

## Team members can make community impact through Regional Councils

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American Airlines proudly supports philanthropic organizations that make a meaningful impact in the communities where our team members live, work and play. But with so many charities worthy of assistance, decisions about where to concentrate our giving need to be made carefully. That's where our Regional Councils come into play.

Just a couple of years ago, the councils were established in each of our hubs giving local leaders and two team members the resources they need to support local philanthropies. They look at what's important to their colleagues, critical to the region/hub and aligned with American's three strategic focus areas for giving: Our Future, Our Well Being and Our Heroes. One of the team members leading the way is Carmen Arias-Mckinn, a customer care manager in the Phoenix Reservations office, who says, "Having the opportunity to network with fellow employees and serve my community is a pretty terrific combination."

Joining one of American's 10 Regional Councils and helping make decisions about local support is a voluntary opportunity at American that comes with a two-year commitment that involves events, activities and serving as a liaison to the organizations. As soon as Carmen had the opportunity to apply for the Phoenix Council, she jumped at the chance. "I was excited about finding how American supports the community financially. After I was selected to be a part of the council, I found that there was quite a bit of discussion that went into the approval process," she says.

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American's Community Relations team hosts a mini training on reviewing requests and what to consider when making decisions on community support, but then it's left up to the local council. In Phoenix, the team includes representatives from Community Relations, Airports, Government Affairs, Sales and Corporate Communications. "We review each request," Carmen says. "For me, I'm always looking at the organizations that offer ongoing volunteer opportunities versus one-time events. If we don't see that, we go back to the organization to see if there are more volunteer opportunities available."

Lucky for her — and American — when Carmen joined the Phoenix Council, she was already familiar with a significant number of community organizations through her personal volunteer work. "I was able to offer insight and feedback on decisions that affected the organizations we support," she says. "Having an awareness of how American supports the community as well as how the organizations serve our community is necessary in order to offer input on the support American gives, as well as how our employees are affected."

One of those organizations is Free Arts, whose mission is healing abused and homeless children through artistic expression. "They make my heart sing ... dance, draw and make music," Carmen says with a smile. "I do not have a creative bone in my body, but working with the kids at different shelters and schools and seeing how much you can affect someone's life simply by spending time and sharing with them has been simply amazing."

She also has a special place in her heart for Habitat for Humanity, which she says "makes me feel like I can build a house every time I leave a site build." But for both American and Carmen, it's really about building relationships. "With Habitat you get to work with the future homeowner and their families in helping make their dream a reality. The build happens over several weeks, so you get to know the Habitat for Humanity crew and the family and feel like you have made a huge difference. I always walk away feeling so satisfied and grateful about my small contribution."

These days, Regional Councils meet quarterly to review all donation requests that have been submitted through [www.aa.com/giving](http://www.aa.com/giving) by nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organizations in each hub city, currently: Charlotte, Dallas/Fort Worth, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Phoenix and Washington, D.C.

Carmen calls her work on the Phoenix Regional Council an amazing opportunity. "Having the ability to make an impact in my community on behalf of American not only gives me great pride, it has helped me when speaking to fellow team members about organizations that we serve and support" she says

To learn more about how American and it's team members support the community, please visit [aa.com/letgoodtakeflight](http://aa.com/letgoodtakeflight).