



WE ARE ONE TRAVELERS AID.

# JOURNEYS

April 2020

## Fulfilling Our Mission Amid COVID-19

### ...in the Community



Although the Travelers Aid staff and volunteers are currently not on site at **Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport**, many are channeling their volunteer spirit out in the community. Here is just a sampling!

Following a program-wide email, **Frank Taylor** immediately replied that he is available to run errands in the metro area for any Travelers Aid volunteers concerned about leaving their homes.

**David Luria** set up a program at his apartment building linking younger residents who are available to help with older residents in need. Brandywine Cares: *Neighbors Helping Neighbors* serves a residence of 305 units.

Groceries and other errands are being provided for one of our 92-year-old volunteers by TAI **Staff**. In addition, **Staff** has given more than seven hours of time at the Arlington Food Assistance Center to help bag, sort and distribute meals for families in need.

Working at *The Twig Thrift Shop* in Alexandria is keeping **Phyllis Sciacca** busy bagging up clothing for the Central Union Mission in D.C. A total of 22 thirty-gallon trash bags of clothes were recently sent to the mission's homeless shelter on Massachusetts Avenue.

**Diane Steed** is knitting hats for the local homeless shelter.

During March, **Maria Spottswood** helped distribute bagged lunches and bottles of water at a neighborhood church. She is also sewing masks for Sibley Hospital based on a pattern recommended by Johns Hopkins Hospital.

**Will O'Bryan** has been volunteering with *Food & Friends* by delivering groceries for clients, many of whom suffer from severe medical ailments.



### ...to Assist Travelers

A woman from Hungary approached TAI volunteer Jennifer Shen at Baggage Claim 11 at Washington Dulles International Airport, asking to talk to an immigration official. Her flight home to Budapest, Hungary, had been cancelled, her passport expired in a month, and her real inquiry amounted to: PLEASE GET ME HOME ASAP FOR THE LOVE OF GOD.

Even though she was desperate, she still had standards, like no (specified airline) flights, and as cheap as possible. A search for flights began, as news articles were frantically scanned to make sure none of the flights Jennifer found were routed through countries whose borders had already closed. Success! United Airlines had an available flight that left the same day taking the woman to Newark, then on to Munich, and finally Budapest.

## Member News

### Reports from the Front Lines in the Fight Against COVID-19



**Travelers Aid International Membership Director Edward Powers reached out to a number of TAI's members and agencies to get an idea of how they have changed their policies and procedures to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are some of their responses.**

### **David Sinski, Travelers Aid Chicago**

Travelers Aid Chicago (TAC) is currently providing service delivery remotely. As of March 13, the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) asked that we tell our volunteers to stay home until further notice. On March 21, after Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker's Stay At Home Order, Heartland Human Care Services (HHCS)/TAC made the decision to extend the Stay At Home to paid staff as well. An official memo was sent to CDA and staff started work from home at 5 p.m. on March 21. TAC staff keep daily communication through emails and phone calls to learn about changes to airport services and information.

All nine information desks at O'Hare International Airport have signs posted listing phone numbers at which they can reach TAC staff. The TAC general office phone calls have been forwarded to TAC staff at home as well. In addition, TAC staff are checking and replying to emails regularly.

Taking advantage of this time to augment professional development, all TAC staff and volunteers receive lists and participate in online training opportunities, including but not limited to topics such as mandated reporting, customer service, dealing with stress, being trauma informed, self-care, adapting to working from home, and more specific awareness/ instructional trainings on topics such as grocery delivery, disinfecting items brought in the home, and how to use Zoom/Skype/Microsoft teams.

### **Molly Hester, Travelers Aid Birmingham**

I released our staff on March 25. I have been managing the office and both programs on my own since then. I am not allowing anyone inside. All work is managed via telephone or email.

Our Senior Ride program has continued to operate but riders/trips have dropped significantly as "non-essential" appointments have been postponed or switched to tele/video visits. We have worked with the hospitals arranging transportation as they discharge patients to make more bed space available for COVID-19 patients. That has begun to decrease as well.

We've also seen a dramatic decrease in Travelers Assistance clients with only a few calls in the past few weeks.

### **Periann Pulliam, Upward Transitions, Oklahoma City**

Upward Transitions is open and continuing to serve our neighbors experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. At this time, our hours are the same, but our methods for supporting our clients have changed.

