



April 2019

Journeys

A monthly newsletter of Travelers Aid International

In this edition:

- Scholarships available for 2019 Annual Conference
- New strategic plan takes shape
- New *Impressive* feature
- Volunteer Activity



Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire – During the April 8 First Quarter Appreciation Luncheon, the volunteers received their new navy blue uniforms. TAI President Kathleen Baldwin (near center with program manager Chet Sobotka) attended the event. Also attending was Ontario International Airport Authority CEO Mark Thorpe. (far left)

President's Footnote: I feel blessed to be working with so many talented, committed individuals, including the staff, our volunteers, and especially our members. What a treat for me to spend time with Chet Sobotka and his corps of outstanding volunteers in Ontario. I had so much fun that I'm hoping to visit other members whenever my schedule allows. Please let me know if there's something coming up you'd like me to attend.

In this, my third month on the job, I still have a lot to learn about this wonderfully complex, dynamic organization. I hope to talk to and learn about as many of you as possible at our conference in Charlotte next month. Please consider joining us as we learn best practices from around the country as well as showcase our local and member programs.

2019 Annual Conference

Exciting Agenda Shaping Up for Charlotte

A large number of subject experts as well as a new generation of Travelers Aid agency leaders will address the 2019 Annual Conference in Charlotte on June 12-14. A [busy agenda](#) is scheduled with nearly 20 educational sessions. The bios of the speakers are now posted on the [website](#). Continue to check the website for the latest information.

The educational sessions will begin on Wednesday, June 12 at 1:30 p.m. at the Federal Reserve Bank in Charlotte. All of the meetings will be in the bank's conference facilities. The Springhill Suites Uptown is the host hotel for the conference and the site of the Wednesday evening networking reception.

Travelers Aid International is again offering [Barrington scholarships](#) to assist some members to attend the 2019 Annual Conference. The Board has revamped the scholarship program this year. Funds have been earmarked to cover the \$300 member registration fee for up to 5 individuals. The scholarships will be awarded on the basis of financial need and a simple application must be completed and returned by Wednesday, May 16. The scholarships will be awarded by May 18. The application is also available on the [website](#).

Registration continues for the conference and the hotel rooms. Our discounted hotel 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 charge! As the host, the room block is being held in Community Link's name.

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 Annual Conference. The fee of \$150 is one-half of the regular member registration rate.

Other [registration](#) options include a reduced fee of \$250 for each subsequent agency attendee and \$200 for each guest. There is an option to pay upfront with a credit card.

As you finalize your travel schedule, plan to arrive in Charlotte on Wednesday with enough time to first go to the Springhill Suites to check-in and drop off your luggage. And, then proceed to the Federal Reserve Bank. Registration at the Federal Reserve begins at 12:30 p.m. Because it is a federal building, all attendees must pass through security and luggage will not be permitted inside.

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

New Strategic Plan Takes Shape

The Strategic Planning Committee has completed its draft of the three-year TAI growth plan and it is now circulating among the board and staff for comments and suggestions. The Board plans to adopt it at its June meeting so that it can be distributed to the membership at the 2019 Annual Conference in Charlotte.

TAI's strategic planning process began last October. It included the full membership of the Board meeting in a planning retreat in Washington on March 8-9 during which key goals were established for the organization to achieve over the next three years. The committee then met on April 2 and April 29, aided by former acting TAI president and subsequently consultant Valerie Graff, to refine the goals for presentation to the full board.

The committee is composed of board members, Bruce Collins, Deborah McElroy and Joan Lowden; former HOPE Atlanta CEO Ed Powers; Travelers Aid Chicago's John Ishu; TAI President Kathleen Baldwin; and Graff.

Travelers Aid Union Station Relocating

The Travelers Aid information booth inside Union Station was forced to close earlier this month as Amtrak begins to prepare the space for renovations of its waiting area. TAI President Kathleen Baldwin assisted by Board Members Susan Perry and Ross Capon have been working with a variety of entities that control space allocation within the historic building to find a new suitable location. At press time, a new temporary location has been found elsewhere in the station.

While the booth is closed, our social workers Willie Ringold and Shelia Dashiell continue to provide assistance. They can be reached at 240-505-4255.

Travelers Aid of Washington got its start at the train station in 1913. While it has not been at the station consistently for the last 100 years, it has been there ever since the building was renovated in 1970s.

Last year was the busiest yet for Travelers Aid. The 19 volunteers assisted 224,536 travelers with questions concerning Amtrak, the bus lines, local transit services and tourism. The social workers assisted an additional 1,476 individuals in crisis and provided 312 bus tickets to those stranded or homeless.



The new home for Travelers Aid will be in this former information pod on the bus deck at Union Station.

Member News

Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Detroit moved on April 1. Their new address: 3031 West Grand Blvd., Suite 690, Detroit, MI, 48202. The agency's phone number remains (313) 962-6740.

