Travelers Aid Response to COVID-19

We are closely tracking the coronavirus and would like to share with you information and preventive measures we should all be taking at this time. Please know that a healthy environment is our priority and we will be evolving our operations as needed, and as our contractual obligations allow, to respond to the rapidly changing conditions.

On a general note, we are following the CDC’s recommendations and encourage all of TAI’s locations to do the same, from frequent washing of hands to keeping offices and volunteer desks clean to respiratory etiquette. Please encourage your staffs and volunteers to stay home from work if feeling ill and to call their doctor if exhibiting symptoms.

Click here for symptoms.

A full list of precautions on the CDC Website can be accessed by clicking here

The CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
In the meantime, we extend **A HEARTFELT THANK YOU** to those volunteers and staff who are going above and beyond in their efforts to assist travelers, both in person and remotely. **They are doing what they do best — Fulfiling Our Mission!**

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**Fulfilling Our Mission**

...in the Community

There is a warmth to Glenda that seems to relax the very air around her. She speaks in a slow, deliberate and thoughtful cadence. But behind the kindness in her eyes is a fatigue, a tiredness that comes with being a single mother of four.

A junior high school teacher in Oklahoma City and former jazz singer, Glenda never intended to raise such a large family but, as the old saying goes, life doesn’t give you more than you can handle.

Eight years ago, Glenda was faced with a choice. She was letting her brother’s three grandchildren, who were living with him at the time, spend the weekend with her and her daughter. Glenda’s brother then told her he didn’t think he and his wife could keep and raise the grandchildren.

His plan for them, however, didn’t sit well with Glenda.

“He was only going to keep the two girls and asked if their brother could be sent to live with me,” she said. “I said ‘No. I’ll take them all.’ I didn’t want them to be separated.” She added, “My daughter was 16 at the time and wanted siblings. And I was the oldest of the siblings in my family, so I’ve always been very maternal.”

Her nieces and nephew moved in, but Glenda soon realized she may have taken on more than she could handle. “The oldest girl was nine, and she could read you and make you think she was wonderful. She was everyone’s princess, but there were problems,” said Glenda.

Her oldest niece was stealing and intentionally breaking things around the house. “Our house was hell going through this,” she said.

After a lot of care and months of treatment, they were able to turn the situation around. “Things are great now; she’s just a normal kid,” said Glenda. “But she needed a brick wall to run into, and that was me. I just kept praying for her.”

Everything seemed to be looking up for Glenda’s new little family when she was injured on the job last year and was out of work for three months. Money became tight, and the family was evicted and forced to live in a hotel room.
Glenda then made the difficult decision to come to Upward Transitions (UT), the TAI organization in Oklahoma City. “I’m a professional person. I felt like I was supposed to be doing the helping,” she said. “I’ve contributed to United Way for 20 years, so it was really tough.”

Glenda was impressed after her first visit to UT. “We were treated with respect and kindness. The atmosphere was comfortable, and the receptionist even remembered my name the next time I came back.”

The UT staff provided rent and utility assistance to get Glenda and her children out of the hotel and into a home. The organization also covered part of the cost of food and gas to help them get back on their feet.

“It’s tough and it’s hard not to get depressed, but we’re grateful to have a roof over our heads,” said Glenda. “My children are healthy and happy.” She added, “I don’t have the words, the help Upward Transitions gave my children and me...I’m truly grateful.”

As for the future, Glenda would like move into an administrative role at her school and she’d like to put out a gospel CD single sometime.

And she’s hoping to find someone to share her life with. “I believe soon God’s going to send someone to me who thinks I’m the cat’s meow,” she said. “A good man, who likes children!”

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...to Assist Travelers

On a Sunday afternoon, Travelers Aid volunteers at Washington (D.C.) Union Station provided assistance to a woman who approached their booth in tears. The woman—whose daughter had just gotten married earlier that day—had left her cell phone either at the hotel or in the cab she took to the station following her daughter’s wedding reception.

Unable to remember the daughter’s cell phone number, TAI staff assisted her with calls to the hotel during her five-hour layover at Union Station, and the women even walked out to the taxi area in hopes of recognizing the gray and white cab she had ridden in earlier.

The hotel was finally able to contact the new bride, who had sought assistance from the hotel housekeeping staff and successfully located her mother’s phone. A very ecstatic mom rushed back to the hotel, in the Georgetown area of D.C., via cab to obtain her phone. Upon her return to Union Station, she stopped by the TAI desk again to thank the staff for assisting her. “I wouldn’t have been able to accomplish anything without your assistance,” she told the staff. She even wanted to leave her bouquet as a "thank you" but was told to hold on to it as part of her memory of a very unforgettable weekend!
Staff in the News

TAI Team a Major Presence at Worldwide Airport Customer Service Conference

(from left): Chester Sobotka, Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire; Anthony Medina, Travelers Aid Chicago; Ed Powers, TAI membership director; Jane Mrosko, Travelers Aid JFK; John Ishu, Travelers Aid Chicago O'Hare, Heartland Alliance; Peter Lauten, Travelers Aid IAD, and (seated) TAI President Kathleen Baldwin

