

# TCAA FALL 2019 NEWSLETTER

## TRITON COLLEGE ANNUITANTS ASSOCIATION

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## 1. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Apparently the Illinois Policy Institute (IPI) recently sent a letter out, and the result was that some people dropped their membership in SUAA/TCAA. I did not receive one of these letters, nor have I read one, but I have spoken with a couple of our members who did, and they had the impression that dropping their membership was the right thing to do. I am baffled as to why the IPI chose to target SUAA members, although I suspect there was a political motive. Looking at their website, I can't see any mention of SUAA. Let me just reiterate that SUAA/TCAA is the group that works hard every day to ensure you receive the benefits you earned throughout your retirement. If I hear of a good reason why you shouldn't support protecting your benefits and mine, I'll make sure and let you know.

Linda Brookhart, Executive Director of SUAA, and Linda Guinn, President of SUAA, have met with all 50 or so new legislators in Springfield, so that they would know about SUAA from the start, and they understand the reasons why SUAA is involved in the issues around retirement benefits. It's a good idea for all of us to try and meet our local Representatives, and even to know our Senators, so that when they are presented bills that might reduce benefits, they know some of the folks who would be impacted. Speaking of Representatives, I'm looking forward to our Fall Luncheon on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, when Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, daughter of TCAA past-president Michael Gong, will be our speaker. Jennifer is a new State Representative, and she is serving on several committees that are of interest to the members of TCAA. (Please see information elsewhere in this newsletter.) In addition to her presentation, Representative Gershowitz will allow time for questions. Also, the luncheon will be a buffet, prepared and presented by Triton's own HIA students. Yes, there will be desserts too!

Finally, I want to encourage you to have your spouse, or any other beneficiary you have under SURS, join SUAA/TCAA. As you know, this is the organization that relentlessly watches legislation in Springfield to make sure our benefits remain intact. When your spouse joins the group, they may become better informed about the work the organization does, and can then add their voice to our cause.

Best wishes, Mary Jeans - President, TCAA and SUAA Co-Chair for Membership

## **2. TCAA Fall Luncheon**

The TCAA Fall Luncheon will be held on **Tuesday, October 22, 2019**, at Triton College. We will meet on the second floor of the Student Center in the Hospitality Room B 203. Registration will take place from 11:00 to 11:30 AM. Our luncheon, along with an opportunity to meet and greet other attendees, will be from 11:30 to 12:30 PM. A short business meeting and our speaker for the afternoon will follow the luncheon. Our luncheon speaker will be Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, daughter of Michael Gong and Illinois House Representative (D) from the 17<sup>th</sup> District. Jennifer will discuss the status of the committees she is on in Springfield including *Elementary Education, Higher Education, Property Tax Relief*, and the *2020 Census*. Time will be allotted for questions. If you plan to attend the luncheon, please **RSVP to Carol Bibly at 708-466-1093 or [cbibly2002@yahoo.com](mailto:cbibly2002@yahoo.com)**.

## **3. Membership**

**Carol Bibly, Chairperson**

Membership in State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA) and subsequently, in Triton College Annuitants Association (TCAA), is a positive approach to help ensure our pension benefits and health care benefits are preserved. However, membership is open to not only those currently receiving pension benefits through SURS, but also anyone currently employed and in the future will be the recipient of these benefits. The presence of SUAA in Springfield is continuing to help prevent legislative changes to the Constitution that would diminish pension benefits. They are working constantly on our behalf.

Sign in and check out [SUAA.org](http://SUAA.org). Read the “mini briefings” to understand the actions in Springfield, updates on SUAA’s position on bills presented in Springfield and “Members only” available discounts. TCAA has 154 members and is continuing to grow as well. You can help our membership grow by speaking with current employees and retirees about joining and passing along this information to get them started.

The Springfield veto session begins October 28<sup>th</sup>, and we will keep you updated with the proceedings as they pertain to our pension and health care.

Stay connected and informed with SUAA and TCAA.

## 4. Treasurer's Report

Ann Sullivan

The TCAA bank account has a current balance of \$2,924.83. The main expenses of TCAA are meeting expense and printing/postage expense. Our income from dues averages around \$88 per month.

## 5. Legislative Report – Carol Bibly

The following is a brief summary of the general guideline for SUAA's positions on legislation that affects pension, health, insurance and other retirement benefits for SURS participants, as SUAA works constantly for their positive outcomes.

The main legislative goal for 2019 is to protect the retirement security of all past, present and future employees of Illinois' public universities, community colleges and their survivors.

**2019 Legislative Acton Plan SUAA** supports legislation that would provide for guaranteed full funding of the SURS pension system.

**SUAA** opposes any legislative attempt to amend, modify or eliminate Article XII, Section 5 of the Illinois State Constitution which states *"Membership in any pension or retirement system of the State, any unit of local government or school district, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, shall be an enforceable contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired"*.

**SUAA** opposes legislation that does not provide for a compounded automatic annual increment that provides protection against inflation.

### Revenue Enhancement Measures

It is **SUAA's** position that in order for the state to meet its current budget obligations, make full annual payments to the various pension systems and pay down the existing pension debt, the legislature will have to implement measures to increase state revenues and/or produce savings.

### Health Insurance

**SUAA** supports full funding for the College Insurance Plan, and SUAA opposes any reduction in coverage provided by that plan.

