



*Jenelle Saunders, WTS-LA 2021-22 President*

## **That may have been the year that was, but this will be the year that will be...**

First and foremost, I want to express to you, the WTS-LA membership, my deepest gratitude for being so gracious, understanding, diligent, and compassionate throughout my presidential term. Despite Covid, politics, climate change, and many other notable events—both good and bad—the members of this organization have served as a safeguard against the vagaries of the world.

Together, we have not only survived, but prospered. And our chapter has prospered as well. Our membership is good. We awarded more than \$100,000 in scholarships this year. And every day, we continue to fulfill our promise to advance women in transportation. Though this wasn't a normal period by any measure, together, we have thrived.

To the board members with whom I have had the privilege to serve: Thank you for your dedication, leadership, inspiration, and guidance. Board participation is a time-consuming volunteer role that you generously have made space for in addition to your careers, families, and social lives. I am grateful for the time you spent fulfilling your duties to uphold WTS International's mission to attract, sustain, connect, and advance women's careers to strengthen the transportation industry.

I also want to thank past WTS-LA President, WTS-IE founder, and owner of Berg & Associates, Deborah Berg. Deborah is the person who encouraged me to join WTS-LA when she took me to a WTS-LA lunch on my very first day of working for her 15 years ago. I am so glad she did. Berg & Associates is the first woman-owned business to have had two WTS-LA presidents and I am extremely proud of that. It's a record I hope that another WBE will break soon, as that is part of our collective mission.

The past two years as WTS-LA President have been an incredible experience for me. Though exiting is rarely easy, my departure has been greatly eased because of the amazing board members who are continuing to serve or stepping into new roles for the next term, including incoming WTS-LA President and HNTB Project Manager Heather Anderson. I am grateful for the counsel and support Heather has provided me with throughout my tenure. Even more importantly, I'm tremendously proud to call her my good friend. She will certainly make WTS-LA even stronger, and I look forward to helping her in every way I can.

Professionally, WTS-LA provides exceptional benefits. From networking to mentoring, WTS-LA is unparalleled. But everyone knows that. What gets less attention, though, are the personal benefits: the connections, friendships, and camaraderie that WTS-LA membership provides. I have made great friends here, meaningful relationships that foster a profound belonging and a positive sense of being in the transportation industry. I am a better person and professional because of my active participation in WTS-LA. So, I am grateful. I owe all of you a debt of gratitude, one that I will continue to pay off through additional service.

Laurence J. Peter said, "There's only one thing more painful than learning from experience, and that is not learning from experience." In WTS-LA, we know all about learning from experience. It's in our DNA to learn from experience. The global pandemic and the multitude of events we have faced together over the past two years have served as a crucible that has transformed us. We have adjusted, adapted, and overcome. Together. Thank you all

**Jenelle Saunders**

Berg & Associates, Inc.