

TCAA PAST AND PRESENT

How did the Triton College Annuitants Association (TCAA) come about and when? The Triton College Retirees came together when Lou Maze, with the help of other retirees, formed the group in 1994. Lou was the first leader of the Triton retirees. This early group defined membership as open to

- annuitants, academic and non academic, of Triton college
- all employees of TC who are eligible for SURS benefits or are receiving benefits
- Surviving spouses who are eligible for SURS benefits.

Minutes from a May 25, 1999 meeting of the group indicated that Dorothy Libner, Lonnie Davis, Kathryn DeHaven and Genevieve Crays were elected as officers of the newly established TCAA and TCAA became a chapter of the State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA). William Rogge, President of SUAA and Robert Harvey, Member-at-Large from College of DuPage were invited as guest speakers for this meeting of Triton Retirees. The speakers emphasized the role of SUAA and the many campus chapters around the state in protecting the interests of those people who participate in the State University Retirement System (SURS). SUAA and the local chapters provide a means of communication through newsletters and meetings to keep the membership apprised of legislation that may impact on the pension system. Mr. Rogge called for nominations and/or volunteers to be the executive committee for Triton College Annuitants Association. Dorothy Libner was elected as President; Kathryn DeHaven as Membership Chair; Lonnie Davis as Social Chair; and Genevieve Crays as Secretary-Treasurer.

In July, 1999 TCAA President, Dorothy Libner sent out a letter to Triton Retirees inviting them to participate in the SUAA/TCAA. At that time, the

chapter had 63 members and the officers were seeking to increase the membership to over 250. The letter provided details of the purpose of TCAA, primarily to promote the interests and welfare of SURS retirees, their spouses and survivors. Among the goals cited were: Improvement of the state funding of SURS pension program and the State Health Insurance Plan; Appropriation of mandated State contributions; Compounding of annual increases for both annuitants and survivors; maintaining all other current benefits.

The letter further encouraged increasing the executive committee to include a Vice-President, an Insurance Chair, and a Legislative chair and invited annuitants to participate by volunteering to be on a committee.

The committee planned and implemented an October, 1999 luncheon meeting which was set up as a Fall Social and took place at Triton College. So began the twice a year luncheons giving attendees an opportunity to catch up with fellow retirees and to be informed as to happenings within the sphere of SURS and SUAA.

These early officers continued into 2000 when George Carter and Chuck Vilim joined the Executive committee as participants on the Membership Committee. George, at that time, was Vice President/President Elect but in 2001 had to retire from the committee to meet personal commitments. In 2003 Chuck started the TCAA Newsletter.

In 2002, Ann Sullivan was elected President and Ray Oviyach became Vice-President/ President-elect. Gloria Hillert served as Insurance Chair, Lonnie Davis as Social chair, Chuck continued on with the Membership committee and Bob Witherspoon entered the picture, serving as Newsletter Editor. In 2002 Lois Pye served as Recording Secretary. This team served together until 2004.

During 2003 the committee worked on updating the TCAA Constitution at which time the officer slate included: President, Vice-President/President-elect, Past President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, Social Chair,

Membership Chair, Publication Chair and Members at Large consisting of 2 members until the association reaches 100 members and then an additional member at large for each of the next twenty-five members until a maximum of 4 members at large has been reached. The Constitution was approved by members attending a meeting on April 15, 2003.

The slate for officers to be elected for the 2004-06 term included Ray Oviyach as President, Ann Sullivan as Treasurer, Lois Pye as Recording Secretary, Gloria Hillert as Insurance Chair, Cellie Banks as Membership chair, Lonnie Davis as Social Chair and Bob Witherspoon as Newsletter editor. Longtime Membership chair, Kathy DeHaven died and this was a significant loss to the Executive committee.

The 2006-2008 term began with Ray continuing as President and Ann as Treasurer. Lois served as Secretary and Gloria Hillert as Insurance Chair. Lonnie continued as Social Chair, Cellie Banks as Membership chair and Bob Witherspoon continued to work on the Newsletter. Frank DeGrado joined the Executive committee as a member at large and focused on Legislative concerns.

In 2008, with Ray as President, the Executive Committee included Ann Sullivan as Treasurer, Lois Pye as Recording Secretary, Gloria Hillert as Insurance chair, Tom Bondi joined the committee and served as Membership chair. Lonnie Davis continued as Social chair and De DeGrado as Legislative chair. Members at Large included Bob Anthony and Ken Czerwinski who joined the committee that year. Bob Witherspoon continued as Publication chair.