### Federal Legislation

**SUAA** supports the repeal of the Social Security Windfall Elimination and Pension Offset.

To read more of SUAA's positions on these and other critical issues, go to [SUAA.org](http://SUAA.org). To become familiar with all of SUAA's work on behalf of us, check regularly on their website

## **6. Upcoming TCAA Elections**

**Connie Allekian**

The year is going by so quickly and before we know it, it will be time for election of officers. Most of the people currently serving on the Executive committee have been doing so for over 8 years or more. We hope that there will be some of you in the TCAA membership that will be willing to serve on the Executive Committee. The office of Vice-President/President-elect is currently without a candidate and we will need someone to come forward to fill that important role. A notice will be coming out in the not too distant future regarding the committee vacancies that will need to be filled. We hope that there will be many volunteers to fill the positions.

## **7. In Memory of Steve Branz**

Our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Steve Branz who passed away on August 26, 2019. Steve was a Business Department faculty member as well a Counselor for over 30 years. He resided in Gilberts, Illinois and in Arizona after retiring in 1997. Steve was 79 years old and will be missed by all who knew him.

## **8. In Memory of Annette Jajko**

Our condolences to the family and friends of retired Triton faculty member Annette Jajko who passed away in May 2019. Annette began as a part-time instructor in the Marketing Department and then continued to become a full-time instructor in the Real Estate and Marketing Departments and finally completing her career in the Business Department.

Annette was involved with many extra curricular activities representing the departments she was involved with throughout her tenure, which included area businesses and feeder high schools. Annette was a skillful and consistent representative of Triton College for nearly 30 total years. She was 67 and will be greatly missed.

## **9. Quality of Life Articles**

**Bob Anthony**

I include in this segment a collection of summaries from recent articles in a journal entitled, *Focus on Healthy Aging*, from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

### **“Don’t Let Shingles Harm Your Vision” – October 2019**

We are aware of the need for seniors to get a Shingles shot to prevent this painful condition, but this article indicates possible complications with vision as well.

Women and people age 75 and older are the two groups with the highest rates of infection. According to an analysis between 2004 and 2016, the incidence of Shingles (herpes zoster ophthalmicus - HZO), has tripled during that time period.

According to the article, HZO may affect the eye even though a skin rash does not develop. Signs of HZO involving the eye include pain, light sensitivity, and blurred

vision. Research suggests that about 6 percent of people who develop HZO experience some long-term vision loss.

Two Shingles vaccines are available; Shingrix and Zostavax. Shingrix is recommended from age 50 (two injections, 6 months apart) and is 91 percent effective in those age 70 and older. Zostavax is recommended from age 60 and is about 40 percent effective in those 70 and up, only 18 percent effective in those 80 and older.

### **“Exercise Lowers High Blood Pressure” – June 2019**

I suspect many of us take medication to lower blood pressure. As we age, the loss of elasticity in the arteries tends to increase blood pressure. Doctors for good reason want to keep that pressure under a certain blood pressure threshold. Sometimes that medication may be counter-productive. I mention this because I had a recent incidence of loss of consciousness and my doctor and I decided that the dosage of my high blood pressure medication was too high.

This article suggests that physical activity can be as effective as medications in lowering blood pressure, especially the higher or systolic pressure. Two studies were referenced in the article and although there are caveats with the data, exercise appears to have a positive effect on lowering systolic pressure in seniors.

What can we do? 1) Some physical activity is better than none. 2) Work up gradually to 150 minutes of moderate exercise intensity per week or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise intensity per week. 3) If you have a chronic condition, discuss with your doctor what exercise types and intensities are suitable for you.

Another article entitled, **“Be Proactive About Stroke Prevention”** – May 2019, emphasizes the importance of controlling blood pressure. In addition to taking medication, the author of the article also recommends that we look to our diet. For example, consider avoiding fried or processed foods and sugary soda drinks. Physical activity is encouraged and using a formal eating plan, such as DASH (dietary approaches to stop hypertension).

## “The Best Eating Plans for Mind and Body” – August 2019

This article suggests that healthy eating can protect your physical and mental health. The chart below lists the three recommended diets, what foods are recommended in those diets, and what foods should be restricted.

<b>DIET</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED FOODS</b>	<b>RESTRICTED FOODS</b>
MIND	Olive oil, whole grains, green leafy Vegetables, other vegetables, Berries, fish, poultry, beans and nuts, daily glass of wine	Red meat and meat products, fast or fried food, cheese, butter, pastries and sweets
Mediterranean	Olive oil, whole grains, vegetables, Potatoes, fruit fish, nuts and legumes, wine in moderation	Full-fat dairy products, red meat
DASH	Whole grains, fruit, vegetables, Dairy products, meat and fish, Nuts and legumes	Fats, sweets, salt

## 9. TCAA Executive Committee for 2018 – 2020

### **President**

Mary Jeans  
[mjeans104@gmail.com](mailto:mjeans104@gmail.com)

**TCAA Director - Member at Large**  
Kevin Kennedy

### **Vice-President/President Elect**

**TCAA Director – Member at Large**  
Tom Bondi

### **Past President**

Michael Gong

**TCAA Director (Legislative) Member at Large**  
“De” DeGrado

### **Recording Secretary**

Connie Allekian

**TCAA Director (Webmaster) Member at Large**  
Ken Piwowar

### **Treasurer**

Ann Sullivan

### **Publication Editor**

Bob Anthony ,[banthony103@comcast.net](mailto:banthony103@comcast.net)

### **Social Chair**

Jens Nielsen

### **Membership Chair**

Carol Bibly, [cbibly2002@yahoo.com](mailto:cbibly2002@yahoo.com)

**Web sites -** [www.triton.edu/tcaa](http://www.triton.edu/tcaa)  
[www.suaa.org](http://www.suaa.org)