



Northern Illinois  
University

# THE NIU ANNUITANT

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May 2021

## President's Report

By Deborah Haliczer, NIUAA President

Spring is here, and it cheers me, and everyone I know, to see leafy trees, spring flowers, and people out in the streets walking and greeting neighbors again, albeit at a safe distance. Most people I know have made use of technology to "travel" virtually, take courses, listen to lectures, "attend" sports events, visit museums.

Thankfully, a large percentage of people our age have been fully vaccinated, so that it is now more possible to get together with family, friends, and colleagues. Most people I know in our association are social people. Remaining at home as most of us have done has been a real hardship. University work is a fundamentally people-centered activity, yet in these times of distance learning, many of our students have felt less connected and motivated, and many of our colleagues have struggled to be productive and involved. Our members who have lost loved ones have felt their grief without the customary support of friends, and times have been hard for many of us, in the face of grief or celebration, obliged to stay at home. As pandemic restrictions and threats lift, I hope to see more of you in person. I would like to acknowledge the NIU Lifelong Learning Institute and its leaders and facilitators. I participated this year, and found it quite refreshing to learn in the virtual company of friends, all unmasked. While it was always great to join study groups and lectures in person, we have all gotten into the habit of ZOOM sessions. Thanks to developments in medicine and science, we have vaccines and hope for a return to a more normal life. But we still need to exercise caution moving forward.

I know we have all experienced stress, worry, boredom, and isolation from friends and family. But I have been impressed by the resilience so many people have shown in these difficult times. But our generation has experienced challenges throughout life, and we have learned many coping skills. This has also been a very difficult year for the Annuitants Association, both our chapter and SUAA chapters around the state. We have historically had social gatherings, coffees, and in-person annual meetings, and travel opportunities. Without these contacts, it has been difficult to keep members

involved and to recruit new members. I am hoping that with more possibilities for in-person activities, we will succeed in maintaining involvement and recruiting new members from among our retirees, their partners, and our current employees. As always, we ask all of you to recommend that your friends and colleagues join NIUAA. We can provide you with recruitment materials.

I would like to thank President Lisa Freeman for her continuing support of our association. I know that she and her administration and faculty have shown leadership and perseverance during the financial and logistical challenges occasioned by the ever-changing pandemic. At the same time, our Association has shown support for the university and its students through our sponsorship of the NIU Annuitants Association Scholarship. I thank all of you who have contributed.

### Annual Membership Meeting

**Our annual meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 2, 3:00-5:00, via ZOOM.** The Board considered an in-person, or hybrid ZOOM plus in-person meeting, but we felt that this year it is still safer and less cumbersome to go virtual. In the days before the meeting, we will send out a meeting reminder with the agenda, biographies for nominated officers and board members, and with information on how to connect. At that meeting we will be electing new officers board members, and our current Vice President, Andy Small, will assume the position as President.

As we prepare for our meeting, we should reflect on why this Association exists. We support and work to protect our pensions and benefits and try to keep our members informed on changes and threats, as well as opportunities. We work to recruit members by telling our colleagues why we exist and how we help. A major example is the work done by our colleague Jim Lockard, who monitors all developments in the state that potentially affect our pensions and retirement. I always hear from members that one of the best benefits of being a member is hearing from Jim. We must continue to be vigilant against threats to our wellbeing. I want to thank Jim for all he does to keep us informed.

*(Continued on next page)*



*(President's Report continued)*

I also want to thank Linda Brookhart, Executive Director of SUAA, for the work she does on behalf of our Association, and for the periodic SUAA communications that go to members.

More thanks are in order: I want to acknowledge and thank our Board members whose terms have ended. They have served us well under unusually difficult conditions. This includes: Al Mueller, Carole Minor, Sabrina Hammond, and John Hulseberg. Toni Tollerud's term is ending, but she will remain with the Board in another capacity, as Vice President elect. Lynn Neeley's term as past President is also ending. We owe an enormous debt to Lynn for her excellent leadership. And not the least of these, a big thank you to Chris Doe, our University Liaison for all of her help to the Board and to the Association.