In the spring of 2008 an invitation was offered by Ray, in the news letter, that members of TCAA were welcome to join the Executive committee at their breakfast meetings. Connie Allekian attended one of the meetings and accepted Ray's invitation to be Vice-President/President Elect. At the spring luncheon, Ray announced to the TCAA members that he and his wife were moving to Texas and so he was resigning as President and turning the role over to Connie Allekian.

In the fall of 2008 the Executive committee decided to have a special election to confirm the offices that had been filled during the previous several months. The candidates for the fall election included: Connie Allekian, President; Carol Bibly, Vice-President/President Elect; Ann Sullivan, Treasurer; Lonnie Davis, Social Chair; De DeGrado, Legislative Chair; Tom Bondi, Membership chair; Gloria Hillert, Bob Anthony, John Boulet and Bob Hlavin as Members at Large; Bob Witherspoon as Publication Editor. John Boulet agreed to be the Webmaster chair to begin researching how to develop a web page. Bob Hlavin offered to be the liaison with SUAAction. The position of Secretary was vacated when Lois Pye retired; no candidate came forward. Later in the year, Lonnie Davis announced his retirement from the committee as Social chair and Mary Jeans filled that position. Later that fall, Ken Piwowar came on board and joined the webmaster team. In March of 2009, Ken was successful in setting up a web page on the Triton College web site. This accomplishment was valuable in providing ongoing information about TCAA, SUAA and Triton annuitants.

During the period of 2008-2010, there was increasing legislative pressure on the pension system to solve the problem of huge state debt to the pension systems and so members of TCAA joined with other chapters to discuss the issues facing SURS participants. These pressures continued to the present.

In 2010, at the spring luncheon, Carol Bibly became President and Connie Allekian Past President. John Boulet departed from Chicagoland and so resigned from the Executive committee. Bob Witherspoon was elected as Vice-President, President-Elect and continued to work on the publication of the newsletter. De DeGrado continued to work on Legislative matters. Members-at-Large included Bob Anthony, Gloria Hillert, Linda Mullikin and Ken Piwowar (webmaster). Bob Hlavin continued to serve as liaison with SUAAction. In 2011 vacancies occurred on the committee and Jens Nielsen joined the committee. John Cadero became a member at large during this period as well.

The election of 2012 for the period of 2012-2014 saw Bob Witherspoon taking the reins as President and Carol as Past-President. Jens Nielsen was elected as Vice-President/President-elect. Tom Bondi moved from Membership chair to Recording Secretary. Gloria agreed to serve as Membership chair with Carol Bibly as co-chair. Ann Sullivan continued as Treasurer and Mary Jeans as Social Chair. De DeGrado agreed to continue as Legislative chair which became more and more important since there was so much activity going on in Springfield in relation to the debt associated with state obligations to the pension systems. Bob Anthony took over as Publications editor, Ken Piwovar continued as Webmaster and Connie Allekian served as TCAAction chair.

The committee continued to work towards keeping the TCAA membership informed about legislative activity and also provided extensive information concerning health insurance. Bob Witherspoon was very active in providing as much detail as possible.

In the spring of 2014, for the 2014-2016 term, Jens Nielsen assumed the role of President. Michael Gong agreed to fill the post of Vice-President/President-Elect. Ann Sullivan was Treasurer, Bob Witherspoon was Past President and Recording Secretary. Carol Bibly became the Membership chair, Mary Jeans- Social Chair, Bob Anthony - Publications Editor, De DeGrado continued as Legislative chair. Ken Piwovar served as Webmaster and members at large included Tom Bondi, Connie Allekian and John Cadero. A primary focus of the committee was to try and build up the TCAA membership. Reaching out to current employees became a goal for the committee.

During the 2016-2018 term Michael Gong served as President with Mary Jeans filling the role of Vice-President/President-Elect. Jens filled the term as Past President. Ann Sullivan was Treasurer, Carol Bibly - Membership chair, De DeGrado- Legislative chair, John Cadero filled in as Social Chair until his departure from Triton College in 2017 and Bob Anthony continued as Publications chair. Members at large included Ken Piwovar-

Webmaster, Tom Bondi and Connie Allekian- TCAAAction and Bob Witherspoon assisting with Membership.

Sadly, Bob Witherspoon, a valued member of the TCAA Executive committee, died in February, 2018. It was his brainchild to develop a history of the TCAA and we, on the Executive committee, dedicate this rendering of the history to the memory of Bob Witherspoon. Bob started with the TCAA in 2002 and took the reins as Publications editor. Throughout his service with the Executive committee he was generous with his time and talent to offer guidance and assistance to members as needed. During those 16 years on the Executive committee he served as Publications chair, Vice-President/President Elect, President, Recording Secretary and Membership chair and Member at Large until his passing in 2018.