ASIRT Gala
November 4, 2019
Carnegie Institution for Science

Leaders in Road Safety
where the rubber meets the road
Dear Friends,

Welcome to Leaders in Road Safety: where the rubber meets the road, the 2019 ASIRT Gala. We have gathered together this evening to express our appreciation to key individuals, corporations and industries who have exhibited active, committed and outspoken leadership in road safety. Our honorees envision a world in which no one will perish in a road crash. To this end, they raise awareness, advocate for actionable political commitment, better safety standards and concrete life-saving interventions. They create and institute road safety initiatives on their own or generously support and finance the efforts of others.

It is precisely this kind of strong, effective and informed leadership that is vital to combat the scourge of road crashes which claims the precious lives of well over one million people every year and injures an additional 50 million. Only through dedication such as theirs will road crashes cease to be the number one killer of children and young adults, among them my own son, Aron.

We are grateful to each of you here this evening for the leadership roles that you play by speaking out for road safety, advocating for a more secure traffic environment for travelers at home and abroad, attending this important event and supporting ASIRT in its many road safety activities. Your commitment to road safety has the power to change the world.

Congratulations and thank you to our outstanding Keynote Speaker Jennifer Homendy, Master of Ceremonies Randy Morgan, Guest Vocalist Katie Makri and to our magnificent honorees David Feinman, Her Excellency Karin Olofsdotter, Andrew Blair, Dr. Jasmina Goldoni Laestadius, Robert Strassburger and Nira Berry. Kudos to Gala Co-Chairs Isabel Einzig and Valerie Eisenstein, Raffle Chair Miriam Cohen, Embassy Chair Paul Blank and the entire Gala Committee. We are ever grateful to our talented and devoted staff, volunteers and members of the ASIRT Board of Directors and Advisory Board, without whom our mission could not be accomplished.

Warmly,

Rochelle Sobel
Founder and President, ASIRT
Reception

Welcome
Katie Makri, Guest Vocalist
Rochelle Sobel, Founder and President, ASIRT
H. Randall Morgan, Jr., Master of Ceremonies

Keynote Speaker
Jennifer Homendy
Member of the
National Transportation Safety Board

Awards Presentation
Aron Sobel Guardian Award
David Feinman
Government Affairs Director
Conservation Lands Foundation

ASIRT Diplomatic Leadership in Road Safety Award
Her Excellency Karin Olofsdotter
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden
to the United States of America

ASIRT Corporate Conscience Award
Andrew C. Blair
President and CEO
Colonial Parking, Inc.

ASIRT Road Safety Champion Award
Dr. Jasminka Goldoni Laestadius
Senior Occupational Health Specialist, MD, PhD, FACOEM
World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund

ASIRT Global Corporate Leadership Award
Robert Strassburger
Vice President, Vehicle Safety & Harmonization
Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, Inc.

ASIRT Community Leadership Award
Nira Berry
Motivational Speaker, Life Coach and Founder
LaughingRx Wellness Programs
Jennifer Homendy took the oath of office as the 44th Member of the National Transportation Safety Board on August 20, 2018. She is a tireless advocate for safety and brings to the Board expertise in rail, pipeline and hazardous materials safety.

From 2004-2018, Ms. Homendy served as the Democratic Staff Director of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials, which is under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I Committee) of the United States House of Representatives. During her tenure as Staff Director, she guided major pieces of rail, pipeline and hazardous materials legislation through the legislative process.

In 2010, Ms. Homendy spearheaded the T&I Committee’s extensive oversight investigations of the Enbridge pipeline spill in Marshall, Michigan, and Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), which led to major safety improvements in pipeline and hazardous materials safety. In 2017 and 2018, she led a multimodal review of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s drug and alcohol testing program which identified significant safety gaps in the program.

Randy Morgan began his international career with Russian trade and translation in the late 1980s, for which he maintained an office in Moscow. Now, as CEO of Morgan Language Services, he operates a comprehensive language solutions company providing written, spoken and electronic services in more than 120 languages. He is a past recipient of ASIRT’s Community Leadership Award and has served on ASIRT’s Board for many years, currently as a Vice President. He and his wife Lynn chaired ASIRT’s 2007 Gala at the Embassy of Italy, and he twice spearheaded the strategic planning campaigns that resulted in the reformulation of ASIRT’s vision, mission and core values. An executive coach and public speaker, Mr. Morgan presents seminars internationally on road safety and other topics.

Katie Makri lives in Alexandroupolis, Thrace, Northern Greece and is Head of the Education Department and the Public Library. She also organizes cultural activities as a Volunteer Officer of the Municipality of Alexandroupolis. Ms. Makri began working in road safety and victim support after the loss of her 20-year old son Stratos in a car crash in 2011. She is a member of the Board of the International Road Victims Partnership since 2017. Ms. Makri oversees all of the Road Safety School Programs in
Honorees

David Feinman
Aron Sobel Guardian Award

David Feinman is currently Government Affairs Director for Conservation Lands Foundation (CLF), defending the integrity of America’s public lands that hold cultural, environmental, scientific and historic value as well as the bedrock conservation laws that protect them. Prior to joining CLF, Mr. Feinman served as Washington Representative for both the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) and World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO), establishing a public policy presence in Washington for both organizations in support of their work on behalf of Holocaust victims in 47 countries. He previously served as Senior Legislative Associate and Project Director for The Jewish Federations of North America.

