



ASTA Veteran Zena Vaughn To Head Up Administrative Staff

Cheri Bowman ASTA's New Volunteer Coordinator

Zena Vaughn, ASTA's talented director of marketing and special events for nearly 10 years, stepped up to the position of executive director on Jan. 31.

Zena will succeed Lil Serafine, executive director since 2014, who is retiring.

Also arriving in ASTA's front office is Cheri Bowman, who took over the duties of volunteer and events coordinator on Nov. 29. Cheri succeeds Erin Hoff.

"In her seven-plus years at the helm of the administrative staff, Lil Serafine really brought the association and railroad to a new level of professionalism," said ASTA Chairman Ben Sargent. "She



Zena Vaughn

had Zena Vaughn at her right hand the whole time, and we look forward to continuing that progress and success with Zena in the lead."

Zena came to ASTA from three years as managing director of Penfold Theatre Company in Round Rock, and had also been managing director of Raven Theatre Company in Chicago.

She holds a degree in theater from Texas A&M Corpus Christi, and a master of non-profit management degree from DePaul University in Chicago.

Cheri came to ASTA from a job as economic-development specialist for the fast-growing City of Hutto. Previously, she had been regional manager for Clampitt Paper Co. in Austin

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Cheri Bowman



Second "Circus of Wonders" a Fun and Rewarding Evening for Restoration Cause

After a pandemic-related one-year hiatus, ASTA's annual gala, the "Circus of Wonders," returned in fine style Nov. 20, providing a festive evening of entertainment and meeting its fundraising goal of \$75,000 for the association's rail-preservation projects.

Nearly 60 sponsors and guests filled the ballroom at the new site of the "Circus," the Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel, and enjoyed a fine dinner, real circus performances from Epic Entertainment, and a silent auction.

Chairs for the event were Eric and Jennifer Stratton, assisted by ASTA Directors Lynda Rife and Nikelle Meade.

Leading the fundraising totals were Etix, the company which provides ticketing services for ASTA's passenger

operations; Herzog Transit Services, which maintains Metro's railroad and operates its commuter trains; and longtime generous ASTA volunteers Eileen and Dave Shannon. (Complete list of donors on the next page.)

The event attracted nine new sponsors and 10 returning sponsors.

Proceeds from the "Circus" will be directed toward ASTA's historical preservation and renovation projects. The event also benefits the Culinary Arts and Hospitality program offered by Leander ISD, with a portion of the proceeds going toward scholarships for students in the program.

Twenty donors contributed items and experiences for the silent auction, with a Lake Travis rental for 12, from Lynda Rife, drawing the highest bid, at \$1,450.

Thanks to our 'Circus' donors!

(Donations to ASTA's "Circus of Wonders" fundraiser. If we have left anyone off, please accept our apologies and contact us at director@austin-steamtrain.org so we can make sure we recognize you in our next edition.)

'Big Top' Donor

(\$10,000)

Etix

Sargent Brothers, Printers
and Typographers
Schoen Family
Texas Compound LLC
Trailblazer Grille and
Candy Rush
Emporium

'Tightrope' Donors

(\$5,000)

Herzog Transit Services
Dave and Eileen
Shannon

Supporters

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(\$2,000)

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Auction Donors

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of Bert Dockall

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Republic Kitchen & Bar

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Serafine Family

Sheraton Austin

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Center

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Larry and Nancy
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Adam Staerkel

Mark Staerkel

ZACH Theatre

New Positions ... (from Page One)

for eight years.

She holds an associate's degree from Gadsden State Junior College in Alabama, and has attended Auburn University.

ASTA's executive director is in charge of all the association's administrative functions, including financial management, fundraising and advertising and marketing.

The volunteer coordinator manages volunteer recruitment and retention, scheduling and training of onboard-service volunteers, and manages special events, including the *North Pole Flyer*.

ASTA's staff will soon be rounded out with the addition of an office and ticket administrator and a mechanical foreman to assist General Superintendent Chris Hoff in the Cedar Park Yard.

A Special Thanks to Our Friends and Supporters,
the City of Cedar Park and Cedar Park Tourism
Services!



1992 - 2022 ...
Thirty Years of Adventure!

As Its Collection of Railroad Books and Materials Expands, So Does ASTA's Museum and Research Role

ASTA's mission statement obliges the association to "preserve and interpret" railroad history, and increasingly that goes beyond restoring and operating historically authentic trains. Since ASTA opened museum space in its Cedar Park offices in 2015, its respectable collection of railroad artifacts is expanding as well into a sizeable collection of railroad books and paper.

Most recently, ASTA was given the railroad library of the late Dr. Frank Peacock, a Bertram-area orthodontist and avid collector of all things rail-related. ASTA volunteers packed up and put into safe storage 45 boxes of books (well over 1,000 volumes), as well as photos, time tables, track charts, freight-car data and other artifacts.

Dr. Peacock's collection will be added to a recent gift of 167 books from donor Gary Jacobson, and to the existing ASTA collection that was gifted by the late volunteer Sam Gardner, ASTA founder Arthur U. Boone, and others.

