

# The COVID Years, Part 1



*Madison Schultz, Chapter President 2019-2020*

The 2019-2020 chapter year turned out to be historical in a couple of different ways. Madison Schultz, a consulting professional engineer, served as chapter President and was only the third female chapter president in our chapter’s history. I’m sure to someone looking in from the general public, that fact must seem very odd once they learn that by 2019, our chapter was 84 years old! Even more odd is that it had been 35 years since the chapter’s first female president and 31 years since our second.

Carolyn Crawford was working for R & B Equipment Company when she became the first ever female Central Oklahoma Chapter President in 1984. She was also the first female chapter president in all of Region VIII. Our second female chapter president, Diana Grundmann in 1988, was a Building Engineer at Southwestern Bell Telephone and followed Carolyn through the chairs only four years later. But in all the 1990’s, 2000’s and almost all of the 2010’s, we had no female chapter presidents.

## Highlights of 2019-2020

- 3rd female chapter president in chapter history
- 31 years since the last female chapter president
- Theme was empowering members, with a focus on diversity
- Chapter sponsored eight students to Winter Meeting
- YEA mentoring event
- GGAC changed name to Government Affairs Committee (GAC)
- Chapter meetings moved to Will Rogers Theater
- Diverse group of meeting speakers
- President met personally with every committee chair
- The Coronavirus pandemic started
- Chapter started doing virtual events
- Won the Golden Gavel!

In 2014, Stephanie Thomas was elected Chapter Treasurer and became the first female chapter officer in 25 years.

The 2019-2020 chapter year turned out to be historical in a second, major way. In February 2020, we started hearing news reports of a “novel” coronavirus spreading from overseas to the United States. By March 2020, the country was fixated on daily reports from New York’s Governor of increasing rates of infection, sickness and death. The word “pandemic” became part of everyone’s daily vernacular, and we were introduced to the term “social distancing.”

On March 11, 2020, an OKC Thunder professional basketball game against the Utah Jazz was cancelled just prior to tip-off due to a Jazz player testing positive for the virus. That evening, the NBA indefinitely suspended the entire season! Something that took everyone off guard.

Quickly following this, all “non-essential” business were ordered by state and local governments to shut down, sending the majority of working adults home in an effort to “slow the spread” of the virus. Schools closed. All public parks and playgrounds were ordered closed and off limits. All sporting events were cancelled. Not one person or one business was unaffected. It was surreal.

HVAC&R companies, including engineers, contractors and parts and equipment sales people were considered essential and allowed to remain open, albeit with employees encouraged to work from home if possible. ASHRAE functions, however, were not considered essential and were cancelled.

There was a rush to figure out the logistics on how to best conduct large meetings online. The term “Zoom meeting” became the catch phrase to describe an online video chat between multiple people. ASHRAE had to switch to this virtual platform very quickly. Society offered a GoToMeeting login for our use, but the chapter also purchased an actual Zoom account for flexibility. A few planned events, however, did get cancelled when a virtual option was just not feasible.

The April CRC, scheduled to take place in Houston, was postponed from April to June and was conducted as an online-only, virtual event. Most everyone that had planned on traveling to the CRC had already made hotel reservations and already purchased airline tickets. The hotel allowed cancellations but getting the airlines to refund ticket costs proved to be a challenge as the airline industry was instantly crippled and ultimately had to be bailed out by the federal government.

With this society year spanning July 2019 to June 2020 and formal ASHRAE chapter activities kicking off in September 2019, the first six months of this year was business as usual, full steam ahead with goals, programming, planning and implementation. President Madison Schultz gave her theme to the BOG of Empowering Members, with an emphasis on diversity. As it turned out, this was in tune with ASHRAE Society as it was the first year for the “Diversity in ASHRAE” committee (formerly Women in ASHRAE). Chapter past president, Aruna Abhayagoonawardhana (2007-08), served as Chairman for our chapter’s Diversity in ASHRAE committee. The committee held a Zoom meeting/happy hour event to discuss the importance of having a more diverse ASHRAE chapter and culture.