And my term as President is coming to an end. It has been an honor and privilege to serve you. While the task of leading the Association has been a real challenge under the constraints posed by the pandemic, I know our Board has accomplished actions that have kept our Association strong. I will remain to support Andy in the role of Past President.

While I am writing to you, I would like to ask a favor. As you reflect on this past year, I would ask you to consider what you have learned through the pandemic and other political and social challenges of the year. What strategies have helped you cope with difficult times? What have you done to continue to grow and stimulate your mind? What advice would you give colleagues looking for ways to keep thriving in spite of challenges? Please feel free to email some of your thoughts to me at [dhhaliczzer@gmail.com](mailto:dhhaliczzer@gmail.com) and I will create a summary to share.

As for me, I will keep practicing Spanish thanks to Jan Modloff and LLI. I will be preparing and planting my spring garden with more new flowers and edibles. We will keep going on virtual trips, like the ones we took to Antarctica and Turkey, until we can go forth actually and see more of our country and the world. As for you, please stay safe and healthy. My best to all of you as we move forward together.

Deborah Haliczzer  
NIUAA President



"Spring View of Campus" by Michael Day, Professor of English and Director of First-Year Composition.



## Legislative Report

By Jim Lockard, Legislative Committee

Perhaps the biggest political story of 2021 for Illinois is the **end of the Madigan era** in Springfield. Madigan held the office of Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives from 1983-2021 for all but two years. This earned him the distinction of being the longest-serving leader of any state or federal legislative body in US history. *National Review* wrote of him as the [last of the machine politicians](#). However, one might wonder whether his influence has merely moved behind the scenes. His successor, Chris Welch, appears to be making some positive moves, but only time will tell. This change in power will be one of the interesting stories in Springfield this year.

Although it is still early to be too focused on the **next gubernatorial campaign**, with Madigan out of the Legislature, the question arises of whether his daughter, former Attorney General Lisa Madigan, is still interested in the position. Her earlier ambitions to win the office were stymied by her father's continued presence in the General Assembly. Gov. Pritzker could be in trouble over the state economy and budget, the state's somewhat muddled COVID response, and other issues, so a Democrat challenger is not unthinkable. On the other side, might Republican State Representative Adam Kinzinger become a challenger, despite his persona non grata status with his own party after calling for Trump's impeachment and strongly criticizing Trump in the wake of the Jan. 6 insurrection?

Of key interest to us all is the next **state budget**, especially for the impact on funding for higher education and pensions, among many other things. Failure of the "Fair Tax" Constitutional Amendment (CA) deprived the state of a significant source of revenue while the Coronavirus pandemic took a still unclear toll on tax revenue from businesses. Cuts to the higher education budget were widely expected, but with the passage of President Biden's relief package, which includes billions to help state and local governments directly, the picture could well change. From what I can gather, it all depends on how the state uses the federal aid, which we may well not know until late May.

No Legislative Report could avoid the issue of **pensions**. As of now, nothing much has changed. The status of Illinois as the worst funded pension system in the country remains, although it is sometimes a battle with New Jersey or Kentucky, depending on the day and how one makes the comparison. In early March, S&P Global Ratings revised its outlook for Illinois debt from negative to stable, a year after making the downgrade. As reported by [CapitolFax](#),

*"Any upside to the state's creditworthiness, however, remains somewhat constrained by the poorly funded pension systems and other outsize liabilities. But even with these, the state's economic base could support a higher rating pending improvement in fiscal operations and overall budget management."*

*If Illinois were to make sustainable progress toward structural balance, including meeting its pension obligations, further reducing its bill backlog, and increasing reserves, we could raise the rating."*

Despite revenue issues, the FY22 state budget is still expected to include the "full statutory" pension payment. Although that is positive, it is also much lower than the ["actuarially" required payment](#). This means the unfunded liabilities continue to grow, largely because of our 3% Automatic Annual Increment. For SURS, most of the annual state payment goes to the debt, not current benefits. Re-amortization remains the best (only?) approach to the unfunded liabilities, as long advocated by the [Center for Tax and Budget Accountability](#), but no one in Springfield seems to listen. During the winter our colleagues at UI-C presented an excellent [program on pensions](#), which you can view at your convenience.

