

JIM VIVERITO FRIEND OF THE AMA AWARD

Former AMA Board Member Exemplified Volunteer Service

By Rob Dingman

Although it has now been many years since I was required to read it for a college political science class, *Democracy in America* chronicled the observations of its author, 19th century French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville, during his travels around the United States to study the American way of life. De Tocqueville marveled at the propensity of Americans to form voluntary associations centered around common interests and goals. He observed that civic spirit, involvement and volunteerism were three keys to American democracy.

Volunteerism is a hallmark of grassroots membership organizations like the AMA. Nonprofit groups, such as the AMA, rarely have the resources to pursue their organizational objectives without the significant assistance of dedicated volunteers.

Volunteers have been the backbone of the AMA since its creation almost 100 years ago. Volunteers assist the AMA staff at events and help retain and recruit members. They serve on committees and commissions, such as those that help make rules for competition. They serve as our eyes and ears and, in many cases, as our advocates before legislative and other government bodies all around the country.

I have said frequently that the AMA doesn't have a Learjet warming up on the tarmac ready to carry a hoard of paid lobbyists into your state capital to solve your problem. The AMA relies on volunteers to be the foot soldiers in the AMA's grassroots army, because the most effective way to influence elected officials

is for them to hear from those who can vote for or against them.

The AMA Board of Directors is made up of volunteers. While Business Members of the AMA are represented on the Board of Directors by four individuals they elect to serve on their

behalf and are paid by their companies for their time and expenses, eight members of the Board are volunteers, who are elected by the individual members of the AMA. That's right, governance of the AMA is provided by a Board with a majority of unpaid volunteers.

I hope you get the idea how critical volunteers are to the AMA.

There is no one who has better exemplified volunteer service to the AMA than former AMA Board Member Jim Viverito. I first met Jim when he joined the AMA Board of Directors in 2010. He had been active in a number of motorcycling organizations including ABATE of Illinois, where he served four terms as Chicago Chapter president and two terms as the chapter representative to the ABATE of Illinois Board of Directors. Jim had raced at the professional and amateur levels and competed in several disciplines of motorcycle racing in both modern and vintage racing.

Jim got elected to the AMA Board because there were many changes going on in the organization at the time, and he wasn't sure if he agreed with all of them. Jim came to the Board with an open mind and quickly learned that there was a lot more to what was going on at the AMA than what he had read about online and heard from other organizations.

Jim's skepticism for what was happening at the AMA evolved over time into great support for the direction the organization was headed, and he became a champion for the AMA and its mission to promote the motorcycle lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling.

Jim was an exemplary Board member and continued to be an active volunteer, and he was very well-liked by AMA staff. Sadly, Jim passed away in 2019. At the time of his passing, he was a member of the American Motorcycle Heritage Foundation Board and chaired the Hall of Fame Specialty Competition Committee, as well as the AMA Sporting Commission.

As I mentioned in my February column, Jim was a passionate motorcyclist and an extremely dedicated AMA member. He volunteered his time and energy to assist the AMA in every way he could. He even volunteered in the AMA mailroom occasionally just to help out.

At its February Board meeting, the AMA Board of Directors voted unanimously to create the Jim Viverito volunteer award and present the first award to Jim posthumously. It was decided that the existing Friend of the AMA Award would be renamed in his honor as the Jim Viverito Friend of the AMA Award.

I spoke with Jim's wife, Marilyn, to let her know about the Board's action and Jim's award. Unfortunately, this was early in the coronavirus pandemic, and I told her when things settled down, we would find a time when the award could be presented to her in Chicago. Since I don't want to hold up the announcement and presentation any longer, we will be sending the award to Marilyn.

Thank you, Jim Viverito, for your service to the American Motorcyclist Association and for truly being a Friend of the AMA.



Rob Dingman, a Charter Life Member, is president and CEO of the AMA.