



March 2019

Journeys

A monthly newsletter of Travelers Aid International

In this edition:

- President's Observations
- Volunteers Invited to 2019 Annual Conference
- New *Impressive* feature
- Volunteer Activity



The Travelers Aid International Board met in Washington. The board elected Jeff Smythe, of HOPE Atlanta, and Marcy Roke, of Travelers Aid Society of San Diego, to serve as directors.

From the President's Desk

The Learning Process Continues

After six weeks on the job, this is what I've learned about Travelers Aid International. The organization is blessed with an incredibly gifted, talented and dedicated staff and volunteers. I've only met a few volunteers so far, but the ones I met were outstanding: Randy at Reagan Airport, Gordon at Dulles Airport, Betty and Ginny at Union Station, and Betty and Bob at Bradley Airport.

I've been incredibly impressed with the Board of Directors, especially Chair Floyd Davis . . . no, not because he is my new supervisor . . . everyone has stepped up, helping me to figure out this wonderfully complicated organization. There's a lot more to learn, though, and every day is an adventure.

Kathleen



Travelers Aid/Washington Union Station volunteers Betty Warren and Ginny Klein.

Volunteers Invited to Annual Conference

To further emphasize that the Travelers Aid network of members and locations is truly “One Travelers Aid,” the Board has created a special registration rate exclusively for our volunteers to encourage their participation in the 2019 Travelers Aid Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C. The fee will be \$150 for the June 12-14 event. The fee is one-half of the regular member registration rate.

An updated [preliminary agenda](#) with speakers has now been posted for the [2019 Traveler Aid International Annual Conference](#). There are several volunteer-oriented concurrent sessions as part of the programming. Attending volunteers will have full participation rights (included in the registration fee) including all meals, the social hour and educational sessions.

Volunteers and Travelers Aid members can [now register](#) for the conference and [reserve](#) their hotel room. Our host hotel is the Springhill Suites Uptown Charlotte and the discounted rate is \$149 per night plus taxes. Reservations must be made by May 22 to secure the discount. Breakfast and wi-fi are included in the daily hotel charge! Community Link is hosting the event.

Learn more about [Charlotte](#), the Queen City, and the things to do and places to eat.

Member News

Member Profile: Travelers Aid/Union Station

Founded: 1912

2018 Passenger Assists: 224,536

2018 Social Service Assists: 1,476

2018 Bus Tickets: 312

Volunteers: 20

Staff: 1.5 social workers

The primary role of the Travelers Aid social workers at Washington Union Station is to assist stranded individuals who are seeking transportation in order to reconnect to their homes, communities and their lives.

“Some of the current trends that we are seeing is an increase in the

number of mental health clients, human trafficking clients, clients with unrealistic expectations of relocating to the Washington, DC metro area and an increase in the number of under-employed who move to the areas for employment but cannot afford the high rent in the area,” said Willie Ringold, the director of social services.



During January and February, a total of 12,811 persons received assistance. Because it’s an easily accessible location within Union Station, many calls were made by volunteers to the hyperthermia vans for transportation to area shelters. The volunteers also shared food truck and meal locations to the many homeless persons seeking warmth during the cold-weather nights.

“As the summer months approach Travelers Aid often sees an increase in the number of individuals who are suffering with a mental illness and who will travel to the city to visit with the president or their congressional representative. These individuals are usually detained by the Secret Service and referred to Travelers Aid for assistance with transportation home,” Ringold explained.

Recommend Reading

Chet Sobotka, the program manager at Traveler Aid of the Inland Empire, is recommending Brian Shapiro’s *The Exceptionally Human Airport Experience*. Shapiro addressed the recent AAAE/ACI-NA Customer Service Symposium in Chicago, which Chet attended. “I recommend that Travelers Aid folks get and read this book. It is an excellent book.”

Impressive

Travelers Aid Going Beyond Expectations

A New feature

This feature highlights reports of our volunteers and staff members going above and beyond expectations in assisting our passengers.

Hartford: Volunteers Don’t Punch Time Clocks

Evelyn Dahl, a volunteer with Travelers Aid/Bradley Airport, successfully reunited a passenger who arrived in Hartford to attend a funeral with her family. When the passenger deplaned, she could not find the relative who was picking her up, and she did not have a cell phone to call the family. After she approached Travelers Aid, Evelyn called the funeral home trying to find a family member, but did not immediately get the information the women needed. While on the airport shuttle bus to the parking lot at the end of her shift, Evelyn got a call back from the funeral home. She immediately returned to the terminal, located the woman and situated her so she could spot her family members as they drove up to the arrivals area.