Prior to the vote on the Fair Tax amendment, multiple calls urged a link between such a Constitutional Amendment (CA) and the repeal of the Pension Protection Clause (PPC). New [House Speaker Welch](#) has proposed reviving the CA by linking the increased revenue to pension funding, but not to changes in the PPC. Whether his idea will gain any traction is unclear. However, we must expect continued, even louder calls just to repeal the PPC, which would require some form of CA.

Another matter of great interest legislatively is **redistricting**, which occurs following each census. Because release of the census data was delayed for many reasons, the process has been more hurried than ever and one can expect continued gerrymandering of districts under any new map. Illinois has experienced population loss seven years running while mostly Sun Belt states have grown. It appears now that Illinois will lose one seat in Congress. The issue of population loss is [more complicated than it seems](#), per Greg Hinz of **Crains**. He notes that no Rust Belt state is doing particularly well. The cause is not just taxation, as the Illinois Policy Institute claims; the greatest Midwest growth is in Minnesota, a ["high tax"](#) state. Illinois' loss is greater in rural Southern Illinois, combined with reduced immigration and minority exit from Chicago.

As always, if any of the links provided interest you, but you can't access the article, perhaps due to subscription requirements, let me know ([jalockard@gmail.com](mailto:jalockard@gmail.com)) and I will send a PDF of the article gladly.

In the interest of keeping you informed, I will continue to share the kinds of information provided above and will watch closely for any pension attacks that seem to be gaining traction. If you are not receiving my periodic emails with the most up-to-date information, please send me a request and I'll add you to my special email list. We must be prepared to support measures that will be helpful to the state and the pension systems and to fight against proposals that would harm the future well-being of public employees broadly.

Jim Lockard  
Legislative Committee



## SUAA Foundation Report

Deborah Haliczzer attended a SUAA Foundation virtual meeting in March 2021. It was reported that the Foundation awarded four dependent scholarships to dependents of SUAA members. Two of these scholarships were awarded to children of NIUAA members: Hannah Secor (daughter of Jill Secor), and Madeline Krmenec (daughter of Andy Krmenec).

The Foundation announced important changes in the dependent scholarship. The Foundation will now award up to six \$1,000 scholarships to selected dependents of State University and Community College SUAA members. Selections are based on the applicant's essay, letters of recommendation, and need. The announcement has been sent via email by SUAA to SUAA members, with an application deadline of June 15. For more information, go to the web site on SUAA Foundation Educational Scholarship Program and Professional Development Grants (<https://www.suaa.org/foundation-scholarship-program>). These scholarships are funded by member contributions to the SUAA Foundation.

The Foundation also offers two professional development grants of up to \$1,000 each for currently employed staff or faculty SUAA members. Information on these grants also was provided in the recent SUAA communication. The criteria and other information are also posted at [www.suaa.org](http://www.suaa.org) under the SUAA Foundation section. The Foundation committee was gratified to hear about the NIUAA scholarship. We are one of the very few chapters who have founded a scholarship program as a way of demonstrating our support for NIU students.

Andy Small currently sits on the Foundation Board. We will be seeking a new representative for the Board. **If you are interested in serving, please contact Deborah Haliczzer or Andy Small.**

**Currently  
Employed  
NIUAA  
Members:  
This is  
For you!**

## SUAA Board of Director's Report, Spring 2021

By Steve Cunningham, SUAA Board Member

### Membership-Membership-Membership

As Spring 2021 unfolds and the state and nation begin to emerge from the pandemic, SUAA has never been more important. For both active and retired personnel, the vital importance of earned benefits through participation in SURS has certainly been highlighted this past year. During these challenging times, our reliance on bedrock institutions such as SURS, our university organizations, and state government has been especially apparent. We rely on these earned benefits throughout our careers and cycles of "life events" extending through retirement. SUAA has steadfastly represented the interests of college and university personnel for 50 years throughout the diverse and complex political and organizational landscape that defines Illinois' system of higher education.

