. In fact, he had to depart Germany before learning of the ground transportation arrangements that would be meeting him in Peoria. Once armed with the details, Travelers Aid Chicago contacted **Travelers Aid at JFK Airport**. Before the man boarded the Atlanta leg, Travelers Aid/JFK found him and provided him with the rest of his itinerary. Travelers Aid/Chicago arranged the ground transportation with the Illinois Department of Human Services. Upon arrival in Peoria, the expat was met with his ride and made it to the shelter managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs Transitional Housing program.

Reagan, Dulles Volunteers Work to Return Lost Passports

On Feb. 14, **Travelers Aid/Reagan** volunteer **Pender McCarter** at Washington Reagan National Airport noticed a small black zipper case left at the Information Desk. It contained several current and outdated passports from the U.S., the United Kingdom and India. From the passport photos, Pender recognized a passenger who asked for transportation information to Washington Dulles Airport. He called **Travelers Aid at Dulles** and spoke with volunteer **Glover Epperson**, who made several paging announcements and contacted several airline agents who may have a passenger missing their passport. Shortly thereafter, a call came into the desk from the wife of the passenger who was indeed at a Dulles gate waiting for his flight home to Los Angeles. The wife stated that her husband was traveling internationally in just two days. Travelers Aid arranged for an overnight delivery of the passports to Los Angeles.

Volunteers in Oklahoma City Team Up to Assist Vet

During the government shutdown, an individual called the **Travelers Aid** information booth at Will Rogers World Airport needing assistance. He told volunteer **Julie Beatus** that he was stuck at the VA Hospital there in Oklahoma City and needed transportation back to Wichita Falls, Texas. She connected him with **Upward Transitions**, the parent of Travelers Aid at Will Rogers, and the agency was able to provide a gas card so he could make the return trip home.

Bradley Volunteers Assist Special Needs Traveler

At Bradley International Airport, **Travelers Aid** volunteers **Bernie and Roberta Mulligan** in January assisted a special needs passenger who had an unexpected extra-long layover at the airport. The passenger, from a group home in Massachusetts, had flown into Bradley and was required to return to the home using a specific taxi service. The Mulligans discovered she did not have enough funds to pay for the cab and furthermore it would be several hours before the cab company could reach the airport. Bernie and Roberta assisted the woman with making several phone calls to her case worker to secure the car fare and to work out the timing of her ride. As their shift ended, the Mulligans asked a state police officer to look after the woman as she still had several more hours to wait.

Volunteer Activities

Member News

Crisis Center is "More Brilliant"

Congratulations to **Crisis Center of Tampa Bay**! On Thursday, WEDU-FM, the PBS station for Florida's West Coast, recognized Crisis Center with its *Be More Brilliant* honor in the station's Be More awards ceremony. Crisis Center, which runs the 2-1-1 center in Tampa, established the Florida Veterans Support Line staffed by veterans working to assist their fellow vets.

Soon to be Appearing in Blue

Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire is making a color switch. The staff and volunteers were vested in red uniforms for years. The Ontario International Airport Authority is purchasing new uniform vests, wind breakers, scarfs and ties in blue. The new uniforms are due in this spring.

Volunteers Beat Subzero Chicago Weather

During the 2 polar vortex weather days in Chicago on Jan. 30 and 31, there were over 18 businesses closed within Chicago O'Hare International Airport because of too few employees. Even the UIC Medical Center was closed. However, **Travelers Aid** was fully staffed and over the 2 days, 21 volunteers came in for a shift!

Honors

For the second year in a row, Travelers Aid Volunteer **Ed McGee** at **Washington Reagan National** was honored as the group's *Volunteer of the Year* and the recipient of the William Dukstein Service Award. The award recognizes Ed's 613 volunteer hours in 2018. Ed will be recognized by Jack Potter, the CEO of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, at the authority's March board meeting. Ed, congrats and thank you!



Appreciation Events

Travelers Aid/Dulles – The staff and airport provided coffee and donuts to volunteers on Feb. 14. The staff is planning a happy hour event in March for another chance for the volunteers to socialize.

Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire: First Quarter Appreciation Luncheon will be April 8. One of TSA's explosive specialists will participate in a training session that same day.

Training

Travelers Aid/Dulles: The volunteers and staff on Feb. 25 participated in an emergency preparedness course designed to ensure that badge holders are equipped with the information they need in case of emergency.

Travelers Aid/Chicago – Associate Director **John Ishu** next Tuesday will participate on a panel at the AAAE/ACI-NA Customer Service Symposium there in Chicago. He will be discussing volunteer training, recognition and performance.

Milestones

New Hires, Promotions and Honors

Travelers Aid/Newark Airport – **Jessica McKenzie** joined the team at Newark Liberty International Airport in mid-February as the Site Manager. She holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Kean University with concentrations in non profit management. Jessica has served in the nonprofit sector for over five years managing volunteer engagement, youth programs and corporate relations. She loves to write poetry, spend time with loved ones, travel and attend music festivals.



Travelers Aid/Chicago – A 20-year Travelers Aid employee, **John Ishu**, was recently promoted to associate director of airport program.



As **Jim Thurston**, a Travelers Aid volunteer at Washington Dulles International Airport, was flying through Sydney International Airport he stopped and chatted with the volunteers staffing the information desk.

It's not all serious work at Bradley.

A couple of our Wednesday volunteers are engaged in a hat duel. **Richard Incorvati** (left) and **Dale Richter** (right) showing off their black cowboy hats that complement the Travelers Aid uniform!



Crisis Center of Tampa Bay CEO **Clara Reynolds** (in blue) meets with the Travelers Aid volunteers at Tampa International Airport. Volunteer Coordinator **Beverly Thompson** is in the center.



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