NEWS RELEASE

Straight to the Gate: Eric Means

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Eric Means' mission is to pay it forward and make a difference in the lives of everyone he meets. He gets plenty of opportunity to do so as a flight attendant for American Airlines.

"I love flying," Eric says with his signature big smile. "You never know who your passengers are going to be. You can set the tone, when they are walking on, you just say, 'Hello, how are you doing?' and they speak back to you.... You never know how you may make that person's day."

Eric can remember seeing a DC10 fly over the Memphis sky and taking his first flight ever (on an American Airlines aircraft). He knew the open skies were the place for him.

"It was a dream of mine, [but] it didn't automatically come right away," he admits. "It was several airline interviews before I was actually selected." He says that he day he was selected, he didn't believe it was happening. "I was like 'This has got to be a joke,' and it wasn't a joke, it was something that changed my life for the better."

And for 22 years, Eric has been "spreading his wings" at American. Now he's passing on that passion for flying to new recruits at Flagship University in Fort Worth, Texas.

“This is just joy, even if I am here at the training center and I have an 8-hour-day, it may go 8-and-a-half hours a day, it is still more joy and more rewarding to be here giving something back to someone,” he says. “It’s about paying it forward. The airline paid it forward to me, and I’m paying it forward to them.”

He also compares working at the world’s largest airline to family and is thankful he works for a company that embraces inclusion, diversity and the LGBTQ community.

“It’s amazing, I can’t imagine not being able to be me,” he says. “I work with a great team of managers, I work with a great team of other instructors, recruiters and they love me as Eric Means. And loving me as Eric Means, means the whole of me.”

“Eric represents the flight attendants as a professional, loyal and outgoing individual. This shows in the way he instructs as well. Eric ‘Trains the way he flies’, always with a great attitude and willingness to go the extra mile,” said John Carithers, Manager, Training Operations, DFW.

“It’s an inclusive culture,” said Eric. “Working in recruitment, I’ve hired, help select, along with the team, a couple of transgender women, and it makes me feel good. I’ve flown with transgender pilots and it made me feel good.”

Feeling good is what shines through for Eric and those around him. “I can’t even explain the joy that I feel working for a company that has allowed me to do so much.”