On March 14, **Travelers Aid Chicago** held its annual open house which attracted almost 200 airport/airline/concession/safety staff that learned about all the services TAC provides to passengers. The attendees represented a widely diverse airport community – from O'Hare-based FBI agents to custodians, airline gate agents to concessions staff, TSA and CBP officers to staff from O'Hare-based International Organization for Migration staff. A more educated airport community means a better-served traveling public.

Impressive

Travelers Aid Going Beyond Expectations

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

Community Link Answers Cries for Help with Bus Tickets

Community Link's **Robin Bridges** picked up the phone one recent afternoon and heard frantic pleas for help: A mother, fearing for her life.

The woman was in Charlotte, locked in a bathroom, with her abuser screaming outside the locked door. With her three children already safe with a neighbor, the mom was trapped inside the bathroom. Not knowing what else to do, she called her own mom, who lived in Connecticut. Her mother knew to summon help from Community Link in Charlotte. She also called Robin.

After the abuser left the house, the mom fled with her children that day to Community Link's office. Bridges and Community Link provided four bus tickets for the family's safe travel to Connecticut. Community Link assisted the family with luggage, snacks, blankets, and coloring books with crayons.

Travelers Aid Finds a Room at the Inn for Texas Man

On a busy April Sunday afternoon at Washington Union Station, an older gentleman approached the on-duty social worker seeking help in finding a reasonably priced hotel room. The man explained that he was going to be in town for a week to attend his sister's and brother-in-law's internment at Arlington National Cemetery. He flew into Washington from Texas, but he had not lined up a hotel. He was searching on his iPad for a hotel, but could not contact any. The Travelers Aid social worker consulted the resource books at the desk and found one in Arlington, near the cemetery. She put the man in touch with the hotel. Problems then arose, because the man was using a friend's credit card rather than his own. After an exchange of phone calls and emails, she was able to secure a reservation for the man. The traveler was very appreciative of Travelers Aid intervention and offered kind words for this organization. As it turned out, he is city councilman in Midland, Texas.

Travelers Aid Provided a Help Hand Along the Way in Chicago

A Travelers Aid volunteer at Chicago O'Hare escorted a visibly distraught woman to the Travelers Aid office to get additional assistance from a social worker. The woman had landed at the airport and was awaiting a 9 p.m. connecting flight to Springfield to spend time with her dying father. While waiting on the connecting flight, she received a phone call from her father's hospice indicating that he may die before her scheduled departure. The woman initially wanted to rent a car to make the drive, but the social worker felt she was not in a condition to drive. Instead, the social worker explored both rail and bus options. The social worker assisted the woman in getting a 5 p.m. Amtrak reservation, which would arrive in Springfield by 8 pm. and provided her with detailed instructions on how to take a city transit bus to Union Station. She made it to Springfield in time.

Will Rogers Volunteer Provides Extra Service to Abuse Victim

Travelers Aid volunteer **Carolyn Waterman** assisted domestic violence victim, Brianna, when she arrived at Will Rogers World Airport. Brianna arrived at the airport with nothing but the clothes on her back. She was flying home to her family in California to escape a dangerous relationship. Carolyn worked with Delta and the Military Welcome Center to print her boarding pass and secure personal hygiene products. Travelers Aid partnered with TSA to help Brianna through security. Brianna arrived safely in California reuniting with her support system.

Travelers Aid Volunteer Provides a Calming Presence

A visibly upset gentleman approached Travelers Aid volunteer **Beth Cutting** in the departures area of Bradley International Airport. Having just returned from a cruise, he was upset when he could not get in touch with his mother. Beth escorted the man to the Travelers

Aid booth so he could charge his phone. She stayed with him until he connected with his mother and then calmed down. Beth was a huge comfort and a calming presence for this passenger and she was able to tend to him so he could make the final part of his journey home without incident.

Travelers Aid Facilitates a Three-Language Conversation

Travelers Aid Dulles Volunteers **Sarika Srivastava** and **Gary Waxmonsky** provided directions and language assistance to two individuals emerging from the Federal Inspection Station. The first, from Romania, sought directions to the gate for his connecting flight. While the pair began to break through the language barrier, a second traveler, this one from China, asked for help to find his connecting, but different flight. So even though no one spoke the same language, the volunteers used an audio translation app and Google Translate to guide them to their respective gates.

The Romanian traveler used Sarika's phone to reach his daughter to let her know he was successfully navigating the airport and airlines on his journey to her.

Reagan Volunteer Navigates Unusual Rental Car Return

A Travelers Aid volunteer at Reagan National Airport interceded with an airline and the police for a traveler who was nearly late for her flight. Volunteer **Carolyn Myles** handled multiple calls from the husband and wife as she was driving to the airport. One of the last calls from the husband explained that his wife had arrived and left the car at the curb of the Ticketing level with the keys still in the car as she rushed to the gate to board her flight. After this news, Carolyn spoke with a police officer, and together they located the car. In the next call, Carolyn learned that the woman was trying to deplane her flight so she could properly care for her rental car. Carolyn returned to the car to have another conversation with the police officer when the woman showed up. The husband was so very grateful for all of Carolyn's legwork and help that he sent the following text: "*Carolyn, I cannot thank you enough for your generosity and help with this matter. You were very kind to help.*"

Milestones

Upward Transitions Promotes Pulliam to CEO



Upward Transitions in Oklahoma City has promoted **Periann Pulliam** to be the organization's next chief executive officer. Periann has been the chief operations officer for the past four years. She joined the agency in 2009 as the director of volunteers for their Travelers Aid program at Will Rogers World Airport. She has over 30 years of business operations experience.