We are transitioning to providing assistance via telephone only for clients. We are asking our referral partners to email requests for assistance. Our staff will contact the partner agency case manager to coordinate screening and needs assessment of the client by phone.

In addition, to eliminate the congregating of clients, our front lobby is closed. Clients who arrive at our office may call our front desk at 405.232.5507 for questions. Clients without a phone may use the intercom in the entryway to communicate with staff.

In addition to these changes to our methodologies, we know that a wave of need is coming for our neighbors. We are preparing to help those who are going to need rent and utility assistance in the next 30, 60 and 90 days.

### **Marcy Roke, Travelers Aid San Diego**

One way we've responded to the COVID-19 crisis is in our SenioRide program. We sought (and received via contract revision) permission from our primary funder to offer emergency shopping vouchers to our clients and their volunteer drivers. We normally provide multiple transportation options for our senior clients for shopping, church, social activities and medical appointments, including rides with volunteer drivers.

Locally, we've been under stay-at-home orders (especially for seniors) since March 13. With these new shopping vouchers, volunteer drivers can pick up groceries, food bank donations, medicine, prescriptions, or to-go food orders on behalf of seniors, so they can stay safely at home. We've also limited normal volunteer driver trips to one driver/one client at a time.

### **Jason Miller, Families Forward Philadelphia**

Families Forward Philadelphia (FFP) continues to provide emergency shelter and supportive housing to 150 families (500 individuals) every day. We remain at full capacity and have adapted our services to accommodate social distancing (staff, participants and volunteers), and COVID-19 products and procedures (hand sanitizer, masks, gloves, cleaning). We work daily with the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services to address all issues with providing housing and emergency shelter.

To date, our funding remains strong and FFP has pursued additional funding to cover costs of COVID-19. The FFP Travelers Kiosk at 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station remained open until April 1, but Amtrak and Septa requested we close for the month of April due to COVID-19.

We are helping travelers remotely as needed with resources and linkages. Remarkably, we have adapted all meetings to online formats. The FFP Board and staff are rising to the challenge of this daily and it is an honor to be a part of this organization. We anticipate many challenges in the coming months and year, but plan to take them on as they arise.

## Volunteer Spotlight — Larry Zeluck



To say that Larry Zeluck goes above and beyond in dedicating his time and energy to Travelers Aid is an understatement – of the greatest magnitude. And that continues to be the case in this Age of COVID-19.

In the early days of his 15-year tenure with Travelers Aid at New York JFK International Airport, Larry volunteered once or twice a week while still working at Merrill Lynch, where he managed a team of mini and mainframe operators using various system software products. As time went on, however, it became evident that we could take Larry out of the airport, but not the airport out of Larry.

These days, Larry (*seen here with TAI President Kathleen Baldwin*) often will serve six days a week at JFK and has given time to helping travelers at Newark Liberty International Airport as well. During the current crisis, however, Larry has been helping out as interim TAI staff, representing Travelers Aid at JFK and EWR, and our organization as a whole.

Larry originally hails from Brooklyn, New York, but has lived for the past 35 years with his wife in Jackson Heights. His son David works at Universal Studios in California, his daughter Stephanie is with NASA and now resides in Alabama, and his youngest daughter Andrea lives in Forest Hills and works in the fashion industry. A fan of the oldies but goodies, trains and planes, science fiction, Junior's cheesecake, and anything chocolate, Larry enjoys sharing highlights about his children's successes, singing some tunes or debating over who has the best black and white cookie in NYC.

Larry has made lasting friendships with many of his peers, and our volunteer family remains fiercely dedicated because of his encouragement and commitment. Thank you, Larry!