Travelers Aid International was well-represented at the AAAE/ACI-NA Airport Customer Experience Symposium, held earlier this month in New Orleans, La. Leading the eight-member delegation was TAI President and CEO Kathleen Baldwin, who was invited to and participated in the opening session of the conference, a meeting of the ACI-NA Marketing, Communications and Customer Experience Committee Steering Group. She gave a brief informational presentation about the value of Travelers Aid membership.
One member of the TAI team in attendance was Chet Sobotka, director of volunteer services for Travelers Aid of the Inland Empire. Chet was one of the presenters at a business session entitled “Beyond the Information Booth,” exploring how to deploy volunteers for special events within your airport in ways that go beyond information desks, and detailing effective ways to keep your volunteers engaged while providing value to the travelers and the airport.

As examples, Chet explained that volunteers at his airport participate in annual airport disaster drills; meet with other airport tenants so they know who Travelers Aid is and see how they can work together to enhance customer experiences at the airport; assist with special need students who fly in weekly by meeting them at the gate and escorting them to their transportation “home,” and provide assistance to their local USO group.

The TAI contingent also included John Ishu, Travelers Aid Chicago O'Hare, Heartland Alliance; Anthony Medina, volunteer manager, Travelers Aid Chicago; Jane Mrosko, TAI program manager, New York JFK; Peter Lauten, TAI program manager, Washington Dulles, and Ed Powers, TAI membership director, based in Portland, Maine.

CEO Baldwin reported that she received many inquiries from attendees about starting a volunteer program at other airports, and lots of compliments from conference participants like Dennis Hazell, customer service manager for the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, based at Washington Dulles, Gretchen Meyer, director of customer service for the Chicago Department of Aviation, and Kevin Mallory, customer service program manager for the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. Ryan Tenny, C.M., customer experience manager from Bradley International in Connecticut, also attended the conference.

Many thanks to AAAE, ACI-NA and Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport for hosting a great conference!

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**Member News**

**DCA Honorees Go Above and Beyond!**

Ed McGee and Rhonda Martin, TAI volunteers at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, were honored for their dedication and service at a Feb. 19 meeting of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Board. MWAA Board Chair Earl Adams, Jr. praised Ed for being selected as DCA’s Volunteer of the Year for 2019, devoting 640 hours of service. It’s the third year in a row Ed

(from left): Paul Malandrino, manager, DCA; Ed McGee, TAI Volunteer of the Year 2019, DCA; Rhonda Martin, 40-year TAI volunteer, DCA; MWAA Board Chair Earl Adams, Jr.
Kirkpatrick Family Fund Grants $15,000 to Upward Transitions

Upward Transitions was recently awarded a grant of $15,000 from the Kirkpatrick Family Foundation that will be used for assisting clients with services.

According to the Kirkpatrick Family Fund, they distributed $5.3 million in grants to 106 organizations for the first half of its fiscal year in the areas of animal welfare; arts and humanities; children, youth and families; community development; education; environment; health; social services, and endowment matching grants.

For over 95 years, Upward Transitions has touched the lives of Oklahomans in need. Upward Transitions’ mission is to prevent generational poverty through community collaboration, emergency relief and empowerment, therefore inspiring hope with our neighbors experiencing housing instability.

Upward Transitions’ CEO, Periann Pulliam shared, “We are so grateful and honored to receive this generous support from the Kirkpatrick Family Fund. The grant will allow us to continue making a meaningful impact on the lives of families and individuals who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless.”

The Kirkpatrick Family Fund, founded by John and Eleanor Kirkpatrick in 1989, supports charitable, civic and cultural causes that impact citizens in central Oklahoma and beyond. The organization has funded organizations and programs across many areas of need, contributing almost $80 million to more than 650 qualified nonprofit organizations that work tirelessly to address the greatest needs in their communities.

Volunteer Spotlight

Roy McKnerney and Evelyn Dahl, the Wednesday evening Travelers Aid volunteers at Bradley International Airport, recently helped out a military family who was traveling to the submarine base in New London, Conn. The wife was coming from Texas with her infant and six-year-old sons to meet her husband, who was stationed at the base.

The passenger was expecting a ride that did not materialize, so Roy helped her download a rideshare app while Evelyn took out coloring books and crayons she had recently donated to Travelers Aid for situations just like this.

Jason, the 6-year-old, was occupied with coloring (and eating the donut Roy had bought for him!) so his mom could focus on feeding the baby and making arrangements for a rideshare. Evelyn rinsed out the diaper bag and the baby’s
At the time their ride was supposed to arrive, Evelyn and Roy escorted the family out to the curb and helped carry the luggage, diaper bag and car seat. Unfortunately, the rideshare driver went to the wrong airport and therefore was going to be delayed another 15 minutes. Roy brought the family back inside the terminal and rejoined Evelyn to assist other passengers. When the driver finally arrived, Roy escorted the family and their belongings back out to the curb and loaded the car for them.

