

Why TMA's Physicians Benevolent Fund is Important: A Conversation with Vickie Blumhagen

TMA's [Physicians Benevolent Fund](#) provides financial support to physicians and their families during times of personal hardship, such as a wife left with a lot of debt following her physician husband's death or an elderly couple struggling to make ends meet as their savings dwindle following a dementia diagnosis. For more than six decades – thanks to the generosity of Texas physicians – PBF has helped families pay for their residence, mounting medical bills, and other necessities.

TMA asked members of the PBF Committee – TMA physicians and TMA Alliance representatives – to answer a few questions about what inspires them to serve and what they'd like other TMA Family members to know about PBF. Committee members review the applications to determine if physicians or physician families qualify for funding.

Vickie Blumhagen of Austin, a former member of the TMA Alliance Board of Directors, has served on the PBF Committee since 2015 and here's what she had to say.

TMA: What interested you in joining the PBF Committee and what keeps you involved?

Vickie: I first heard about PBF during a TMAA finance meeting and immediately knew I wanted to be part of the committee. It especially interested me given my background in social work and years of experience with the board of the Travis County Medical Alliance and the TMA Alliance. The letters from recipients telling us how the fund has helped them keeps me involved.

TMA: What are you most proud of about the work of this committee?

Vickie: I am most proud of how the committee treats each application/applicant with the upmost respect and dignity. The committee takes confidentiality very seriously.

TMA: Sometimes people are hesitant to ask for help. If someone becomes aware of a physician's family in need, how can they connect them to PBF?

Vickie: They can contact TMA and ask for Chris Johnson, PBF director, at 512-370-1602 (or [email](#)). TMA staff will contact the family in need, keeping the referral confidential.

TMA: What is the most important thing you want your TMA Family to know about PBF?

Vickie: The PBF stands ready to help anyone in need who meets the qualifications. Our committee members represent only a few counties in Texas, so we need your help to identify people who may be struggling in your communities. TMA staff do an amazing job of working with applicants to assess their needs; not just immediate needs, but long term as well.