

# A lasting legacy: Continuing a captain's fight against pancreatic cancer

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American Airlines team members raise more than \$19,000 for pancreatic cancer research in honor of Captain John Biegel, who passed away in 2018.

For 27 years, Captain John Biegel inspired his colleagues at American Airlines with his charisma and infectious positive energy. During the final three years of his life, he tapped into those same qualities in his fight against pancreatic cancer, helping others facing the same battle against the third-leading cause of cancer death in the U.S.

Capt. Biegel was a central figure of **American's 2017 partnership** with Stand Up To Cancer, and though he passed away in 2018, his legacy of inspiring, encouraging and supporting others remains strong at American. His wife Dana, a Los Angeles (LAX)-based Flight Attendant, in partnership with the airline's Virtual Employee Business Resource Group (EBRG), continues his fight. Her determination to raise awareness and impart change has never been stronger.

"Cancer touches all of our lives in one way or another," Dana said. "It's not just one person's fight, it's a fight for all of us. Having the support of American's thousands of team members behind this effort is an incredible resource."

Through the Virtual EBRG's sponsorship, team members from 13 stations across American's network formed Let Purple Take Flight teams this year to raise money as part of **PurpleStride**, a series of nationwide walks hosted by the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (PanCan) with the goal of ending pancreatic cancer by advancing research, supporting patients and creating hope.

"Everyone who worked with Capt. Biegel remembers him as an outstanding member of the American Airlines

family,” said Mark Quigley, a Customer Service Agent at Phoenix (PHX) and Global Administrator of the Virtual EBRG. “We wanted to make sure his legacy is never forgotten, so we’re picking up where he left off.”

Let Purple Take Flight teams have raised more than \$19,000 so far this year, exceeding their original goal of \$10,000. That includes \$8,000 raised by group of 22 American team members, family members and friends of Capt. Biegel who came together to participate in the PurpleStride event at the Los Angeles Zoo on May 4. With a Let Purple Take Flight sign in tow, the team marched 2.2 miles led by none other than team captain Dana Biegel.

“I figure if John can be a captain, I can too,” she said proudly.

“I love being here. Everyone is so sweet and supportive,” added Debbie Dennis, an LAX-based Flight Attendant and close friend of Dana, while at the event. “I want to do more, and I would definitely do this again.”

Moving forward, the Virtual EBRG is working with PanCan to create a system that enables team members from any location where American operates to form a Let Purple Take Flight team and join the flight. Many are already signed up to participate in PurpleStride walks scheduled for June in Washington, D.C.; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Chicago. And their goal is simple: to continue raising awareness about this deadly disease and the search for a cure.

“Awareness is the key to early detection and survival,” Dana said. “If PanCan can help find a cure and allow people to live longer, healthier lives, it will all be worth it. Together, we can make a difference.”