Both Roy and Evelyn went above and beyond to save the day for this young family to get them reunited with their husband/father!

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**TAI CEOs Visit in Our Nation's Capital**

TAI President Kathleen Baldwin had a pleasant surprise in mid-February when Elias Lebbos, CEO of Travellers Aid Australia, was in Washington, D.C., on vacation and stopped by the TAI office for a visit. They discussed a number of issues relevant to TAI, and Elias, who is based in Melbourne, said he “looks forward to exploring ideas on how we can work more closely in the future.”

On his return home, connecting through New York JFK, he also had the opportunity to meet JFK TAI volunteer Larry Margolin!

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**Oops!**

Two “clarifications” to items that appeared in the February 2020 edition of *Journeys*:

The photo collage of volunteers holding up Valentine’s Day signs were misidentified. They were actually the volunteers at Chicago O’Hare International Airport.

The item celebrating the 10-year anniversaries of two volunteers at
As Virus Grips Nation, Advocates Move to Halt Evictions

(The following is an article by Associated Press reporters Aaron Morrison and Kat Stafford, published on March 20, that includes comments from Jeff Smythe, executive director of HOPE Atlanta and a member of the TAI Board of Directors.)

On the day after the coronavirus outbreak was declared a global pandemic, Joe Ferguson was given a batch of court-ordered evictions to carry out in his job as constable in Tucson, Arizona.

He knocked on doors in the majority Hispanic community of South Tucson, told residents to gather personal effects, clothing, medications and pets, and watched as some families became homeless.

Ferguson says he strongly opposed the evictions, with the Arizona court system requiring him to toss people out of their homes even as the nation was going into a deeper state of lockdown and panic over the coronavirus.

“To serve the best interests of the entire community, while we’re all facing a public health epidemic, we should allow people to stay in their homes, so that we don’t stress our shelters, our hospitals and our first responders,” Ferguson said.

Then on Wednesday, President Donald Trump announced a proposed $1.5 trillion package that he said includes “immediate relief to renters and homeowners” by suspending evictions and foreclosures for 60 days.

But, it turns out, the vast majority of renters will not be covered by the protections.
That's because the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s plan only covers single-family homes with loans through the Federal Housing Administration — roughly 8 million homeowners, most of whom are not under foreclosure, according to HUD.

That compares to the roughly 43 million households who rented in 2019, according to the U.S. Census. Roughly half rent their home from an individual investor, while the other half rent from a business or multi-unit property owner. The ones renting from a business will not receive any protections, according to HUD’s proposal.

While housing advocates praised the Trump administration package as an “important first step,” they said that by excluding renters, an often economically vulnerable population, it does not go nearly far enough.

Susanna Blankley, coordinator of the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, said she’s concerned for renters and others who won’t be covered by Trump’s moratorium.

“It will help a lot of people but ... it’s a very limited subset,” Blankley said. “It’s not nearly enough.”

“We need big-scale solutions,” said Andrea Shapiro with the Metropolitan Council on Housing, a New York-based advocacy organization.

The White House did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Renters tend to have lower incomes than their homeowner counterparts and cannot tap into the equity in their homes for a credit line if in case of an emergency. And a disproportionate number of renters are African American, Hispanic and other minorities.

Housing advocates say the situation in the United States reveals a bigger crisis with affordable housing that goes beyond the current virus emergency. And they have grave fears about what happens next, when tenants and homeowners face back payments and are still broke from being jobless.

Officials in more than three dozen cities and states, including San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York state, have put in place their own policies to halt evictions, foreclosures and utility shutoffs out of concern that the economic fallout from massive job losses will push many people to the brink of homelessness at a time when they need to stay in their houses and apartments.

The measures vary in scope, and have included a months-long reprieve for renters and homeowners who can show that their inability to pay is related to the coronavirus upheaval.

But the majority of states and localities have yet to step in to stop people from losing their homes.

“At this point, with so much uncertainty for so many people who have not thought of themselves at risk of homelessness, to have any type of relief is helpful,” said Jeff Smythe, executive director of HOPE Atlanta, a
homelessness prevention organization in Georgia. The state had an eviction rate of 4.7% in 2016, more than double the U.S. average, according to data analysis by the Eviction Lab.

“Behind all of this is the bigger crisis,” Smythe said. “Not having enough affordable housing, not having livable wages and the disparities around income are still with us.”

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms signed an order this week meant to stop non-payment evictions by the Atlanta metropolitan area’s public housing authorities for 60 days. The moratorium is a “key component of our collective community efforts to prevent further exposure and spread of this virus,” Bottoms said in a statement.

(To read the full article, click here.)

We Need Your News!

We are always on the lookout for interesting news about your organization! E-mail ellen@travelersaid.org with any and all items you would like to be considered for the monthly TAI newsletter.

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