However, despite this record of advocacy on behalf of college and university personnel, SUAA membership rates continue to be a challenge. In January, the SUAA Board of Directors sponsored a targeted direct outreach from the SUAA State Organization in Springfield that was mailed to over 37,000 SURS participants, specifically directed toward those approaching retirement or recently retired. Thereafter, a ZOOM meeting of all SUAA Chapter Officers was undertaken to enlist their assistance in reaching the goal of at least 10% of the mailing recipients joining the SUAA membership roster. Despite these efforts, we still have good way to go in meeting this goal. Total SUAA membership is a little over 14,000 amounting to just 11% of working and retired personnel

represented by SUAA. The mailing to SURS participants highlighted some recent examples where SUAA was a difference-maker protecting and promoting participant interests including:

- In 2012, SUAA led the campaign to stop a misguided constitutional amendment (HJRCA 49) contained in the November 2012 election ballot.
- In 2014, SUAA represented the class of SURS participants before the Illinois Supreme Court arguing against PA 98-0599 that had the potential to cut some pension benefits. The SUAA obtained a precedent-setting *unanimous decision* that stopped the Act from being implemented.
- In 2014-15, SUAA intervened in a class action lawsuit (Kanerva v. Weems) to protect retiree health insurance benefits.
- In 2015, SUAA successfully lobbied for SB 1583, allowing community college participants who had opted out of the College Insurance Program to reenroll during open enrollment periods.
- In 2015, SUAA was instrumental in overturning HB403 (Amendment 1), a repeal of the 50% tuition waivers for eligible university employees.
- The SUAA has also been a steadfast supporter of funding for Illinois higher education, including creation of the "Higher Education Creates Jobs" campaign in 2017.

The SUAA State Organization relies a great deal on the efforts of local Chapter leadership to recruit new and continuing members at each institution.

NIU stands out with its 1,665 members (being a close second statewide just after UIUC) representing an outstanding level of membership, especially as a percent of eligible personnel. Thanks to the efforts of the NIUAA and other university leaders for your support of SUAA! Our strength as an organization very much relies on active membership and the work of our local Chapters.

Steve Cunningham  
SUAA Board Member

## Scholarship Committee Report

By Clair Williams, Scholarship Chair

After the performance of a feasibility study, the Board of Directors authorized the establishment of the NIU Annuitants Association Scholarship Fund, an endowment with the NIU Foundation.

A growing-to-endowment agreement was signed by the Association's president on September 28, 2018, and stipulated the scholarship criteria and selection process. A single scholarship was to be awarded each academic year to a student from each of the university seven degree granting colleges on a rotating basis. The decision on who receives the award is made by the colleges, not the Association. The agreement also contained a provision which exempted donations from the Foundation's gift fee of fifteen percent for a period of three years.

By the end of March 2019, various fund raising activities had generated donations amounting to \$54,000. \$50,000 were placed in the Endowed Fund of the NIU Annuitants Association Scholarship Fund and \$4,000 was added to the Expendable Fund to pay for a \$2,000 scholarship to be awarded for both academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. As of November 19, 2020 a total of \$67,155 in donations had been received, of which a total of \$4,025 has been disbursed to scholarship recipients.

The establishment of a permanent Scholarship Committee was approved at the Association's annual meeting held on October 7, 2020 by an amendment of its bylaws. The committee acts as a liaison with the Foundation, receives and reviews Foundation reports, allocates earnings, conducts fund raising activities, and performs related duties assigned by the President. The Committee arranged for the Association to participate in the Foundation's Thousands Strong event. Through the Day of Giving \$1,480 in gifts were received from 12 donors. We will solicit as many donations as possible before the end of September 2021 to maximize the benefit of the waiver of the fifteen percent gift fee.