Mr. Feinman has been involved in road safety issues since 2007 when he joined the staff of former Congressman Robert Wexler and has served on ASIRT’s Board since 2011. While a congressional aide to Congressman Wexler, Mr. Feinman staffed the Congressional Caucus on Global Road Safety, leading efforts to pass two resolutions relating to road safety through the House of Representatives, building membership for the Caucus and attending the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in Moscow. He now provides expertise in government affairs, advocacy and the legislative process to ASIRT’s Board, supporting ASIRT’s efforts to build champions for global road safety on Capitol Hill and encouraging passage of sound federal domestic and foreign policy to support better global road safety outcomes.

Her Excellency Karin Olofsdotter
ASIRT Diplomatic Leadership in Road Safety Award

Her Excellency Karin Olofsdotter is Ambassador of Sweden to the United States. She previously served as Director-General for Trade at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and has also held the positions of Deputy Director General and Head of the Department for Promotion of Sweden, Trade and CSR in Stockholm, Ambassador at the Embassy in Budapest and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Swedish Embassy in Washington, DC. She has also served in Sweden’s Foreign Service and served as Chief of Staff to several Swedish Foreign Ministers and as Director of the Ministers Office in Stockholm before joining the Embassy in Washington, DC. Ambassador Olofsdotter is spearheading plans for the upcoming Global Ministerial Conference to take place in Stockholm in February 2020.
Andrew C. Blair
ASIRT Corporate Conscience Award

Andrew C. Blair is President and Chief Executive Officer of Colonial Parking, Inc., the largest provider of parking management services in the Washington Metropolitan Area, with 275 operations and more than 1,100 employees serving 110,000 parkers each day. He has more than 36 years of experience in the industry, including risk management, marketing and operations, as well as strategic planning and execution.

Mr. Blair takes an active leadership role in numerous municipal, community and professional organizations. He served as past Chair of the Board of Children’s National Medical Center Foundation, past Vice Chair of the Parent Board of Children’s National Medical Center, past Chair of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, past Chair of the National Parking Association, and Board Member of the Washington Parking Association. He currently serves as Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Safe Kids Worldwide and Vice of the Georgetown Business Improvement District, is a member of the National Advisory Board of the Jefferson Scholars Foundation at the University of Virginia and sits on the District Council of the Urban Land Institute Washington.

Dr. Jasminka Goldoni Laestadius
ASIRT Road Safety Champion Award

Dr. Jasminka Goldoni Laestadius is a Senior Occupational Health Specialist in the Health and Safety Directorate of the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund. A physician with specialized professional training in Occupational and Environmental Medicine, she also holds a Ph.D. in that field. She has spent most of her 35-year career in culturally diverse settings including the World Food Program in Rome and the European Commission in Brussels. Dr. Goldoni Laestadius holds memberships in various national and international professional associations and is a past President of the Metropolitan Washington College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. Her expertise covers all aspects of Occupational Medicine, but she is particularly active and recognized in the field of global road safety, as evidenced by her numerous peer-reviewed publications, reports, professional presentations and awards.

Road safety is the main occupational health risk for World Bank Group staff, 70 percent of whom travel routinely as part of their work, resulting in over 800,000 days per year of international travel to mostly low- and middle-income countries. Dr. Goldoni Laestadius played a crucial role in establishing the Road Traffic Safety management system in the World Bank to reduce road safety risks for staff, focusing on drivers’ medical clearance process and development/monitoring of a confidential reporting system for road traffic crashes and near-crashes.
Robert Strassburger
ASIRT Global Corporate Leadership Award

Robert Strassburger is Vice President, Vehicle Safety & Harmonization for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, Inc. Since joining the Alliance in April 2000, Mr. Strassburger has overseen the development of several voluntary industry standards and commitments to enhance motor vehicle safety. He also oversees the Alliance’s safety research which includes development of new crash test dummies, crash investigations and fundamental injury causation studies.

Mr. Strassburger joined the Alliance from Nissan North America where he was Director of Government Affairs. Prior to joining Nissan, he held several safety, engineering and vehicle emissions positions at Mazda North American Operations. He also serves as President and CEO for the Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety, Inc. (ACTS).

Nira Berry
ASIRT Community Leadership Award

Nira Berry is known as the Happiness Coach, and her mission is to empower and guide clients to find laughter and happiness. A national and international motivational speaker, Ms. Berry’s specialty is happiness, stress management and laughter experiences including laughter yoga, LaughingRx laughter team-building events, laughter therapy and life coaching. She is the host of Happy & Healthy television show and the creator of Laugh Off Stress: Laughter Yoga Exercises DVD.

Ms. Berry discovered the power of healing and benefits of laughter while recovering from cancer and as a result founded LaughingRx Wellness Programs. Since then, her passion is to spread the message of living with joy and laughter. She has been the featured speaker at hundreds of corporate, government and health events.

Ms. Berry, who earned a graduate degree in Health and Wellness Coaching from the Maryland University of Interactive Health, is a Certified Health and Wellness Coach and a Certified Laughter Yoga Teacher. She is a member of the Survivor Volunteer Board, Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, and was selected as the 2019 Survivor of the Year. She is a faculty member at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland. Ms. Berry is featured frequently in the media including USA Today, Reader’s Digest, Forbes.com, The Washington Post and Bethesda Magazine for her expertise in laughter and wellness. Her upcoming book on happiness and laughter is expected to be released next year.
Thank You

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