American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

Living my truth

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In the June issue of American Way, Vera Verbel, a Chicago O'Hare (ORD)-based Boeing 787 captain for American Airlines, kicked off Pride Month by sharing how the airline and it's more than 130,000 team members have cared for her on life's journey. She also shared how she's paid it forward by promoting greater inclusion, diversity, equity and understanding among team members and customers.

Vera Verbel

At American Airlines, we're about more than just getting you safely and reliably from one place to another. Our core values define us. A lot has changed in the three decades since I started my career, but one truth has remained: We're here to care for you on life's journey.

In celebration of Pride Month, I wanted to share how American has cared for me on my own journey — one that reaches far beyond my path to the Boeing 787 flight deck.

I knew at just four years old that how I looked — how the world saw me — wasn't truly me. I was a girl. I loved my baby doll and buggy. But I was told that I couldn't love those things, that boys don't love those things. I felt pressure, guilt and shame because life felt like a lie. And I carried that lie silently for years.

In the early 2000s, I flew 15 combat missions in the Apache helicopter as a U.S. Army reservist in Afghanistan. It was the scariest experience of my life, but it gave me the courage I needed to stop hiding. When I got home, I began my gender transition with the name Vera. Years later, I learned its origin: Vera means truth. And it was time to live my truth. At American, I knew I could.

Like with any journey, there's been some turbulence over the last 30 years. But I have always felt kindness and

support from my leaders and colleagues. They know it's okay to ask me anything so they can better understand who I am. I host transgender awareness sessions that educate our team members on working alongside and better serving our LGBTQ colleagues and customers. Our Pride Employee Business Resource Group — the first of its kind when it formed 25 years ago — is more vibrant than ever. For the 17th year in a row, American earned the highest rating from the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index. And for the fourth consecutive year, we've been named a Best of the Best Corporation for Inclusion by the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and the National Business Inclusion Consortium.

I'm proud to be part of a company that not only allows but also encourages me to be me, an airline that celebrates differences, values unique perspectives and embraces a culture that reinforces another enduring truth: We have far more in common than that which divides us. On behalf of American and my more than 130,000 colleagues — as diverse as the customers we serve — thank you for flying with us.

Vera Verbel
Captain, Boeing 787
Chicago O'Hare (ORD)