

Challenge: Reach for the Stars

Hernando J. "Joe" Ortega, Jr., M.D., M.P.H., FAsMA

The holidays are passed and now the New Year is upon us. I hope everyone is working on their resolutions for 2020! Your main resolution should be to meet all your friends and colleagues in Atlanta in May! Preparations for the Annual Meeting in Atlanta are well underway. Registration is now open for the meeting. Recall that the theme is "Selection and Training."

Your AsMA Executive Committee and Council have accomplished multiple initiatives that are moving AsMA forward. The Scientific Program Committee has met and sorted the abstract submissions into a very good-looking meeting for Atlanta. We're moving along with organizing the plenary sessions for Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday mornings, organizing schedules and finalizing speakers. Did I mention that the theme for Atlanta is "Selection and Training?"

But that's not what I want to talk about this month. I want to **challenge** you. I'd like to highlight our AsMA Foundation. Many other medical organizations have associated foundations that sponsor scholarships and grants for students and residents to attend meetings. AsMA is no different, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Richard Jennings. Thirteen years ago, when Richard was AsMA's president, he had a vision. During his tenure as a physician, NASA flight surgeon, and aerospace medicine educator, one of the bright spots he noted was observing the unbridled energy and excitement for our specialty that young scientists- and physicians-to-be demonstrated, particularly those from our new AMSRO constituent, the Aerospace Medical Student and Resident Organization. But there were limited scholarship opportunities for these motivated, future Aerospace Medicine practitioners. Pardon the OB pun but, Richard's vision was born 13+ years ago as Russ Rayman and others helped to "deliver" this brand-new "baby", your Foundation [Jennings RT. President's Page. *Aviat. Space Environ. Med.* 2006; 77(7):771].

The original bylaws called for a Board of Directors of seven, which was to include three former AsMA presidents and a minimum of four additional AsMA members. The founding Board of Directors included Drs. George Anderson, Jim Vanderploeg, Jeffrey Davis, David K. Broadwell, Ron Hansrote, Masanobu Kaji, and Ramon Dominguez Mompell. Since the early years, the Board has been expanded by three more, to ten, including the AsMA Executive Director.

A major gift early in the Foundation's history was the Goldenrath contribution of \$100,000. Malcolm Cohen, as a trustee of the Goldenrath estate, was critical to this process. The Heritage Society was created later to honor those planning future gifts in their estate planning.

Since those humble beginnings, the Foundation now has some significant assets under management. Endowed funds created

within the Foundation currently include Mohler, Belland, Trumbo, Goldenrath, Jennings, Tredici, and Mantri funds — all with different purposes and support based on how they were created. The Trumbo Fun Run/Walk, scholarships, and travel awards are among the good works the Foundation supports each year. The Foundation now has upwards of \$450,000 in managed funds.

In the past few years, the Foundation has worked to make donating easier and has gained increased visibility within Aerospace Medicine. In 2014, they began publishing a newsletter on their efforts and their progress. Two years ago, Mr. Sventek added the ability to donate to the Foundation to the new AsMA Annual Meeting registration website. The Foundation has now developed their own ability to take credit card donations, have built a new website, and are now working on a secure website donation capability. In Las Vegas the Foundation announced a new capital campaign to raise \$50,000 for the year. They called it the "Reach for the Stars" campaign. [<https://asmafoundation.org/reach-for-the-stars/>] They are about half-way to the goal.

Currently under the stalwart stewardship of Kim Broadwell and Genie Bopp, your AsMA Foundation is entering its "terrible teen" years. I'm hoping these coming years are when the Foundation begins to spread its wings and find its own identity.

This is still a small Foundation by most standards, but with ambitious goals. AsMA constituent organizations have placed their money in a pooled investment fund. This has allowed constituent society members to contribute to their own funds, receive tax advantages, and get expert investment management. For example, the Aerospace Nursing and Allied Health Professionals, the Society of NASA Flight Surgeons, the Space Medicine Association, and most recently the American Society of Aerospace Medicine Specialists have all created funds within the Foundation to start building towards their own scholarship goals.

The Foundation Board would like to have enough resources to make sure the awards and scholarships are large enough to be meaningful in realistically supporting a trip to our Annual Meeting, or supporting other worthy goals of those who need our help. It would be a boon to the profession if the Foundation had enough money to support research proposals from applicants — citizen



CONTACT DETAILS:

Email: President@asma.org • **Web site:** www.asma.org • **Facebook:** Aerospace Medical Association • **Twitter:** @Aero_Med

Reprint & Copyright © by the Aerospace Medical Association, Alexandria, VA.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3357/AMHP.911PresPage>

science, seed money for great ideas, data analysis. The sky's the limit.

Richard wrote in a 2006 president's page, "It is my hope that each of the AsMA members who are able will support the next generation of students, nurses, physiologists, scientists, and physicians as they enter this rewarding field" [Jennings RT. President's Page. *Aviat. Space Environ. Med.* 2006; 77(7):771]. So "paying it forward" is the topic of the month. Having been inspired by Richard's unbridled energy, enthusiasm, and most notably his accomplishments, I'd like to put forth a **challenge** to all "AsMA members who are able," which should be most of us!

At our recent Council meeting, Mr. Sventek reported that 93 members availed themselves of the opportunity to donate while registering for the Las Vegas meeting. The Foundation raised \$2,399.00 from those 93 folks. That's an average donation of \$25.80. We also heard that there were 1,643 total registrants. That is a donation rate of 5.6%. That is not too bad for the second year of this capability. But I know you can do better.

Thus, I officially **challenge** each of you to add a "little sumpin' sumpin'" extra to your registration this year. If half the registrants gave \$20 each, we'd raise around \$15,000 for the Foundation. If 2/3 of the expected attendees simply donated a "sawbuck," just \$10 each, that would be \$10,000 for our Foundation. That would be an over 10-fold increase in donation rate, not unachievable but perhaps a "stretch" goal. Certainly doable.

I know you can do better. I donated \$20 last year but plan on adding a \$100 donation for our Foundation to my annual meeting registration this year. **I hereby challenge the AsMA membership and all meeting attendees to break last year's numbers.** The metrics to beat are these: 93 raw donors, 5.6% attendee donation rate, \$2,399 total donations, and average donation of \$25.80.

Our Foundation is counting on you, as are those young, excited students and residents. So, pay it forward. Take this **challenge**. Spread the word to your friends and peers. Reach for the stars and keep 'em flyin'.