



Tenth Anniversary

In celebration of TABCO-Retired's ten years of advocating for retired TABCO members, a luncheon was held at Liberatore's Italian Restaurant. This gathering saw many connecting with old friends, and brought together the folks who had supported the inception of an Association-connected retiree organization, as well as those who have supported its growth and continue to assist with operations. Six of those were recognized with certificates of appreciation.

To the left, four of those recipients are pictured: Kim Melfa, TABCO Administrative Assistant; Abby Beytin, Past TABCO President, Dr. Myriam Rogers, BCPS Superintendent, and President Cindy Sexton. Unable to be present were Ana Negrete-Garcia, TABCO Office Manager, and Christine Beard, retired member, who received their certificates at a later date.



Also to the left are pictured past and current TABCO leaders and staff: in front are Lisa Levee, retired office manager; Edward Veit, past TABCO president; and Abby Beytin. In the back row, Cindy Sexton; Bob Anzelc, retired TABCO executive director; Caroline Seamon, wife of deceased TABCO president Kenneth Seamon; Ben Forstener, current TABCO executive director; Mark Beytin, past TABCO president; and Kim Melfa, TABCO administrative assistant and liaison to TABCO-Retired.

Retired members who attended received a discount on the cost of their meals, funded by the TABCO-R budget, and "bling bags" with mementos of the occasion. Steering committee member Cindy North led the planning of the event, with great results.



TABCO-R Steering Committee members
Back row, from left: Angie Leitzer, chair; Roxann Russo, Edward Kitlowski, Cindy North, Julia Hinton VanHook, Barbara Tyler. Front row, from left: Cheryl Vourvoulas, Stephanie Foy, Jane Sacks, Elizabeth Ceanfaglione, Mary Ellen Vecchioni

Healthcare matters...!

Given the difficult circumstances facing many of our fellow citizens regarding healthcare, BCPS retired employees are fortunate to have continuing commitment to accessing healthcare coverage via our former employer. However, retirees often attempt to use the BCPS website for information, only to be frustrated. It is interesting that the retiree benefits section is located under the “Staff” tab on the BCPS home page. On the other hand, access to advice from the Employee and Retiree Customer Service Center (formerly the Customer Service Center or CSC) that was created after the 2020 ransomware attack, is a vast improvement to the limited service prior to that time. We hear from Medicare-eligible members that RetireeFirst personnel are also very helpful. But we know that the transition to Medicare process has been problematic (to say the least) for some; BCPS has strict timelines.

TRANSITION TO MEDICARE

From the BCPS website, here is some important information for those approaching Medicare age: “BCPS requires that as soon as a retiree, spouse, or dependent of a retiree is eligible for Medicare, that they accept Medicare as their primary health carrier, enroll

in Medicare parts A&B, and choose a BCPS Medicare Supplement plan to continue BCPS medical benefits. Prescription plans are bundled with plan options, so retirees do **NOT** need to enroll in a Part D prescription plan.

To ensure uninterrupted medical insurance coverage, you **MUST** take action to elect a BCPS Medicare and prescription plan by contacting Retiree First at 443-290-3114, Monday-Friday, from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. EST. You will be receiving additional communications from Retiree First directly regarding enrollment, plan options, and rates. Please do NOT throw it away.

Failure to act in a timely manner could result in loss and/or interruption of your medical insurance coverage.”

ALSO, from the benefits office: “You should receive a mailing from RetireeFirst that includes an enrollment guide and application [an] estimated 45-60 days prior to your birth month. RetireeFirst will contact you via phone to discuss your options. You will be responsible for completing the application for your requested plan and sending it back to RetireeFirst. If you did not receive information from RetireeFirst, please call at your earliest convenience to request plan materials.”



The House in the Cerulean Sea

By T. J. Klune

Linus Baker lives a lonely life as a case worker for the Department in Charge of Magical Youth. His job is to evaluate orphanages for magical children, ensuring they are safe and not a threat to society. His reports are dull and adhere to the guidelines in the large rule book of DICOMY. Linus lives alone in a small house with his cat. One day he is called to inspect an orphanage on Marsyas Island where six extraordinary children reside including a gnome, a sprite, a wyvern, and the Antichrist. As he stays on the island Linus discovers that the children are not dangers to society but are truly unique individuals with their own fears. The head of the school, Arthur Parnassus, is fiercely protective of them.

“We get trapped in our own little bubbles, and even though the world is a wide and mysterious place, our bubbles keep us safe from that.”

As Linus gets to know the children and Arthur, he begins to question the rigid rule of the job and his voluminous rule book and the prejudices he has held. *The House in the Cerulean Sea* beautifully explores family, acceptance, and the importance of kindness.

What struck me was the contrast of Linus' former life which was depicted as gray, to his time on Marsyas Island where cerulean is only one of the colors that describe his time there, and his report to DICOMY. As you can tell, I found the story enchanting.

Even if you are not a fan of fantasy, T.J. Klune's writing is extraordinary and its core message that “we are not defined by what we are born as, but by the choices we make,” is worth a look. There is a second book, *Somewhere Beyond the Sea* that was released in October 2024, and I also found references to a movie of the first book.



By Barbara Tyler