



June 2019

# Journeys

A monthly newsletter of Travelers Aid International

In this edition:

- New Directors Elected; New Strategic Plan Adopted
- New *Impressive* feature
- Volunteer Activity

The panel for the Art of Helping Travelers included (left to right) Rachel Rucker, ACI-NA; John Ishu, Travelers Aid Chicago; Shelia Dashiell, Travelers Aid/Union Station; and Jessica Lani Rich, Travelers Aid of Honolulu.



The panel for Lessons in Leadership included Marcy Roke, Travelers Aid Society of San Diego; Jeff Smythe, HOPE Atlanta; and Chet Sobotka, Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire.

## Annual Conference Presentations Posted

Sixty individuals participated in the 2019 Annual Conference in Charlotte on June 12-14. The three-day event featured 18 educational sessions, including two workshops designed to strengthen the bonds within the Travelers Aid network. A number of subject matter experts from Charlotte social service and volunteer organizations provided ideas, tips and experiences that Travelers Aid members could implement within their own agencies. Conference presentations are now posted on [our website](#). There are also links on that page to speaker biographies and the onsite program.

The board has selected Honolulu as the site for the 2020 Annual Conference. A date and host hotel location will be determined. Travelers Aid of Honolulu will host the conference.

### The Marshmallow Challenge

As a team building exercise each table was challenged to build the highest tower using spaghetti, string, and tape. The tower was to be



topped with a marshmallow.

One participant noted that "we learned who, at our table, were planners and who were doers."

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## Four New Directors Elected

At the Annual Meeting during the conference, the members elected four new board members:

- **Dick DeiTos**, executive director, Metropolitan Washington Airlines Committee; and a former TAI board member.
- **Tim Gillespie**, of BGL Associations, a Bethesda, Md.-based transportation consulting firm. He was an Amtrak executive from 1979 to 1998.
- **Susan Martin**, now a Dulles Airport volunteer after a two-year stint as a Travelers Aid staff member at Dulles. She had previously worked for United Airlines for 34 years in accounting and finance.
- **Maria Suggett**, president of Mountaintop, an educational consulting company in Littleton, Colo. She is also a former board member of the Travelers Aid Society of San Diego.

Each member will serve a three-year term that begins July 1.

The four will replace directors **Ross Capon**, the former president of the National Association of Railroad Passengers; Joan **Lowden**, a former executive with American Association of Airport Executives, and **David Fleming**, a Dulles volunteer and a former attorney with Gannet. Each of these directors completed their terms and was not eligible for re-election to the board.

Continuing directors include **Floyd Davis**, president of Community Link; **Randall Brater**, a partner with Washington law firm of Arent Fox; **Ellen Horton**, a former executive with American Association of Airport Executives; **Susan Perry**, a retired transportation consultant; **Bruce Collins**, general counsel at C-SPAN; **Deborah McElroy**, a consultant with Airports Council International – North America; **Jessica Lani Rich**, president of Travelers Aid of Honolulu; **Periann Pulliam**, CEO, Upward Transitions; **Tara Hamilton**, a public relations consultant; **Mollie Hester**, CEO, Travelers Aid of Greater Birmingham; **Marcy Roke**, interim president, Travelers Aid Society of San Diego; **David Sinski**, executive director, Heartland Human Care Services; and **Jeff Smythe**, CEO, HOPE Atlanta.

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## New Strategic Plan Adopted

In the board meeting prior to the start of the conference, a strategic plan, [A Path for](#)

**Travelers Aid**, was adopted for 2019-2022. In adopting the plan, the board updated the organization's mission statement: Travelers Aid International "is to aid people in transit who are in distress, through our direct services and through services provided by our members."

The plan set forth three goals:

1. Achieve and ensure continued financial sustainability by improving funding streams and ending each fiscal year with a surplus
2. Retain and expand membership
3. Strengthen the organization to support all programs.

During conference workshops on Wednesday and Friday, attendees offered suggestions on how to retain and expand the membership. A staff working group was formed to assist in drafting an implementation plan to meet the three goals.

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## Other TAI News

### Travelers Aid Returns to Union Station

In early July, Travelers Aid will again have an information booth in Washington's Union Station. The staff and volunteers will be operating out of a self-contained pod across from the Greyhound office on the bus deck of



Union Station's parking garage. Travelers Aid had to close its information booth in the Amtrak waiting area because of an upcoming renovation program. A mobile volunteer program is being planned so Travelers Aid can continue to assist Amtrak passengers.

### New Port Authority Contract Signed

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has offered a two-year contract to Travelers Aid International to continue managing the volunteer programs at New York JFK and Newark airports. Travelers Aid has been serving the JFK passengers since 1957 and the Newark travelers since 1992.

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## Member News



## Tampa Bay Volunteer Marks 35 Years

A lot has changed at Tampa International Airport since retiree **Marie Lou Corristan** started working there. For the last 35 years, Marie Lou has volunteered at Travelers Aid — a help desk in the airport's main terminal — offering assistance to stressed out passengers. Marie Lou, 88, was honored recently by [Crisis Center of Tampa Bay](#) CEO Clara Reynolds during a ceremony at the airport. Marie Lou has dealt with a lot of people over the years. Her [story](#) was recently told in the *Tampa Bay Times*. Marie Lou, thank you for all your service to the Tampa Bay community!