*Research Promotion Golf Tournament Fund Raiser at Kickingbird Golf Course, Edmond, OK*

Student branches from The University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, and The University of Central Oklahoma, continued to regularly attend in-person monthly chapter meetings prior to the shutdown in March 2020, and the chapter sponsored eight students to attend the Winter Conference and AHR Expo in January 2020. Some of our student members were also speakers at the conference and many are active on Society Technical Committees. The chapter's Student Activities committee also attended a STEM Expo at MetroTech back on September 20, 2019.

The Young Engineers in ASHRAE (YEA) committee tried something new this year by having a "Mentor Matching" event. YEA and non-YEA members attended and discussed what it takes to be a mentor and allowed some of the members to get to know each other. The YEA committee also held a virtual YEA/Student Mixer on Thursday, May 14, 2020 via Zoom and a second YEA/Student Mixer via Zoom on June 18. The committee had high hopes for many other types of events this year, but due to the pandemic, their hopes were squelched significantly. It was a very frustrating time in history.

The Research Promotion (RP) committee set out planning for three events: The longstanding tradition of kicking off the year in September with a golf tournament; along with a poker tournament and sporting clays event, both in the spring. The annual golf tournament was held at Kickingbird Golf Course on September 10, 2019. There were 19 teams and several sponsors, which in total, raised \$18,000 towards the RP goal. The sporting clays shotgun shooting event was postponed due to the coronavirus shutdown, but still ended up taking place on June 12, 2020. Unfortunately, the poker tournament ended up being cancelled.

Three sustainability projects were planned for this year, adding one more to the chapter's usual two events. They planned to have an OKC Boathouse trash cleanup day, a Rebuilding Together home renovation workday, and a Habitat for Humanity house build workday.

The OKC Boathouse event was completed on November 23, 2019 and was a big success with thirteen volunteers working hard to clean the shoreline and surrounding public areas. The Habitat workday took place in June 2020 after being postponed, but unfortunately, the Rebuilding Together renovation ended up being cancelled due to the pandemic. Just like with the RP fundraiser events, the fact that leadership set their sights on three sustainability events is what most likely allowed two of the events to actually take place. Had they only planned two events, it is very likely that only one might have taken place as in-person activities were very difficult to accomplish during the year 2020.

Junke Wang and Hunter Hodges were our chapter scholarship recipients this year. Junke Wang was a PHD student at The University of Oklahoma and Hunter Hodges was a senior at The University of Oklahoma. The scholarship awards were \$1,500 each.



*YEA Event in November, 2019*

The Grassroots Government Advocacy Committee (GGAC) officially changed its name to the Government Affairs Committee (GAC). February 25, 2020 was the annual Government outreach day. They focused on combining a statewide effort, along with the Northeastern Oklahoma Chapter, in continuing the education of local representatives to ultimately adopt the 2018 IECC for the State of Oklahoma. In the past, the OUBCC has updated the IBC Building Code but has always rolled back the section of the code that determined minimum standards for energy compliance including Chapter 13, Energy Efficiency. This roll back has always been back to the 2006 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), which by 2020, was very outdated. Plus, calling out the 2006 IECC in the State code seemed to be just a formality as neither the State nor any city code enforcement group had yet to formally enforce the provisions of the 2006 IECC in their building inspections. Some architects and engineers were diligent in making sure all their designs complied with the energy code, but some others completely ignored it as a matter of normal practice. However, all designs done for any of our federal facilities, such as Tinker Air Force Base, were required to be in compliance with the current federally mandated energy code.