## Going Above and Beyond

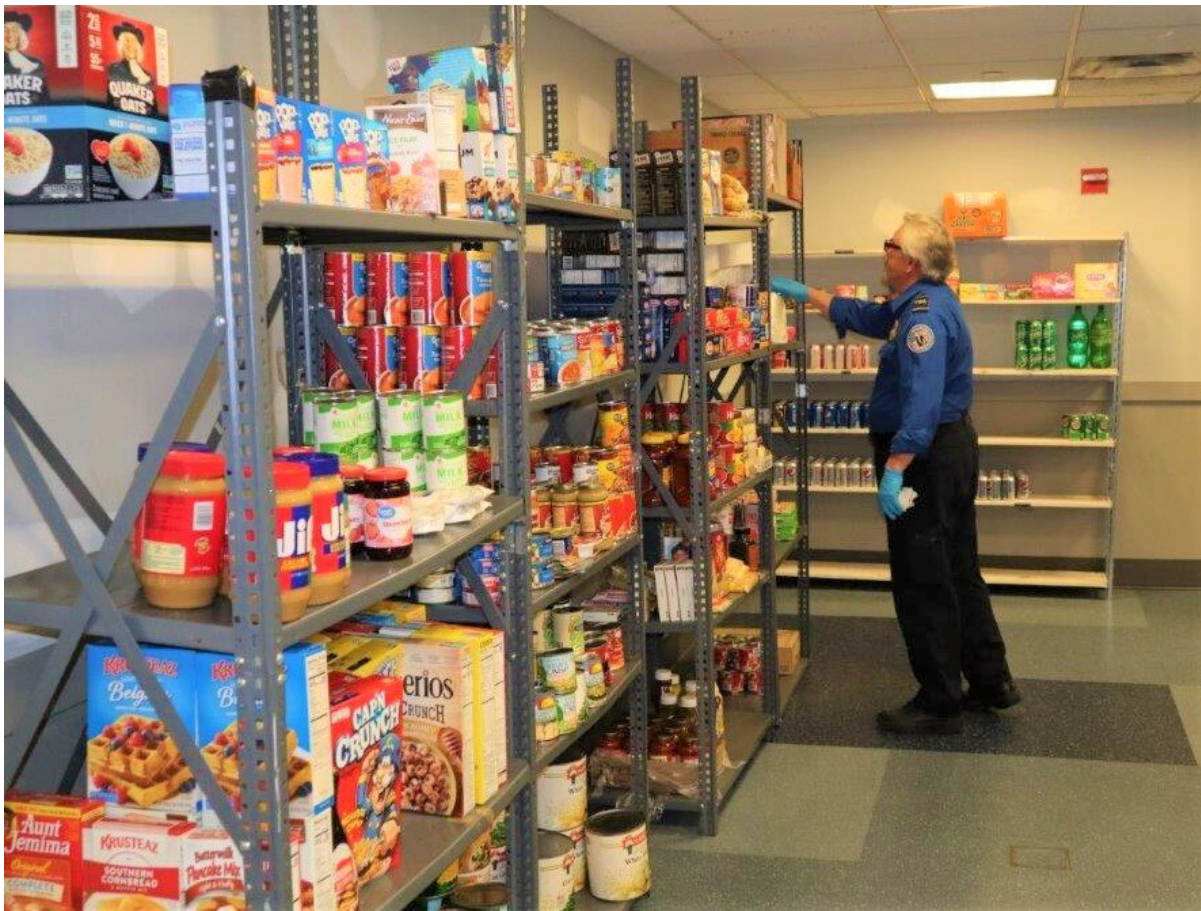


Travelers Aid staff, in partnership with JFK's Port Authority Police and Port Authority management, arranged for a 38-year-old woman to return to her home in Phoenix, Arizona, after being stranded at JFK Airport for more than two weeks. A family member had helped purchase a ticket for the woman so she could visit her elderly parents in Moscow. Unfortunately, the Moscow flight was canceled but, instead of rebooking the flight, the family member took the refund on the ticket and refused to pay for the traveler to return to Phoenix.

Without any other support system or resources, the woman remained at the airport, stuck and unsure how to turn around her situation. After the Port Authority Police encountered the woman and referred her to Travelers Aid, efforts to gather flight and price information were made. With the collective humanitarian efforts and support of our Port Authority partners, Travelers Aid secured a ticket for the woman, who then was successfully able to return to Phoenix.

## Food Pantry Now Open for Workers at IAD





With the drastic decrease in air travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, airports around the world are being forced to furlough and/or let go many workers. Recognizing this, Transportation Security Administration officers at Washington Dulles International Airport decided to open a food pantry to help out these workers and their families.

The pantry was stocked originally by donations from the TSA officers themselves, but Travelers Aid International staff and volunteers have been collecting food donations in the local area since April 8. Donations have been picked up from volunteers' driveways and porches. So far, more than 2,400 pounds of food, and many toiletry items, have been collected.

And those who were not able to donate food have been making online financial contributions on the TAI website. Since April 8, more than \$3,000 has been received in individual contributions, and money continues to come in online. The Committee for Dulles also made a \$1,000 donation.