Recent gifts to the Association's Scholarship Fund have enabled us to be able to offer more than one scholarship for the 2021-2022 academic year. The members of the Scholarship Committee extend our thanks to the generous members who have made these scholarships possible and ask for continued member support so that we may offer multiple scholarships each year in the future.

**To make a gift click on this link for the gift form: [https://www.niu.edu/annuitants/\\_pdf/annuitant-association-scholarship-donate-form.pdf](https://www.niu.edu/annuitants/_pdf/annuitant-association-scholarship-donate-form.pdf)**



## Retiree Permits Available June 1, 2021

The time to renew your parking permit is quickly approaching. Parking permits will be available June 1, 2021. Due to COVID-19, Campus Parking Services is requesting that retirees purchase their retiree parking permit through the mail this year. Please read the information below as some of the rules and criteria have changed.

If you are receiving a pension from the State Universities Retirement System, and your last employer was NIU, you may purchase a retiree parking permit. Retiree parking permits may be displayed in any Blue, Orange, Yellow, or Green parking lots. Please note:

- Payment is still required for all individuals who park in the Visitor Pay lot or at meters/pay stations.
- Parking in no parking zones, reserved spaces, and service spaces is prohibited.
- A handicapped placard or license plate must be displayed, along with the retiree permit, when parking in handicapped spaces.
- 15-minute spaces may be utilized without a retiree permit. Retiree permits are issued as a privilege and are not to be used by relatives or other persons actively employed by or enrolled in the university.

If you had a retiree permit last year, you should receive a form in the mail. Simply complete the form and mail it with your \$10 payment to the address below. Campus Parking Services will process your request and mail your permit to you. If you did not receive a form in the mail, you will need to print the form by visiting: [https://www.niu.edu/parking/\\_pdf/retiree-form.pdf](https://www.niu.edu/parking/_pdf/retiree-form.pdf), complete the form and mail it, along with the \$10 payment. Completed documents should be mailed to:

**Northern Illinois University, Campus Parking Services,  
121 Normal Road, DeKalb, IL 60115**



**"Betsy Ross" by Elena Haliczzer, a student in the PhD program in Instructional Technology at NIU. A solo show of her photography opens July 2 at the DeKalb Area Women's Center.**

## Being Vaccinated and Staying Mentally Healthy

By Toni R. Tollerud, Education Chair

According to an article published in the Medical Press by Matthew Perrone and Carla K. Johnson: "COVID-19 hospitalizations among older Americans have plunged more than 70% since the start of the year, and deaths among them appear to have tumbled as well, dramatic evidence the vaccination campaign is working." If you are like me, this is sweet news to your ears and heart. The idea that we are getting on top of this pandemic and will be able to find ways back to some normalcy is both important and consoling.

This article continues that "Two-thirds of American senior citizens are fully vaccinated, versus just one-third of all U.S. adults. Over 80% of senior citizens have gotten at least one shot, compared with just over 50% of all adults." It is good to note that seniors are leading the way and doing what we can to address a step in bringing the pandemic under control. And I know that once I was vaccinated, I felt such a relief in the anxiety and stress I was carrying. I am hopeful that you, like me, are in that statistic above of having received your shots and are feeling some sense of safety in the world. That you are seeing some light at the end of the tunnel and are strategically planning some activities that you have been unable to do over the past year. And yet we know that COVID-19 has had a heavy toll on us not only physically, but mentally as well. As a result, I want to talk about the susceptibility seniors are experiencing for depression and feeling out of sorts.

