

2017: This Was the Year that Was



Kathy Simons (2018 WTS-LA Chapter President), Photo by John Livzey, 2017

A wise woman once said, “It’s okay to look back at the past, just don’t stare.” I think there is great wisdom in that. So, with apologies to those who loathe year-end reviews, it’s time to look back at this past year and acknowledge our accomplishments, honor our efforts, and explore what we can do better in the future.

Of course, hindsight is 20/20. So, it would be very easy to look back with “should haves” in mind. If at all possible, dispense with those. They serve no one. But looking back does provide a unique opportunity to use the knowledge of what transpired combined with the perspective of today to help us improve for next year. So, with apologies in advance if I fail to touch on a particular event or contribution, here is what I see as our unique accomplishments for the year.

First, I’d like to acknowledge our Communications Committee. Raising the stakes and upping the ante, the Communications Committee has produced an impressive and unprecedented electronic and social media outreach program that deftly covered our programs as well as highlighting individual, board, committee, and chapter accomplishments. They helped increase membership while informing both members and non-members about what we have to offer as an organization. By virtually every measure, the committee redefined communications for WTS. Yes, they were that good this year. But no committee is an island. In fact, virtually all are interdependent. So, success in Communications also helped directly feed success in other areas and vice versa. One such area I’d like to highlight, though, is Corporate Partners.

The Corporate Partners Committee is, essentially, a committee of one. But you would never know that from its achievements. Of course, everyone knows that the chapter needs Corporate Partners, but few know the extent to which our programs and efforts succeed because of their contribution. And the committee has proven extraordinarily adept at reaching out and informing current and prospective Corporate Partners about the benefits of actively supporting WTS-LA, and then getting them to commit time and funding. Providing encouragement and support, the committee has proved to be a game-changer for this chapter. But without effective, timely, and meaningful programs, the Corporate Partners Committee’s job would be that much more difficult.

This year the Programs Committee outdid themselves. And that was no small feat. In 2017, the Programs Committee brought together transportation luminaries from across numerous transportation modes to help keep our members informed and updated on the latest developments in Southern California transportation. But their programs were not only about information. There was also exceptional networking. In fact, there are few, if any, other venues where people in the transportation industry actually get to rub elbows with the highest level of transportation leadership. But it happens in WTS-LA every month, because the Programs Committee makes sure that happens every month, if not more often than

that. Networking of that kind is simply invaluable. So, kudos to them. While the Programs Committee helped us keep our focus on our mission and the advancement of women through networking and information, their programs also helped inform the work of numerous other committees in the chapter.

For example, the Transportation U Committee was reconstituted to help advance careers for young transportation professionals in the chapter. And by all accounts, that committee promises great things for 2018. Also in the career vein, I want to acknowledge our Annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner Committee (for creating a fantastic event and setting a scholarship awards record) and the Scholarship Committee (for bringing us phenomenal scholarship candidates), the Transportation Resume Book Committee (also a record in the number of participants and schools reached), the Mentorship and Professional Development Committee (for the innovative Mid-Career Leadership Program), the TBAC/Small Business Committee (newly formed to help small business), and the Diversity and Recognitions Committee. If you're a woman looking to advance your career in transportation, the work of these committees makes it clear that WTS-LA is the place to be in 2018.

Aristotle said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In looking at WTS-LA over the past year, it is very easy to see exactly what he meant by that. We are truly a working organization with many outstanding parts that come together to make up an even more dynamic whole. So, though it hardly can suffice, I thank you. I thank you for all of the time, energy, effort, and creativity that you brought to the chapter last year. All of us have very busy lives outside of WTS, so it makes it that much more impressive that we were able to accomplish so much. I also want to take a moment and especially thank my executive board. They have put in countless, tireless, selfless hours this past year under our new structure of managing the board committees. I sincerely appreciate your efforts, your effectiveness, your expertise, and your endless compassion.

At the outset, I said there is a danger in looking back at the past. So, as I promised, I won't stare. But there is value in it and I do want to acknowledge all of those that made 2017 a wonderful year in WTS-LA. It has been a complete joy to work with you to help improve the chapter and make a very real difference in the lives of our members. And I look forward to building on that tradition to make 2018 an even better year for all of us.