President Schultz and the BOG decided that a change of venue was needed for chapter meetings and ultimately decided that the Will Rogers Theater was the best location for a group our size. The previous location on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor at 50 Penn Place was getting a little too crowded for the monthly chapter meetings and the theater provided much, much more room. Members liked the new location with all of its historical charm and ambiance; however, it did take a couple of meetings to get sound and projector issues worked out. The slate of speakers was as follows and was purposefully developed with a focus toward diversity in the speaker selections:

October 9, Jennifer Lickteig, CEO of Capital Funding and President of TBS Factoring, LLC: "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly of Government Contracting"

November 6, Eli Howard, Executive Director Technical Services at SMACNA: "System Effects on Ductwork"

December 11, Leanne Beasley Sutton, Product Manager for VAV Diffusers, Underfloor Air Distribution, and Displacement Ventilation for Titus: "Pros and cons of a VAV Diffuser System vs Traditional VAV Box System"



*ASHRAE Central Oklahoma Chapter Meeting at Will Rogers Theater*

January 8, Ken Gilbert, Regional Technical Consultant for Automated Logic: “High-Performance Sequences of Operation for HVAC Systems”

February 12, Joint meeting with SMACNA featuring a panel discussion with Stephanie Thomas, Chuck Darr, Scott Sanders, Kyle Bellmon, Joe McKenzie, and Mike Clark. COK ASHRAE President, Madison Schultz moderated

March 3, Esther K. Tierney, Manager of the Sales & Applications Department at Multistack, and Bruce Barrett, Regional Sales Manager for Multistack: “Variable Primary Flow Chilled Water Systems” (the last meeting before the coronavirus shutdown)

April 1, Online GoToMeeting, Oscar Peraza, Regional Product Manager for York Chillers in JCI’s West Region: “Update on Refrigerants”

May 6, Online GoToMeeting, Joint meeting with AIA, Bill McQuade, Vice President Sector Services and Industry Sector Lead for Applied Products: “The Future of the HVAC&R Industry- Trends, Risks, and Opportunities”

May 11, Online GoToMeeting, Companions’ Night Event, Congresswoman Kendra Horn, US House of Representatives from Oklahoma’s Fifth Congressional District: “Federal Energy Policies and Q&A”

Region VIII CRC, Online GoToMeetings, May 27: Business Meeting Part 1; May 28: Business Meeting Part 2 and Executive Caucus; June 2: Workshops; and June 3: Honors and Awards.

As mentioned earlier, President Madison Schultz started the year with a goal of empowering members and increasing diversity among chapter leadership and technical speakers. She stated that she’s never been satisfied with the way the HVAC&R industry looks with less than approximately 8% of Mechanical Engineers being women. To her, engineering has not always felt like the most welcoming place and because of that, it has been on her heart to make it more welcoming to everyone no matter their gender, color, age, job description, experience, etc. She wants all to feel welcome in our industry.

One way she put her goals into action was to highlight the efforts of a single chapter member in her President’s message at the beginning of every monthly newsletter. The region suggests that chapters put out eight newsletters each year, but Madison issued ten! In the last newsletter, she named everyone who served in any level of leadership in the chapter over the year.

Furthermore, she met individually with every committee chairperson throughout the year. Something many chapter presidents talk about but never actually get around to doing. She helped them set goals at the beginning of the year and then she monitored their progress regularly as the year progressed. Madison worked closely with each committee through every change that needed to be made on the fly in the last four months of the society year during the global “shutdown,” or as some preferred to put it, the global “lockdown.”



*Government Outreach Day, February 25, 2020*

President Schultz went above and beyond in every aspect of leading the chapter and the Region VIII Golden Gavel Committee agreed by awarding her, and the Central Oklahoma Chapter, the coveted Golden Gavel for 2019-20. Since the CRC was an online event in 2020, they could not physically hand Madison the actual golden gavel, president's pin and banner patch, but those items would be delivered to her later on. Still, it was monumental moment during the video conference as you could hear the chapter members cheering and all the congratulations started scrolling in the chat window.

Central Oklahoma had won the Golden Gavel in 2015 after Mr. Joe Sanders ended the 22 year drought going back to 1993, and then won again in 2018 with Mr. Damon McClure as president. Winning in 2020 meant that there was now, no doubt that the Central Oklahoma Chapter was back to top form, harkening back to decades past, in the mid 1970's to the early 1990's, when our chapter won the award so often that everyone almost came to expect it each year.