*Psychology Today* reports that 1 out of 4 seniors indicate they have been depressed during the past year. Seniors, especially those with chronic illnesses, are more likely to suffer isolation and loneliness. For many, we have lost the opportunity for companionship and fellowship with others by not being able to go out to eat, shopping, visiting, and meeting in person at clubs, church groups, etc. Most of us have experienced these losses the past year. Such losses can leave us feeling alone or losing sight of our purpose. They can bring on feelings of depression. Depression makes us more vulnerable, and may cause us to continue feeling anxious or isolated. We might find ourselves still withdrawing from others and activities, even though some aspects of our world ARE opening up and opportunities are increasing.

### How are you doing?

If you still feel consumed with stress and anxiety, overwhelmed with the situation, tired, lethargic, or don't know what to do, take note of your situation. And then, take action.

Here are my thoughts!

1. Recognize that you are not alone and that things can get better.
2. Reach out to others, even when it is hard. Contact a trusted friend (preferably not someone you are living with) and talk about your feelings and thoughts with them.
3. Plan an activity you feel safe doing and act on that. Keep it simple. Visit a family member, good friend, church friend or colleague.
4. Read something or watch a TV program for fun and seek out someone to share your thoughts.
5. Avoid the news or focusing on the negative. It will be there later. There are good things that can help us to feel hope and offer us a positive direction to take.
6. Don't forget to breathe. Take a walk in the sunshine (or rain), or work in the garden, if you have one.
7. Say "NO" to things that aren't necessary right now. There will be plenty of time to join groups or take on new, or even old obligations, as we get back into more normal living.
8. Support your local Annuitants Association: attend the upcoming annual meeting and reconnect when you can and reminisce about NIU, friends, and accomplishments.
9. And finally, if you still feel blue, seek out a professional counselor to delve more deeply into what's going on.

I have been a professional counselor for over 35 years. I believe in our profession, and seeking help from a professional is not a weakness or failure. It is just the opposite. Talk therapy can help us regain ways of coping through these challenging times of loss and change and gives us a direction for hope.

Carry on, fellow NIU Annuitants. Practice self-care and be gentle with yourselves. See you in June at the Annual Meeting!

Sources:

[www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-fraud-crisis/202104/psychological-impact-covid-19-seniors](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-fraud-crisis/202104/psychological-impact-covid-19-seniors)

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-04-covid-hospitalizations-senior-citizens.html>

### In Memoriam

Jan Bach  
Lida Barrett  
Solange Byers  
Shirley Dolby

Clinton Jesser  
Marilyn Johannesen  
Robert Keim  
Herbert Kekstadt

Barbara Lawson  
Henry Leonard  
Leonard Mandell  
Carla Montgomery

Walter Owens  
Beverly Patton  
David Ripley  
James Roof

William Shearer  
Marie Louise Sorensen  
George Spencer



## Trips and Travel Schedule

Organized by Steven Johnson, Culture and Travel Committee Chair

Greetings and best wishes to you all. I have both my vaccinations and hope you have as well and are ready to travel again. Over the years, I have thought about a trip to coincide with the historical opening of NIU, September 11, 1899. Recently I got a phone call from Moline, Illinois, and the CELEBRATION BELLE paddle wheel riverboat: they have a narrated lunch cruise on Saturday, September 11, 2021, so . . . I reserved some tables for NIU, and we can celebrate the opening of the university, and our return to travel, on the waters of the Mississippi River.

The riverboat observes all COVID protocols with UV sanitizers on each deck, hand sanitizers, social distancing, etc. The NIU motor coaches COVID protocols allow for 25 passengers. The reservation is in and I, for sure, am ready to go!

