

# Ninety Years of Contributions: Three Women Who Helped Shape Facilities Management

By Patricia Smith

**T**hree APPA members, all women, all successful in their professional careers, will be leaving the facilities workforce in the near future. As I learned that they would be retiring, the first thought that entered my mind was that our “collective APPA” would be losing nearly 90 years of contributions from these individuals.

As I continued to reflect, I thought about how they invested so much of themselves, not only in the “APPAs” (APPA chapters, regions, and International APPA,) but also in the many professionals they helped to shape over the course of their careers. Finally,

I focused on how their memberships in the APPAs helped our profession through their leadership.

During their long tenure as employees at public universities, these three individuals have provided their respective employers with superb quality and loyalty, maximizing their membership in the APPAs. They have taught, developed programs, managed a regional library, served on committees, chaired conference host committees as many as three times, accepted the role of regional vice president, been leaders in their local and regional organizations, and most of all, exemplified what defines an APPA member.

In this article, I would like to share with you the contributions of **Dianne Gravatt**, assistant vice president of facilities at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey; **Carol Trexler**, director of facili-

ties human resources (HR) at Rutgers; and **Nancy Yeroshefsky**, director of HR for facilities management at the University of Maryland, College Park.

## LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES AND ENGAGING MEMBERS

Careers, like campus buildings, have changed dramatically over the span of the three decades that these women have worked in facilities management. What began as a “caretaker” task of maintaining buildings and grounds has evolved into a stewardship role of intense involvement with diverse buildings, personnel, and processes. Evolving with and initiating many changes at the campus level and local APPA chapter and regional levels is what has defined the work of Dianne, Carol, and Nancy.

Each has contributed to their institutions by developing people, programs, and processes, and by doing so has become a valuable contributor to APPA. As young professionals, these women entered the facilities management finding themselves a distinct minority in a field dominated by white males. As APPA’s membership grew and diversified, they saw opportunities for their campus staff to grow as well. Each leveraged the opportunities that APPA gave them and engaged members of their institutions in local, regional, and national participation.

### *Investing in Yourself and Your Staff—Dianne Gravatt*

Investing in themselves and others is a key trait of Dianne, Carol, and Nancy. As the assistant vice president for operations and services at Rutgers, Dianne leads a staff of more than 1,200 employees. Dianne’s start in higher education began as director of facilities at Rutgers’ Newark campus. She brought a wealth of information to Rutgers from her former job in the



Photo by Patty Smith

From left: Dianne Gravatt, Carol Trexler, and Nancy Yeroshefsky.

medical field. Her acclimation to higher education facilities management was easy, as she is a bright individual, an avid learner, and an advocate for every staff member with whom she has ever worked with or for. As a former director and now assistant VP, Dianne is a champion for investing in herself and others.

Using NJAPPA as a proving ground, Dianne has made membership and education the driving force to ensure that members appreciate the joys of learning while positioning others to advance their own careers. Employees under her direction have journeyed from craftsmen to directors. She has created a legacy of both giving to APPA and gleaning every ounce of educational opportunities in return. It is a guarantee that although Dianne is retiring, she will leave behind a solid pool of APPA members who, because of her contribution, can pick up the volunteer baton and contribute to our local, regional, and international membership needs.

### ***Innovative Thinking—Carol Trexler***

For those who are unaware, Carol Trexler was on the team that started APPA's Supervisor's Toolkit, one of the most popular educational programs for APPA members. It took countless hours of development, researching skill sets and soliciting information from college and university facility leaders—mostly outside of the work day—to create a program that provided an unmet need: How does one get the training to progress confidently from worker to leader? The Toolkit continues to launch many a career that has helped members move from being hands-on facilities workers to leading others.

But, Toolkit was not Carol's first "rodeo." As associate director of Rutgers University Facilities Human Resources office, Carol was a moving force behind the Rutgers craft trainee program. In this program, custodial and grounds workers were trained to become plumbers, electricians, locksmiths, etc. Today, these workers are craftsmen, coordinators, supervisors, and directors at Rutgers, and many are active members in the APPAs. Most recently Carol brought another program to Rutgers, the Work Keys program, developed by the New Jersey Department of Labor, which helps employees realize their own potential through self-investment. Investment in human capital is Carol's legacy. Membership does, indeed, have its rewards.

### ***All Humans Matter—Nancy Yeroshefsky***

Last October, ERAPPA Vice President of Membership Nancy Yeroshefsky gave us fair warning

that she will retire December 2017. The University of Maryland, College Park facilities department is losing a terrific and charismatic leader, and a person who strives to be inclusive. The 2004 award winner of the University of Maryland's (UMD) Defender of Diversity Award, Nancy has embraced the human resources concept that "all humans matter," and believes everyone has something to contribute to an organization. The Maryland/DC Chapter will hold one more annual meeting with Nancy as a member of the ERAPPA 2017 Host Committee; then ERAPPA will have huge shoes to fill as it searches for a new VP for membership.

Like me, once Nancy was given the opportunity to taste what APPA had to offer to its members, she was hooked. As a member, Nancy leveraged any and all opportunities for education both for herself and the many staff members in the UMD facilities department. Nancy has also engaged in local and regional committee work as well as host committees, and as ERAPPA's current VP for membership, leads the membership committee in an unmatched manner. As a committee member, I can attest that she is a charismatic leader, unassuming yet dynamic in creating an atmosphere that allows the committee to thrive. She challenges us in subtle ways, inspiring us to create innovative models for welcoming new members to ERAPPA, and hence APPA. Like ripples in a pond, Nancy's contribution to the membership will be felt for years to come.

### **APPA MEMBERSHIP DOES MATTER**

What can we take away from the many contributions made by Dianne, Carol, and Nancy as members of APPA? Each their own way grew as a professional, and as they grew, expanded opportunities for themselves and their staff to grow with them. As an active member of my state, regional, and international APPA, I want to say a heartfelt thanks, wish each well, and remind all APPA members to be inclusive when considering membership opportunities for your staff. Because membership really does matter. ☺

---

Patty Smith is director of facilities, interim, at New Jersey City University in Jersey City, NJ. She can be reached at [psmith1@njcu.edu](mailto:psmith1@njcu.edu).