American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

American Music Awards honor first responders, including two American pilots

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When the 45th annual American Music Awards honored first responders in a national broadcast Nov. 19, Los Angeles-based American Airlines Captain Korry Hamman and Chicago-based First Officer Christine Zoerlein represented thousands of American team members who answered the call to help when natural disasters hit our communities in 2017. The moving tribute highlighted the commitment that first responders have in times of need. Korry and Christine's stories are two examples of how American Airlines team members helped each other and the hardest hit areas.

Soon after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, Korry, who is also a member of the Texas State Guard, was deployed to fly a C-130H Hercules aircraft to the Gulf Coast in support of relief efforts. His Sept. 1 mission: Deliver supplies, aid and essential medical personnel to the hard-hit area.

Similar C-130H crews from the Texas Air National Guard and the U.S. Air Force (reserves and active duty) were tasked with flying evacuees out of the area. Even after putting several aircraft in the air each hour, Korry said the American Red Cross noted that they had more than 1,800 people waiting to evacuate — 500 of which had been stranded on tour buses, some waiting more than 12 hours.

Korry approached Red Cross management. "I asked them what they needed to help these people, and they said, 'We just need more planes.' So, I made a call," Korry said.

Korry talked with Captain Jim Palmershiem, senior manager, Veteran and Military Programs, and within the hour, team members systemwide were in motion. That evening, at 6 p.m., an American MD-80 touched down in Beaumont, Texas, carrying supplies and ready to transport evacuees. Korry watched it taxi in. He said there was a

sense of pride in American stepping in so quickly when help was needed. You can **read more about that rescue flight here**.

And as he stood up on stage the night of the awards ceremony, that feeling returned. “It was absolutely awesome to be standing up on stage looking down at a crowd full of celebrities looking up at me saying thank you for all you do. And I thank American for giving me that opportunity.”

Christine, who currently serves with the Mississippi Air National Guard, was activated after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico as a Category 5 storm, causing catastrophic damage to the entire island.

Christine spent five weeks at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida, coordinating the flow of military aircraft landing and taking off from six primary airports in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These small airports were severely affected by Maria, which proved problematic as they were the primary ways to reach affected areas.

Christine said she joined the military to be able to serve people, so when the devastation became apparent, she immediately wanted to join the first responders.

“As a pilot, participating in humanitarian relief missions is a great way to combine helping people and serving my country,” she said. “Seeing the images on TV was heartbreaking as Hurricane Maria caused devastation to millions of Americans across Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. I really just wanted to do what I could using the skills that I have to contribute to get these people the help they needed.”

She said the surreal experience of walking the red carpet at the American Music Awards sunk in after she watched it live.

“We all know how much time and effort our American team members contributed to relief efforts, so I was proud to represent all of those individuals on stage,” she said. “I think it’s great that the AMAs were able to recognize everyone who contributed to the various disasters this year, and it was humbling that American chose me to represent all of our team members who helped as well.”