Two volunteers, George Zapalac and Micki Scott, have worked hard identifying

and organizing the existing book collection, and have catalogued more than 1,000 books in a searchable spreadsheet.

Of course, once the whole ASTA library is catalogued, the association intends to make the collection available to volunteers, members, scholars and anyone in the general public interested in railroads and their history. Configuration and location of such a library is still being considered, but the raw materials are here in abundance!



Books and more books from the Peacock collection.

Capital Metro Honors Brian Smith, Hard-working Man of Many Hats

Brian J. Smith, a 23-year volunteer veteran of ASTA, has won the prestigious Safety Champion Award from Capital Metro for the fourth quarter of 2021. The recipient is selected from a pool of rail nominees from Metro, Herzog Transportation Services, Watco (operating as Austin & Western Railroad), as well as nominees from Metro's bus, paratransit, and facilities staffs.

Brian has served for years as secretary to the ASTA board and executive committee, and as one of the A&TC's locomotive engineers. More recently he had taken on the job of operations manager, serving as ASTA's day-to-day interface with Capital Metro, planning train operations, keeping regulatory paperwork in order and serving as rules instructor, training ASTA's train crews. It's in his role as rules instructor and operating manager that his passion for safety is most apparent. And that pursuit of safety is paramount



not only for the traveling passengers, but for his fellow crew members, and for the other railroad partners on the tracks that ASTA travels.

"Brian always takes the high road in matters of safety and operations. Allowing short cuts, or the path of least resistance in these matters is just not in his vocabulary," said ASTA President Dr. Robert Schoen.

In addition to a handsome plaque, he will also receive recognition throughout the Capital Metro Transportation system. A hearty congratulations to Brian!

Cedar Park Yard, A&TC Volunteers Playing a Role in Upcoming Robert Rodriguez Film

ASTA's Cedar Park Yard and its engines and cars were the setting Oct. 19 as the characters in Robert Rodriguez' upcoming sci-fi action thriller raced and chased each other among the rolling equipment.

The picture, to be titled *Hypnotic*, with a release date as yet unscheduled, stars Ben

Affleck and Alice Braga.

The actors and a numerous crowd of cameramen, directors, technicians and general helpers swarmed around a full array of lights, cameras and technical equipment as *Hypnotic* turned the usually placid yard into a movie-set-for-a-day.

And helping as crew for

all the moving engines and cars were a dozen of ASTA's operating volunteers.

While shooting lasted only a day, preparation and behind-the-scenes work occupied at least a week of busy activity in and around the yard.

According to advance press accounts, *Hypnotic* is the story of a detective (Affleck)

who "becomes entangled in a mystery involving his missing daughter (Hala Finley) and a secret government program."

ASTA and its equipment and volunteers have been involved in a number of movie and television projects over the years, notably *The Newton Boys* (1998) and others.

One Hundred Issues Along, 'Call Board' Still Telling ASTA's Story

Its first issue noted wryly that “whenever two or more Americans gather to common purpose, one of them, sooner or later, will start a newspaper.” That’s exactly what happened in the summer of 1990, just a year after the Austin Steam Train Association was chartered, when the *Call Board* appeared with its two-page No. 1 issue.

Nearly 32 years later, both the association and the newsletter are still alive and thriving, and you are holding issue No. 100.

(“Call board” refers to the board in a roundhouse or yard office where crew assignments were posted.)

When the first issue appeared, the newly formed association had just pulled

its signature steam locomotive, Southern Pacific 786, out of a downtown Austin park, moved it to a facility at the Westinghouse plant near Round Rock, and was preparing to start the initial restoration that saw 786 under steam in late 1991, and pulling ASTA’s first *Hill Country Flyer* in July, 1992.

ASTA’s busy subsequent years saw the railroad’s offices and yard firmly established in Cedar Park, regular journeys into the Hill Country every weekend on all-volunteer-staffed trains, collection of an impressive roster of passenger equipment from the last golden era of American rail travel, and of course, memorable train rides for nearly a million passengers.



Nice Words From a Longtime 'Call Board' Reader.....

Dear Readers:

Hopefully you have noticed that you are perusing the 100th edition of the *Call Board*, ASTA’s quarterly publication to its members, which in and of itself is a remarkable milestone! But even more remarkable is that all 100 editions have been created and produced by just one

editor, Mr. Ben Sargent! Our editor typically avoids self-promotion, and eschews aggrandizement, so let us as his readers congratulate him on such a faithful and remarkable task! We salute you, Mr. Sargent; and look forward to your future publications!

--A Loyal Reader

Through it all, the *Call Board* chronicled the ups and downs, the triumphs and shortfalls, the comings and goings of a busy and active railroad and volunteer-centered non-profit association.

We appreciate the patience and loyalty of our readers, and certainly let us know with ideas and comments!

Join the Fun as an ASTA Volunteer!
Check our website, www.austinsteamtrain.org!

Your Winter CALL BOARD!

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