

## Our Great AsMA Staff—Highlight on the Home Office

Joseph Dervay, M.D., M.P.H., MMS, FACEP, FAsMA, FUHM

Our organization is very fortunate to have a wonderful group of professional staff guiding and serving us on a daily basis! While these individuals are often acknowledged and thanked for their AsMA support during the Opening Ceremony of the Annual Scientific Meeting and at the Honor's Night dinner, most members do not know all of them personally. It is my intent to *shine a light* on the Home Office staff so you may appreciate their backgrounds, duties, commitment, and professional pride.

Gisselle Vargas is currently the AsMA Deputy Executive Director. Originally from Brooklyn, NY, she received her Master's degree in Public Administration from Strayer University. She began her



AsMA employment as the Office Manager in 2006 and later became the Operations Manager. Some of Gisselle's many duties include managing the onsite registration counter at our Annual Meetings; helping new Fellows candidates with their application process; handling financial transactions for AsMA including invoices and payroll; interacting with our Certified Public Accountant; and serving as

the AsMA expert on Impexium (our member database). She has also begun a doctoral program in her off-hours. As Gisselle shared, "It is a real privilege working at AsMA. I love working with my colleagues. They feel more like family! I also truly love interacting with our AsMA members from around the world."

Sheryl Kildall hails from Southern New Jersey and initially served as an analyst for a federal law enforcement agency in Washington, DC, prior to joining AsMA 24 years ago. She has served as



the Subscriptions Director, interfaced with University and Military libraries, and is now the Director of Membership/Meetings. Sheryl addresses over 1500+ Annual Meeting registrations per year. She is the liaison for the AsMA Foundation, addresses membership, dues, accounts receivable, and a host of other administrative activities. Always gracious and kind, she is likely the first voice you hear

answering the phone calls at AsMA to address your question or request. As Sheryl noted, "I thoroughly enjoy my work at

AsMA and love putting names to faces at the annual meeting. Our members are the backbone of this organization, and we do everything possible to make being a member of AsMA an incredibly positive experience for them."

Rachel Trigg is the Managing Editor of our *Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance* journal. A New York native, she earned a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) from Friends World College in



Lloyd Harbor, NY. She also studied Library Science, earned a certificate as a Publications Specialist at The George Washington University, and a diploma from Stratford University in the culinary arts. She previously worked as a writer/editor for a number of publications, wrote restaurant and theater reviews, and served as a Proofreading Supervisor at Direct Press Modern Lithograph.

She joined AsMA in 2003 as the Editorial Assistant for the journal, became Assistant Managing Editor, and now Managing Editor. Rachel edits the AsMA website, produces the monthly newsletter, assists authors during their editing and proofing process, produces the journal, and prepares the abstract submission website for the Annual Meeting. Her support of the Scientific Program Committee is vital to developing a strong program each year. Rachel noted, "It is very rewarding to pull our journal together to provide a *great read* to the membership. I am proud

of our collective effort to share information across the medical and scientific communities."



Stella Sanchez joined AsMA in 2023 as the new Assistant to the Managing Editor. From Gainesville, FL, she earned B.A. degrees in Philosophy and Journalism, and a minor in Cognitive Science, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is currently burning the midnight oil to



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earn her Master's degree in Publishing at The George Washington University. She supports authors as needed throughout the manuscript process and assists with updates to the AsMA website and newsletter. Stella shared, "I relish the opportunity to learn from the leading minds in the aerospace medicine community and contribute to the future of aerospace activities by facilitating the communication of groundbreaking research through our journal and the building of international partnerships at our meetings."

Jeff Sventek is the AsMA Executive Director, having assumed his role in 2010 as the eighth Executive Director in the history of AsMA and the first non-physician to hold that prestigious position.



From the town of Sherman in Western New York State, he originally enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and subsequently completed 34 years of service, retiring with the rank of Colonel. He holds a B.S. in Biology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and an M.S. in Physiology from Rutgers University. He is board-certified in Aerospace Physiology and is an AsMA Fellow. During his Air Force (AF)

career, Jeff served as an AF Aerospace Physiologist and was the first ever Lieutenant Colonel to serve as the Chief of AF Aerospace Physiology. Jeff held numerous command and leadership positions until he retired as Deputy Command Surgeon for the Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, and as 14<sup>th</sup> Chief of the AF Biomedical Sciences Corps. Following retirement, Jeff served in various government contractor positions providing human performance expertise to the Department of Defense.

As the AsMA Executive Director, Jeff serves as the Chief Operating Officer and reports directly to the AsMA Council. He guides the daily operations of AsMA and provides oversight of the

current \$1.6 million annual budget. Jeff also serves as the general coordinator and organizer for the Annual Scientific Meetings. During his tenure as Executive Director, Jeff has worked to modernize the Association's operations with a focus on efficiency and effectiveness. He has led AsMA through numerous management challenges during his nearly 14 years as the Executive Director: from Icelandic volcano eruptions impacting international travel, SARS, unexpected significant per diem changes, and government sequestration, to the challenges of operating a professional organization and providing educational opportunities during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Jeff has worked closely with AsMA leadership to ensure the Association remained financially protected and operationally viable. Jeff shared with me that, "my time with AsMA has truly been some of the most rewarding leadership and management experiences of my entire working career. I am always thankful that AsMA has been such a significant part of my life over decades. The international collegiality of AsMA is second to none."

As you can appreciate in the vignettes above, what a fantastic team! Hopefully you now know more about our wonderful Home Office staff and their professionalism, dedication, and commitment to AsMA.

If calling the Home Office for an issue or question, please be patient and kind and realize the staff will always work hard to get you an answer or point you in the right direction. When you see the Home Office team again at our next meeting in Chicago, whether at the Registration Desk, AsMA counter, or throughout the meeting spaces, please take a moment to share a warm smile, say hello, introduce yourself, and thank them for their service to AsMA.

*I know they would greatly appreciate your kindness and good cheer... they are truly vital members of our collective AsMA family. All the best.*

*Keep 'em flying...and Full Steam Ahead!*