



## Time to Contribute and Make a Difference

By John Tawresey, P.E., F.SEI, Dist.M.ASCE

It was a beautiful day in Seattle, with the bluest skies you have ever seen. On that day, I was at my construction site, waiting to pour the first building foundation. I retired in 2013 and converted my assets into constructing seven rental units. After 40 years of practicing structural engineering, I was confident that I could be my own general contractor. It should be easy on a small project.

While waiting, my phone chimed. It was Glenn Bell (Past President of the SEI Board of Governors). “John, I am calling you about the foundation.” How did Glenn know about my foundation? He could not know. He was 3000 miles away. I responded, “What foundation?” He replied, “The Structural Engineering Institute Futures Fund (SEIFF). It’s a subset of the ASCE Foundation.”

Glenn asked me to join the Futures Fund Board. I did not even know it existed. Perhaps today you are in the same position, so read on! I asked Glenn for additional information, and I learned.

The SEIFF was formed in 2013. A memo of understanding between the ASCE Foundation and the SEI Futures Fund was executed. It has interesting provisions favorable to SEI.

- The ASCE Foundation will provide administration and support for fundraising activities.
- There will be no fees to the SEI or the SEI Futures Fund for Foundation administration and support of the SEIFF fundraising efforts.

Wow, a fund with no expenses! All of the contributions are for projects – what a deal.

I learned that funding requests could be submitted to the Futures Fund by making a proposal within four strategic areas:

- Promote Student Interest in Structural Engineering,
- Support Younger Member Involvement in SEI Activities,
- Enhance Opportunities for Professional Development, and
- Invest in the Future of the Profession.

Each year the Board receives proposals, with a June 1 deadline. Not all submissions are funded. Sometimes the Board will suggest modifications to the request and fund accordingly. Realizing that the SEI Futures Fund has these strategic, forward-leaning attributes, I placed my name for consideration and was subsequently accepted.

That was four years ago. In the meantime, my rental foundations were completed. I finished the buildings and learned that being a general contractor is hard work and challenging.

Being a structural engineer is not easy, but it is a wonderful profession. In what other profession do you have the opportunity to do something different every day? Solving problems is fun, and our architect colleagues provide many opportunities. I am fortunate to have designed many structures and participated in many professional organizations. I recognize the necessity to give back, and, for all of us, the SEIFF provides the opportunity.

Being on the Futures Fund Board has been challenging. For me, asking for your support is harder than designing a masonry wall. But my discomfort is overcome by the good I know that support will do. Here are some of the activities previously funded that may help you decide to participate.

- 1) SEIFF provides scholarships for engineering students and young professionals to attend the Structures Congress.
- 2) Sponsored by the SEI Codes and Standards Division, SEIFF provides expenses for younger members to participate and be



2019 SEI Futures Fund Student and Young Professional Recipients of a Scholarship to the Structures Congress.

involved in standards meetings, giving them exposure to, and investment in, this crucial work of our profession.

- 3) Pursuing our goal of expanded global professional awareness and connection, the formation of the Global Activities Division of SEI received funding from the SEIFF and is now active in providing SEI with a more international perspective and involvement.
- 4) SEIFF has sponsored workshops for structural engineers to gather and discuss important issues facing our profession. Sponsored events include workshops on the future of structural engineering education; workshops on sustainability and how structural engineers can meet the challenges of combating changes to the global environment; and workshops on leadership training.
- 5) Sponsored by the SEI Local Activities Division, SEIFF has funded expenses to communicate important codes and standards changes to our members.

Many of these activities are continuing. New activities are funded for fiscal year 2021, including scholarships for the upcoming Electrical Transmission and Substation Structures Conference (ETS) and seed money to develop a database on claims against structural engineers.

Designing and constructing a resilient foundation is essential to the performance of our structures. Donating to the Futures Fund is critical to provide the foundation materials (growing financial resources) to support our community.

I support the work of the Futures Fund, not because I am on the Board but because I am passionate about the future promise of our profession. Indeed, that is why I joined the Board to begin with! I am inviting you to join me and many others who believe our profession is only just beginning to catch a glimpse of its future. Here’s what I would like you to consider – a sacrifice. Would you take the money you might spend on a good bottle of wine or a nice dinner out and instead gift it to support those who will follow us and one day lead our profession? Would you make that one simple investment decision? It is easy; you can contribute by visiting [www.asce.org/SEIFuturesFund](http://www.asce.org/SEIFuturesFund).

In addition, do you also have some ideas about how we, together, can improve our profession? If so, make a bold proposal to us, and let’s get to work on it! For submittal requirements, visit the website. Thanks for your ongoing commitment to the future of structural engineering – OUR profession. ■



John G. Tawresey is a retired CFO of KPFF Consulting Engineers in Seattle, WA.