Reagan: Volunteer’s Language Skills Again Prove Useful

The language skills of Travelers Aid/Reagan volunteer **Daphne Kamely** reunited a woman traveling from Uruguay with her Washington family making for a happy Valentine’s Day. Arriving on a domestic American Airlines flight, the woman was unable to find her daughter and approached the Travelers Aid information desk and asked Daphne, who is fluent in Spanish, for help. After an initial round of pages failed to get the family together, Daphne found the son elsewhere in the airport and the daughter outside seeking a parking spot. She successfully got the two siblings reunited with their mother at the Travelers Aid information

desk.

Chicago: Staff Aids Traveler Fleeing Domestic Abuse

The Travelers Aid/Chicago social services supervisor provided emotional support and guidance to get a passenger fleeing a domestic violence situation onto a flight. The woman initially approached the Travelers Aid office seeking help with her luggage and relief from the airline baggage fees. In the privacy of the office, the supervisor assisted her in repacking her luggage to avoid the extra fee. The supervisor then escorted the woman to the airline and successfully advocated on her behalf.

Oklahoma City: Volunteer Navigates a Family Reunion

Travelers Aid volunteer **Sharon Burnett** assisted a 75-year-old woman meeting her son arriving from Alabama at Will Rogers World Airport. Sharon assisted her in navigating the airport including reading the flight information display, locating the appropriate gate and then determining where she had parked.

Dulles: Problem-Solving Volunteer Keeps On-Time Departure

On March 5, Travelers Aid/Dulles Airport volunteer **Clif Heady** solved a paperwork problem for a transferring passenger: how to correctly declare moving more than \$10,000 out of the country while not missing his flight to Munich. The passenger, who had arrived on a domestic United flight and had just an hour until boarding his Munich-bound plane, approached Clif at the Travelers Aid information booth. The passenger had been advised by a United ticket agent in the Midwest to file his Customs and Border Protection declaration papers at Dulles. Clif was hesitant to direct the passenger to the CBP office for fear the man would miss his flight so he called the office. The CBP officer told the passenger to wait at the Travelers Aid booth, as he would bring the paperwork to him. The passenger was delighted to receive such efficient customer service, and he was able to make his flight.

Washington: Stranded Family Gets to Continue Home

A family of 5 requested assistance from Travelers Aid/Union Station on a snowy day in February. They were traveling to North Carolina and their car malfunctioned after sliding on a patch of ice. Unable to afford the costly repairs, the family abandoned their vehicle at a local service station. Travelers Aid was able to verify their residence, the children's school attendance, and was able provide bus tickets so the family could return home to North Carolina.

Volunteer Activities

Volunteer Appreciation

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month and April 7-13 is Volunteer Appreciation Week.

Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire – April 8, First Quarter Appreciation Luncheon. TAI CEO Kathleen Baldwin is traveling to California to attend.

Travelers Aid/Reagan Airport – May 13, Volunteer appreciation lunch at Sam and Harry's inside the airport. TAI CEO Kathleen Baldwin will attend.

Travelers Aid/Dulles Airport – May 14, "Destination Appreciation" will be held at the airport. TAI CEO Kathleen Baldwin will attend.

Social Events

Travelers Aid/Washington – April 6, Volunteers from both Reagan and Dulles airports will take in the Cherry Blossom Festival with a tour of the budding trees, music and fireworks.

Outreach

Travelers Aid/Chicago – In an effort to increase community awareness of its Airport Practice Experience program for those passengers with visual impairments and developmental disabilities, Travelers Aid has been meeting with Chicago Lighthouse, Access Chicago, Comprehensive Early Autism Services and Bradley Cameron Association.

Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire – Program Manager Chet Sobotka will participate in an April 9 “Conversations on Courage” podcast to explain the agency’s services and “life rewarding” aspects of being a volunteer.

Training

Travelers Aid/Chicago – A March training session was devoted to providing volunteers with more information on the region’s mass transit options and connections at Chicago O’Hare.

By the Numbers

A random review of monthly reports submitted by Travelers Aid members.

Travelers Aid/Chicago – Volunteers at Chicago O’Hare assisted 66,792 passengers in February

Travelers Aid Dulles – Volunteers at Washington Dulles International Airport assisted 88,253 passengers in February.

Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire – Volunteers contributed 1,405 hours in February assisting 6,806 guests at Ontario International Airport.

Travelers Aid/JFK Airport – The 68 volunteers at JFK Airport assisted 21,304 passengers in February.

Travelers Aid/Newark Airport – Volunteers at Newark Liberty International Airport handled 2,866 transportation inquiries among their 5,953 passenger assists in February.