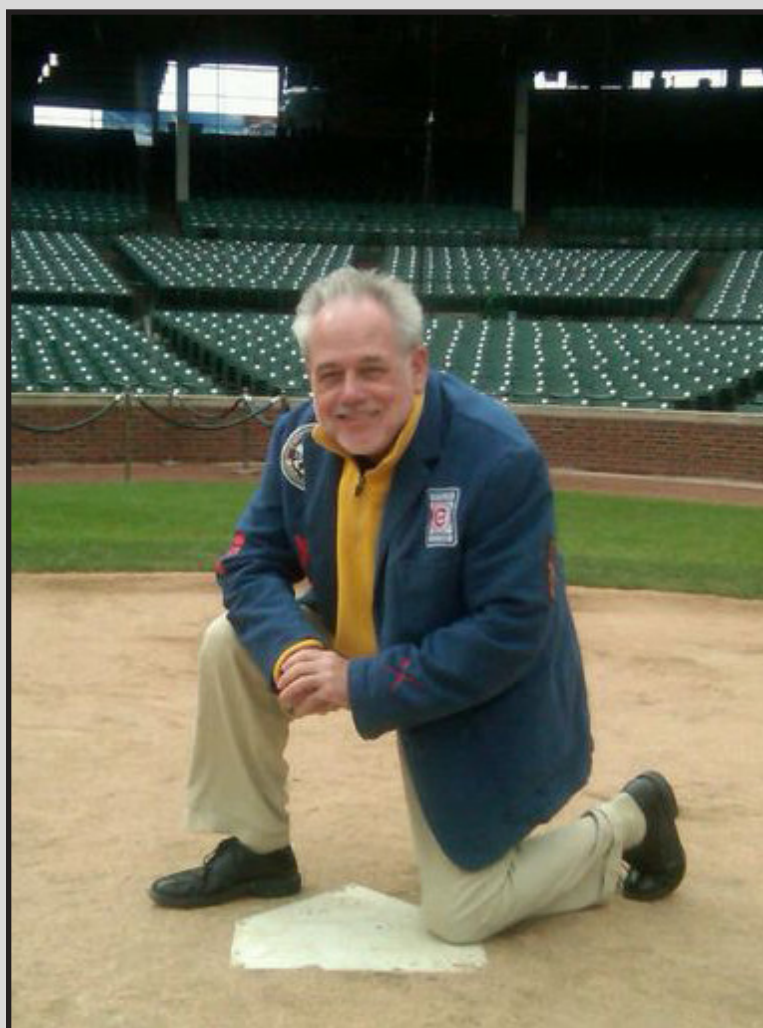
- Steven

### 2021 Schedule (with hope and anticipation)

July 16 - 24:	Colorado Historic Trains
August 4:	CINDERELLA, The Fireside Theatre (\$145/\$155)
August 14 - 25:	Ultimate Ireland
Sept. 10 - 19:	Rocky Mountaineer/Canadian Rockies
Sept. 11:	Celebration Belle River Cruise (\$95/\$105)
Sept. 13 - 17:	Mackinac Island (Value Trip, \$549)
Sept. 22:	JOSEPH, The Fireside Theatre (\$145/\$155)
Sept. 27 - Oct. 1:	Lancaster and Gettysburg (Value Trip, \$645)
Oct. 10 - 16:	National Parks of the Southwest
Oct. 18 - 22:	Branson Show Extravaganza (Value Trip, \$645)
Nov. 11:	HOLIDAY INN, The Fireside Theatre (\$145/\$155)
Nov. 27:	Chicago Shopping Trip (\$20.21)
Nov. 27:	SIX, The Musical, Matinee, Chicago
Dec. 3 - 23:	Circle Hawaii Cruise from San Diego

### 2022 Schedule

Jan. 8 - 21:	Expo in Dubai, Cruise Abu Dhabi, Qatar
Jan. 23 - Feb. 13:	Polar Vortex Escape, 21-Day Caribbean Cruise
March 2:	COME FROM AWAY, Matinee, Chicago
Apr. 21 - May 1:	Tulip Time on the Jewel of the Rhine
June:	Alaska and the Yukon
June:	Oberammergau and the Best of Germany
July:	Stratford Festival of Canada
August:	Canada, New England and Iceland
Sept. 7 - 16:	Best of Scandinavia



Where in the world is Steven?



## NIUAA 2021-2022 Officers, Directors, and Committee Chairs

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**Please Note: Voting members of the NIUAA Board include all officers and those listed as Directors.**