When the pandemic hit in March, 2020, many chapters just rolled over and quit, which was the easy way out, but not Madison and not the Central Oklahoma Chapter. The chapter adapted and the show went on. She firmly believed that it was more important to host a virtual event, with most likely much lower attendance, than to have no event at all and lose touch with the membership. After winning the award, President Madison Schultz gave the following reflections on the past year and her secret to running a successful organization:

*"The Golden Gavel is the highest honor a chapter can achieve, and it is a chapter award. We would not have won it without all of the amazing volunteers that we had this year. Surround yourself with people that have a different skill set and background as you. Actively recruit and engage diverse volunteers and future leaders."*

## The COVID Years, Part 2



*Chris Dolan, Chapter President 2020-21*

The 2020-21 society year began subjugated by the same extraordinary circumstance that 2019-20 ended with: The COVID-19 virus pandemic. However, from the time the virus really hit home around March, 2020 to the start of this society year in July, 2020, it seemed as if the public's perception of fear, as well as that of government officials, had lessened enough that most everything in Central Oklahoma had been allowed to reopen, albeit with restrictions still in place at most buildings and events. Masks were required at nearly every retail store, sporting events had started up again, but most with mandatory reduced attendance levels, some government offices were still closed, and many businesses were still requiring some or all employees to work from home.

President Chris Dolan and the BOG started the year off by deciding that BOG planning meetings would be held in person, at the centrally located Engineered Equipment Inc. office, instead of at a restaurant, but the meetings would also be available online for those who wish to attend virtually. The same held true for chapter meetings

as well, which were held at the Will Rogers Theater, but also available online. The virus did have an impact, however, on overall attendance (in person plus online) with the average attendance for the year being significantly down from the previous years. Unfortunately, after a couple of months in, and a spike in reported new virus cases, both the BOG and chapter meetings went virtual-only again.

The annual golf tournament took place at the Kickingbird golf course in Edmond, Oklahoma as normally planned in September. Players were required to wear masks only while inside the club house. Turn out for the tournament was very good, the weather was fantastic, and \$25,000 was raised for research and scholarships. This was the largest amount ever raised at any of our fund raiser events. The RP committee was also able to put on another Sporting Clays tournament in the spring which was also very successful.

### Highlights of 2020-21

- Early planning meetings to keep up the momentum from Golden Gavel year
- COVID-19 forcing many events to go virtual
- Record setting contributions received for RP
- Reduced the number of BOG down to four
- Chapter meeting topics of particular interest to engineers, contractors and owners.
- Two Distinguished Lecturer presentations
- Colored lanyard system implemented at in-person chapter meetings
- Two sustainability events
- Chapter President also served as RP Chair
- Significant accomplishment by Government Affairs committee
- Student Activities marketing video
- Diversity in ASHRAE meeting

The chapter leadership had almost an entirely new slate of BOG members, plus the count was reduced down to only four, but most of the committee chairs returned bringing continuity to this year's leadership team from last year's Golden Gavel winning crew. The BOG meetings were "paperless" this year with reports available online. President Dolan made the uncommon choice to remain Research Promotion chair while also serving as Chapter President.

At the in-person chapter meetings, the leadership made available colored lanyards to allow people to indicate their comfort level with human interaction. Green lanyards meant you were willing to shake hands, yellow lanyards meant you preferred to fist bump, and red lanyards meant you preferred that people stay six feet away.

This year marked the passing of one of the chapter's Past Presidents, Peter G. Ray. Pete was active in ASHRAE for about two decades, joining the society in the late 1980's, and becoming involved in the leadership in the 2000's, ultimately serving as Chapter President in 2009-10. Pete was only 62 years old when he passed. To honor him,

the chapter leadership voted to contribute \$1000 for three years in a row to establish a scholarship endowment in his name. Once the \$3000 is contributed, the endowment will automatically generate \$150 per year, in perpetuity, to be awarded as part of an ASHRAE engineering scholarship.