Travelers Aid/Oklahoma City – Volunteers at Will Rogers World Airport aided 113 members of the military while assisting 7,967 passengers in February.

Travelers Aid/Reagan – The 211 Volunteers at Washington Reagan National Airport received 5,384 specific requests, suggestions or complaints in February among the 42,257 passenger assists.

Travellers Aid/Toronto – Volunteers contributed 392 hours to assist 18,158 travelers passing through Toronto Union Station. February was a rough month for planes, trains and buses, which were cancelled several times due to heavy snowstorms.

Travelers Aid/Union Station – The 20 Travelers Aid volunteers inside Washington Union Station assisted 6,657 passengers in February and an additional 320 needing assistance from our social workers.

Milestones

Korea West Interns Bolster Staff at TA Airports

Korea West interns recently began working at three airports while another intern departed a fourth.

Korea West is a post-college internship program managed jointly by the U.S. State Department and the South Korean Ministry of Education. These young adults participate in the program to improve their English skills before returning home. WEST is actually an acronym for Work, English, Study, Travel.



Travelers Aid/Reagan Airport on March 5 said good-bye to Korea West intern **Mindy Song**. Mindy provided 2,375 hours of service to Travelers Aid during her internship. Mindy's essay summarizing her experience at Reagan National won a \$1,000 award from the South Korean Ministry of Education.

Washington Reagan National Customer Service Manager Kevin Mallory presents Korea West intern Mindy Song with a personalized photo of the airport.

Jaeho "Jay" Han has joined the staff of **Travelers Aid/Bradley** as a Korea West intern for the next four months. Travelers Aid volunteer Nancy Malo is hosting Jay during his internship. Also pictured are Roberta and Bernie Mulligan, fellow Thursday evening volunteers.



Korea West intern **Chaewon Lee** is now assisting travelers at Newark Liberty International Airport. She is working alongside **Travelers Aid/Newark** volunteer Tyrone Laval.

At JFK, Korea West intern **Yoojin Shin** is getting settled into the job as **Travelers Aid/JFK** volunteer Irma Bardelang provides an orientation to the airport.





Metropolitan Airports Authority for his 613 hours of service in 2018. This is the second year in a row that Ed has earned the distinction of the highest number of annual volunteer hours.

"Ed exemplifies the spirit of public service that characterizes the men and women of our airport community...who work tirelessly – even when they don't get paid – to provide world class transportation services to the National Capital Region," observed Jack Potter, the authority's CEO.

Chet Sobotka, program manager of **Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire**, chatted with **Travelers Aid/Chicago** volunteer Burl Cohn prior to Chet's flight out of O'Hare. Chet was in Chicago to attend the AAAE/ACI-NA Customer Service Symposium.



Jim Planter, a volunteer with **Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire**, won NASCAR tickets in a weekly drawing sponsored by the Ontario Airport Authority. To encourage guest interfacing, the airport every Thursday sponsors a couple hours of fun events. Jim is also a Travelers Aid volunteer recruiter.



Meet-and-greet at Dulles. TAI CEO **Kathleen Baldwin** meets Travelers Aid staffers **Peter Lauten** and **Tina Mally** as well as volunteers **Clif Heady** (far left) and **Gordon Turner** (second from right). An international passenger approaching the

Travelers Aid information desk was thrilled to join the group for the photo.

Fundraisers

A 60-day snapshot of future events

April 6, **Baltimore Catholic Charities**, 29th Annual Bull and Shrimp Roast, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Odenton. [Learn more.](#)

April 6, **Crisis Center of Tampa Bay**, Strokes for Hope a 10K swim around Davis Islands. CEO Clara Reynolds and Board Member Jamie Klingman will be among the swimmers. [Learn more.](#)

April 13, **Community Link**, 8th Annual Sweet Escapes, Mint Museum – Randolph Road.

[Learn more.](#)

April 27, **Travelers Aid Society of Greater Birmingham**, Dixie Vintage Antique & Classic Car Show, Veterans Park, Hoover. [Learn more.](#)

May 4, **Halifax Urban Ministries**, Blue Diamond Gala, Halifax River Yacht Club.

May 15, **Baltimore Catholic Charities**, My Sister's Place Women's Center Bridesmaid's Bingo, Boumi Shrine Temple

About this Newsletter

We have been experimenting with the formats for *Journeys*, our monthly newsletter. For January and February, we prepared 3 distinct editions: A members', a volunteers' and a donors'. This month we have combined all the features into one edition. What do you think?

Take a moment and answer a very brief survey on your preference for the format of the newsletter in the coming months. [Here's the survey.](#)

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.

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