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, which manages Dulles and Reagan National airports, donated space for the pantry, which is set up in a room near Baggage Claim No. 6 on the airport's arrivals level. The space, stocked with non-perishable foods such as canned goods, oatmeal, peanut butter and pasta, is staffed by a TSA officer and is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 5 p.m. Any airport worker can access the

pantry up to two times a week and is allowed to leave with one bag of items, which is checked to ensure equal distribution of goods.

Hand sanitizer stations are set up inside and outside the entry to the pantry, and up to four people are permitted to enter at a time to ensure social distancing. Pantry visitors are encouraged to wear masks.

Peter Lauten, TAI program manager at the airport, commented, “We are very proud of the support we have received and have been able to share with the community. We will continue to work to feed this population as long as necessary.”

*(Pictured below are IAD Coordinator of Volunteers Aliza Mendelowitz and Lauten helping with food deliveries.)*



## Can't Find TP? There's a Museum for That!

*(The following is an excerpt from a story in Stuck at the Airport about the Toilet Paper Museum in the Pacific Northwest.)*

Toilet paper has been in the news quite a bit lately as people search for it, swap for it and, in a pinch, steal it.





But Bob Berger isn't letting anyone near his cache of more than 200 rolls of vintage, odd and unusual rolls of toilet paper in his Toilet Paper Museum.

Berger began his own collection with a bright pink roll of Canadian toilet paper with French writing on one side of the wrapper and English on the other. Not long after, his sister presented samples from the first and tourist-class restrooms on a German train.

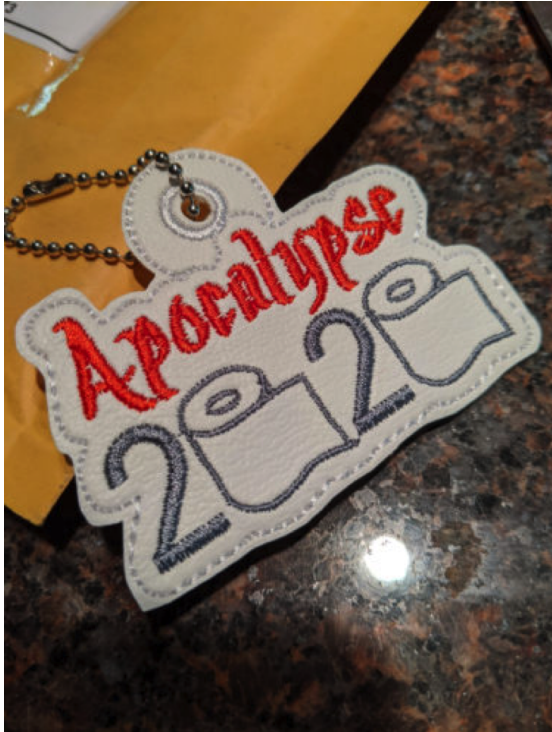
After that, the collection just kept rolling along.

The circa-1969 "Krapp" toilet paper comes from Austria. The roll of "Doudou" toilet paper hails from Martinique.

In the celebrity section of the museum, toilet paper bearing the likeness of actor John Wayne is emblazoned with the slogan, "It's rough, it's tough and it don't take crap off anyone."

The politically themed section of the Toilet Paper Museum includes novelty rolls that encourage users to wipe up with presidents ranging from Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Jimmy Carter.

And Donald Trump has his very own section.





## COVID-19 Resource Links

*(compiled by Heartland Alliance's Human Care Services)*

### **National Association of Social Workers**

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Infectious-Diseases/Coronavirus/Self-Care-During-the-Coronavirus-Pandemic>

Counseling, self-care, working remote.

### **National Network to End Domestic Violence**

[https://nnedv.org/latest\\_update/resources-response-coronavirus-covid-19/](https://nnedv.org/latest_update/resources-response-coronavirus-covid-19/)

Available services, tips on what to look for in a pandemic. Working remote.

### **American Psychological Association**

<https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2020/03/covid-19-leadership>

Leadership maximizing trust and minimizing stress in COVID 19 pandemic.

### **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/>

What the VA is doing, protections and FAQ

### **Centers for Disease Control**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

FAQs

### **Centers for Disease Control**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/index.html>

Latest information updates on CDC work with coronavirus

### **Centers for Disease Control**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Managing Anxiety and Stress tips

### **Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration**

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/virtual-recovery-resources.pdf>

Online recovery supports

### **Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration**

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf>

Tips for before and after social distancing

**United States Government/CDC**

<https://www.coronavirus.gov/>

Information on symptoms, populations and latest maps

## We Need Your News!



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

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