Kathleen Weinberg recently joined **Travelers Aid Chicago** as a part-time social service supervisor at O'Hare. A long-time social worker, Kathleen was most recently a volunteer at O'Hare.

Also at O'Hare, **Dong Jin Shin** joined the staff as the most recent Korea West intern.

The digital [Travelers Aid International Membership Directory](#) has been updated and posted on the website.

Staff Spotlight

Since 2001, Jane Mrosko Has Assisted JFK Travelers

Jane Mrosko, the Travelers Aid program director at JFK Airport, was raised on the West Coast and Midwest and did not arrive in New York until just a year before joining Travelers Aid.

Jane was born in California, but spent most of her childhood and early teens in Oregon, followed by Iowa, and then Minnesota. She married and then moved with her husband, Micah, to Japan, where they taught English to college-aged students for two-and-a-half years.



Jane completed her master's degree from the University of Minnesota and worked as a medical social worker before moving to New York in 2000. Jane and Micah have two children and two dogs, and together they enjoy playing games, watching movies, and trying new places to eat, especially if ice cream is involved!

Jane has had some interesting jobs (ask her how she landed a job at an Italian bakery that was frequented by some "wise guys"), but Travelers Aid has been one of the most monumental. In 2001, a month after Sept. 11, Jane began her career with Travelers Aid. The opportunity to work with hundreds of amazing volunteers whose energy and passion for helping others has been one of the main inspiring factors that continue to motivate Jane's work at JFK and with the organization.

By the Numbers

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

Travelers Aid/Bradley – The 53 volunteers at Bradley International Airport assisted 10,839 passengers in March.

Travelers Aid/Chicago – Volunteers assisted 74,216 passengers in March and the agency is now on track to pass the 1 million mark before the end of the year.

Travelers Aid/Dulles – Volunteers at Washington Dulles Airport contributed 4,100 hours in March to assist 106,514 passengers.

Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire – The volunteers contributed 1,510 hours in March to assist 7,504 guests of Ontario International Airport.

Travelers Aid/Reagan – The 213 volunteers at Washington Reagan Airport assisted 61,610 passengers in March – almost 20,000 more than in February.

Travelers Aid/Union Station – During the first weekend of April – the height of the Cherry Blossom Festival – volunteers and staff assisted more than 700 on April 6-7.

Travelers Aid/Will Rogers World Airport – Volunteers assisted 10,266 travelers – a hike of 2,299 in March compared to February.

Volunteer Activities

Appreciation Events

Travelers Aid/Union Station – On April 23, Travelers Aid International treated the volunteers to lunch at a nearby restaurant, Dubliner.



Travelers Aid/Dulles volunteers relax and enjoy the week-long open-house that the staff staged during National Volunteer Appreciation Week.

Tours and Training



Travelers Aid/Bradley – Several volunteers took part in safety training provided by the Bradley Airport Fire Department. (Left) Intern Jay Han learns the proper way to use a fire extinguisher. (Right) Travelers Aid volunteers Roy McAnarney and Evelyn Dahl get CPR training.

Travelers Aid/Chicago – On May 15, volunteers will visit the Chicago Architecture Center.

Travelers Aid/Milwaukee – Volunteers recently participated in a 90-minute training session with Visit Milwaukee designed to anticipate the most-asked questions concerning the area's sights and events. Participants earned a "certified tourism insider" lapel pin.



Travelers Aid/Reagan – (Above) On April 8 and 13, a total of 50 volunteers toured the airport operations area including the command center and had a shuttle bus tour of the airfield.

Travelers Aid/Reagan – On May 4, a group of volunteers will do a driving tour of embassies.

Fundraisers

A 60-day snapshot of future events

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

June 8, **Heartland Alliance**, Home and Garden Tour, Michigan's Harbor Country. [Learn more.](#)

June 17, **Baltimore Catholic Charities**, 32nd Annual Blase Cooke Golf Tournament, Baltimore Country Club. [Learn more.](#)

June 20, **HATAS**, Lunch and Learn, The Furniture Bank. [Learn more.](#)

June 21, **Upward Transitions**, American Tourist 2019: New York, New York gala, Oklahoma City's Historic Farmers Public Market. [Learn more.](#)

June 27, **Travelers Aid Society of San Diego**, Sail into Summer gala, Marine Room at Marina Village

About this Newsletter

The results are in. While we have been experimenting with the formats for *Journeys*, our monthly newsletter, in the first quarter, the results of a reader poll linked to the March edition indicates the vast majority want the one, unified edition.

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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