American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

An Inspiring Path

2/8/2018

Throughout February, American is celebrating Black History Month with numerous events and initiatives. We're also taking this opportunity to highlight the stories of our African-American team members and the important work they do to make us the world's greatest airline. This week, Kenneth Stevens, a Customer Service coordinator at Reagan National Airport (DCA), talks about his path to the airline business, and why it's inspired him to give back.

Kenneth Stevens doesn't remember a time from his childhood when he didn't want to be in the airline business. "I grew up poor in rural North Carolina with four other siblings," said Kenneth. "But my dad, who was a shoeshine man, and mom, who was a factory worker in a TV manufacturing plant, were big-time savers. They vowed all of us kids would go to college."

But the Reagan National Airport (DCA) Customer Service coordinator insisted first on attending Hartford Airline School, an 18-month flight training program. In 1971, at the age of 21, he landed his dream job of working for an airline, processing ticket refunds for Allegheny Airlines. The job helped him work his way through Bowie State University in Maryland and launched his more than 45-year career.

His parents insisted that he and his siblings could do anything they wanted in life. They also drilled home that they'd never be happy or successful in their careers without first loving what they do and then giving it their best. Kenny is often seen mentoring those who show a passion for learning. It's one of the reasons he serves as chapter president of DCA's African American Diversity Network (AADN) Employee Business Resource Group (EBRG). He believes it's his small way of giving back some of the blessings he's been afforded and sharing the rich history of his community.

"He's forever cooking meals for coworkers, many of whom he knows are struggling financially, and it's not at all

unusual for him to stay over or come in on his day off to train a new hire on a jetbridge," said Melvin Thornhill, a longtime colleague and friend. "He'll detail several cars over the weekend and, with the money, go buy groceries and cook a big pot of something to bring into work." Kenneth also volunteers as an usher and greeter at his church.

"So many people never had the luxury of such support. Or, they're of the age where they may take it for granted," Kenneth said. "I feel like these are just little ways of giving back."

Kenneth Stevens
Customer Service Coordinator, DCA