



## President's Farewell

*by Deborah Valentine Smith, AOBTA® President*

Greetings!

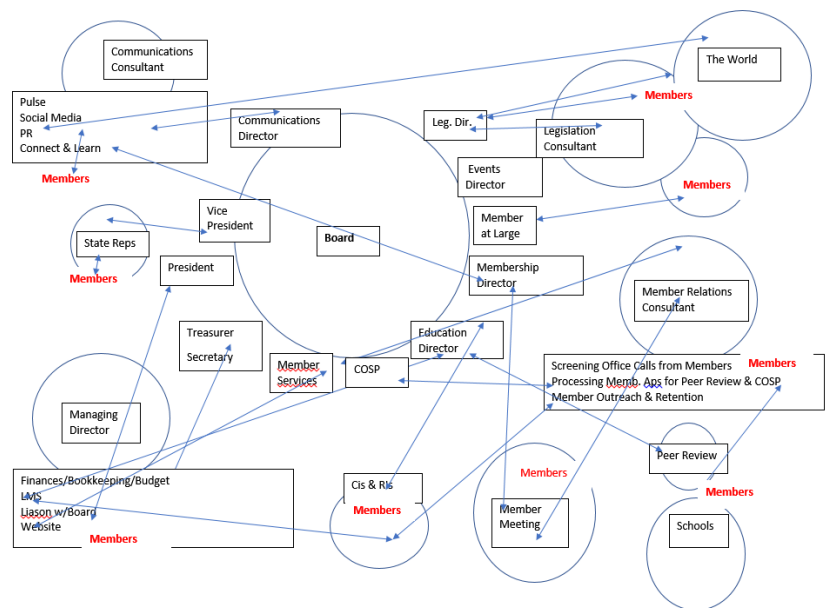
I am still smiling from our virtual convention on April 30 – May 9. We had NO IDEA what nine days of virtual programming would mean, so we did it anyway. And it was more than worth it. The presenters were excellent and rose to the virtual challenge in spectacular ways. We really wanted to create the kind of community connections that have historically been one of the joys of AOBTA® conventions, but we didn't really have a clue how that would work virtually. All of you who attended and participated made it work. The WHOVA app included great features like discussion groups, meet-ups and messaging among attendees, but we didn't know to expect the whole-hearted enthusiasm you brought with you. I counted 56 discussion threads, from "Working in a COVID World" to "Favorite Dance Music;" 13 meet-ups, 234 posts to the photo contest, and who knows how many messages. The discussion threads are still going. And for that matter, so is the convention, more virtual than ever. We are in the process of uploading all the workshop recordings onto the site for people to catch up with what they missed live. If you haven't registered yet, you have until August 1 to get the whole AWESOME package, including the social features, 10 hour-long QiGong/meditation sessions, 15 2-4 hour workshops, 9 community events and slews of continuing education credits, for the unbelievable member price of \$250 (\$150 student). Scholarships are still available. Everyone, including those registered for the live events, will have until September 1 to access the recordings before everything is transferred into the new Learning Management System – the AOBTA® Academy.

That brings me to what's happening with the board of directors and the operations staff. Several years ago the board set the intention to develop a paid staff of consultants to support the implementation of AOBTA®'s vision and mission. We began by hiring our Managing Director, Wayne Mylin, several years ago, and in the past two years we have added Brian Skow, Communications Consultant, Sarah West, Member Relations Consultant, and Yolanda Asher, Legislation Consultant. I think you've all seen the results of their contributions, not the least of which was the incomparable way they, along with the Convention Committee, made a reality of the dream conceived by the board for this convention.

Over the past several months, the board has been moving in the direction of our dream: turning over most of the day-to-day operations to the staff. I have paid special attention to how to delegate much of what has been on the president's plate in order to focus this position on board leadership and liaison between staff and board. Lightening the administrative load on the board potentially gives them space to, well...play more. Support the Shen. Shine the light on ABT. Don't worry, we are still serious about all this, but in the recent past, business as usual has been too much to be sustained by volunteer labor. With much of that now delegated to brilliantly capable people, who, by the way, are ABTs themselves, the board can take a creative, inspired look at where we going, what we need, and how we do it.

How we do it. As part of the board's Diversity Project, we've been discussing the hierarchical foundations of the structure of the board and visioning a structure that more matches who we are. We're seeing more of a web that includes the consultant staff and members rather than a pyramid. This makes for a distribution of influence and a truly dynamic flow of Qi among board,

staff, and members. This idea will be developed over the next several months by the new roster of board members but stay tuned and chime in with ideas. It could look kinda like this:



I am really excited about and grateful to the new and continuing board members taking office on July 1:

- President: Sarah Goldenberg
- Vice President: Andrea Sullivan
- Treasurer/Secretary: Sheryl Huske
- Education Director: Cindy Banker
- Membership Director: Valerie Coleman-Palansky
- Member-at-Large: Gregory Casey
- Legislation Director: Victor Manuel
- Communications Director: Matthew Swiegart
- COSP Co-Directors: Cari Johnson Pelava and Steve Rogne
- Member Services Director: Gail Kelstrom
- Events Director: Open

I am taking my leave from the board with a light heart because of the renewed energy and commitment of these people. I want to thank everyone for the heart-warming waves of appreciation that were sent my way in the last month. Every part of AOBTA® in which I have participated for the past 30 years has been a rich, rewarding and integral aspect of my life. All the tasks I have taken on, from editing *Pulse* to serving as President, have challenged, inspired, and *trained* me in skills I would not otherwise have developed. The practice of my profession has been immeasurably enriched by the community of colleagues. The people I have had the pleasure to meet and work with will remain precious to me for the rest of my life. I want to encourage everyone to find a place here to bring your unique gifts to share with this “tribe,” as Grandmother Winter Jade Forest calls us. What you bring with an open heart will be returned to you a thousand fold. I promise.