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## Impressive

### Travelers Aid Going Beyond Expectations

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

### Chicago Makes an Impact with a Make-a-Wish Family

Because of the growing success of the Protective Travel Services offered by **Travelers Aid Chicago**, the agency will be working with a number of Make-a-Wish families this summer. In May, the Chicago team was able to help provide an extremely positive travel experience for a family that has a five-year old on the autism spectrum and who is battling leukemia. The family relayed that they were extremely appreciative of the Travelers Aid services on their way to their Make-a-Wish trip to London and when they returned to Chicago.

### Oklahoma Volunteer Finds Mom Still in Dallas

On May 8, a Travelers Aid volunteer at **Will Rogers World Airport** received a call from Scott Green, who was panicked because he received a call from his wheelchair-bound mother that she was left unattended waiting outside of an unidentified office. After gathering information from various sources, the Travelers Aid volunteer concluded Scott's mother never boarded her plane in Dallas and was in a wheelchair at DFW Airport not in Oklahoma City. Scott Green was extremely grateful for Travelers Aid time and care in locating his mother.

### Bradley's Use of Translator Aids Frustrated Traveler

At **Bradley International Airport**, Travelers Aid volunteer Karen Van Dyke was approached by a gentleman who was trying to connect with his brother-in-law who was picking him up. The passenger spoke limited English and was very worried about possibly missing his ride. Karen offered to take the passenger outside and she took the foreign language translation service phone number with her as well. The passenger was able to convey to Karen that he spoke Bengali. After numerous attempts, the passenger reached his brother-in-law and found out it would be a couple hours before he could get to the airport. Karen invited the passenger to come back inside, but he wanted to wait outside. Luckily, it was a gorgeous spring day so Karen felt comfortable leaving him there. The passenger was grateful for Karen's help.

### Reagan Volunteer Helps When No One Else Would

Travelers Aid volunteer Filomina Hawle at **Reagan National Airport** received a

handwritten note of thanks that best tells the story of the assistance she provided. “I forgot my jacket at a restaurant and was unable to get back into the terminal [gate area.] Everyone, and I mean everyone, was quick to send me to another person to help assist. Luckily, I found myself at her [Filomina’s] information booth and she called around and nobody picked up. She eventually decided to walk to my gate herself and came back with my jacket! She was an angel in disguise and deserves the highest accolades. Very impressed with her customer service; she is an essential asset to your team.”

## Reagan Volunteer Helps Students

On June 23, Travelers Aid volunteer Jamie Larounis at **Reagan National Airport** (pictured center with glasses) got the chance to help these four stranded Colorado high school students and their teacher. They missed their flight to Denver on Frontier Airlines and the only option the airline provided was a departure on Thursday, June 27. Jamie was able to get them rescheduled on another airline to Colorado Springs on Tuesday for less than the cost of their original tickets.



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## Milestones

Travelers Aid International recently added three new staff members at its managed airport programs. **Bobby Sarkar** joined Travelers Aid/JFK Airport as the volunteer manager. **Danielle Zavala** joined Travelers Aid/Newark Airport as a volunteer coordinator. And, **Jessica Santos-Martinez** joined Travelers Aid/Bradley Airport as a part-time volunteer coordinator.

**Me’Chelle Jones**, a recent graduate of Ballou High School in Washington, D.C., recently joined the Travelers Aid/Reagan Airport staff as a summer intern. Me’Chelle was enrolled in the school’s hospitality and tourism program. The Travelers Aid team learned of this internship program through its affiliation with Destination DC, the city’s official visitor and tourism agency.



*An [updated Membership Directory](#) has been posted on the website including the latest personnel changes relayed to Travelers Aid International.*

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## By the Numbers

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

The 58 **Travelers Aid at Bradley International Airport** volunteers donated 1,044 hours in May assisting 23,935 travelers.

**Travelers Aid Chicago** assisted 104,778 travelers in May passing through Chicago O’Hare. They assisted 71 travelers with items from their provisions closet including diapers,

overnight kits, personal items and medical devices.

In May, **Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire** assisted 7,933 guests at Ontario International Airport.

In May, **Travelers Aid/JFK Airport** assisted 26,643 travelers and volunteers contributed 1,321 hours.

The 29 volunteers of **Travelers Aid/Newark Airport** in May provided 549 hours of service assisting 10,535 passengers.

For the third month-in-a-row, **Travelers Aid at Reagan National Airport** set a new record. In May, the 227 volunteers assisted 65,004 passengers, a 111% increase since May 2018.

In May, 35 volunteers of **Travelers Aid at Will Rogers World Airport** contributed 603 hours and assisted 12,751 visitors, an increase of 1,505 visitors over April.

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## Volunteer Activities

### Social Events

Travelers Aid volunteers at **Bradley International Airport** recently got together at a local park to get to know one another better. A potluck picnic was held where everyone contributed a side dish or dessert. Everyone enjoyed the variety of food, the camaraderie, and an evening of fun including corn hole and croquet.



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## Fundraisers

### Sail into Summer

Travelers Aid International President Kathleen Baldwin congratulates Jan Ford, chair of Travelers Aid Society of San Diego, for the successful fundraiser on June 27.



### A 60-day snapshot of future events

**July 15, Baltimore Catholic Charities Golf Open**, Chartwell Country Club, Severna Park. [Learn more.](#)

**July 19, Family Guidance Center of Alabama, Diamonds & Denim: A 60th Anniversary Celebration, RSA Activity Center. [Learn more.](#)**

No August events scheduled.

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