The 2021 AHR Expo originally scheduled to be held, as usual, in January was cancelled due to COVID-19. The 2021 ASHRAE Winter Conference, which always takes place at the same time as the expo still took place but in an online only format, renamed the Winter Virtual Conference, and was delayed until February. The conference included a mixture of live broadcasts and pre-recorded on-demand sessions. The chapter normally allocates money to help send students to the winter conference, but due to it being online only, the leadership decided to reallocate the money toward sending students to the ASHRAE summer conference in Arizona, but alas, that conference also went virtual.

The Student Activities committee remained very active this year despite the setbacks of the pandemic. College campuses were shut down for



*ASHRAE Central Oklahoma Chapter Meeting at Will Rogers Theater*

most of the year which actually lead to the chapter coming up with a marketing video that was sent to the universities designed to encourage college students to join ASHRAE. The seven minute video was shown in multiple classes at both OU and OSU, and was sent to Region VIII leadership to encourage other chapters to send the video to their universities.

The YEA committee also managed to remain active this year by holding an event at Top Golf as well as a number of virtual get-togethers. At the Top Golf event, chapter leadership and YEA wanted to emphasize that all of their events are actually open to anyone regardless of age. Leadership has noticed that over the past few years, that even though there has been a growing number of younger members being active, which is a good thing, there has also been a decrease in the number of older members attending events outside of the chapter meetings, which is not a good thing.

The “Women in ASHRAE” committee, that was formed last year, changed their name this year to “Diversity in ASHRAE” to include a much more broad focus. This committee held a webinar this

year focusing on the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. The discussion included how to recognize sexual harassment but primarily focused on how to respond in real time.

The Government Affairs committee was able to have two Day on the Hill events this year, but their major accomplishment was on staying focused on effecting change at the Oklahoma Uniform Building Code Commission (OUBCC). Their efforts contributed to the passing of a bill that requires two additional mandatory members on the OUBCC with one being a licensed mechanical engineer and the other a licensed electrical engineer. This success will allow the engineering community to have a greater voice in future State code regulation.

The chapter continued the tradition of community service this year with a Habitat for Humanity house framing work day in the fall and a boathouse docks and shoreline cleanup work day in the spring.

President Dolan had determined prior to the start of this society year that he wanted a greater focus on engineer, contractor and owner participation in chapter meetings. To facilitate this, he paid a visit



*ASHRAE Government Affairs Committee Members at the Oklahoma State Capitol*

to the three largest consulting engineering firms and worked with CTTC to schedule a slate of chapter technical presentations geared toward being more interesting to those branches of our membership. The chapter tech presentations were as follows:

October, 2020 (in person at the Will Rogers Theater): Indoor Agriculture (with a focus on marijuana grow facilities) by Al Grosskurth with Quest Climate.

November, 2020 (in person at the Will Rogers Theater): Displacement Ventilation by Chris Burroughs, Product Manager in Price Industries Sustainable Systems division.

December, 2020 (virtual): Legionella Risk Mitigation by Stirling Boston & Jenny Hill. Jenny Hill is Product Manager of Commercial Water Quality at Watts Heating and Hot Water Solutions. Stirling Boston is Regional Sales Manager for AERCO.

January, 2021 (Virtual): Refrigerant Safety by Douglas Reindl, professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an ASHRAE Distinguished Lecturer.

February, 2021 (in person at the Will Rogers Theater): Life Safety Damper Overview by James Livingston, Central Regional Sales Manager, Ruskin Company.

March, 2021 (virtual): Productivity From Anywhere by Pam Duffy, Owner of Spark One Solutions and an ASHRAE Distinguished Lecturer.

May, 2021 (virtual): Heat Pump Chillers by Oscar Paraza with Johnson Controls.

When President Dolan was asked, after the year was over, looking back, what accomplishments would he say were most meaningful and what was the most challenging, he had this to say:

*“The most meaningful accomplishment has to be the efforts of all of the chairs. Although we were all dealing with the pandemic, there was nothing stopping them from achieving their goals. I am very appreciative of the hard work everyone put into making my year a successful one! I think the answer to the most challenging is obvious... COVID!”*



Habitat for Humanity House Framing Work Day