American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

Showing appreciation to those who serve

5/1/2019

High school senior Carlie Suttles grew up with a deep understanding of the sacrifices made by members of the military and their families. Both her grandfather and great grandfather served in the U.S. armed forces.

“Hearing about their experiences before they both passed has helped shape who I am as a person,” Carlie said. “I want to be able to learn about other veterans’ experiences and how it has helped shape their lives and let them know they are loved, and that we are here to help pass on their stories.”

Carlie got that chance late last month when she was selected as one of 40 students from Archbishop McNicholas High School in Cincinnati (CVG) to accompany 40 World War II veterans on an American Airlines-donated, volunteer-operated charter flight to New Orleans (MSY) for a visit to the National WWII Museum. In partnership with the Gary Sinise Foundation, the Soaring Valor program brings together members of our greatest generation and the next generation for an educational experience unlike any other.

American Airlines is privileged to participate in programs like these thanks to longstanding partnerships with Sinise and other organizations like the Medal of Honor Foundation. In fact, American will welcome its 700th Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. (DCA) later this month, bringing veterans of different wars together to visit their memorials and museums in what is often their only opportunity to do so.

As rewarding as these journeys are for veterans and students, they also hold particularly special meaning for American team members, more than a thousand of whom volunteer their time to support our military on the ground and in the air throughout the year.

Numerous volunteers, friends and family showed up at CVG to thank the veterans for their service and give them a heroes’

salute before their flight.

Each veteran on the Soaring Valor flight was paired with a student from Archbishop McNicholas High School in Cincinnati.

Students Carlie Suttles and Miranda Taylor pose with their two assigned veterans at the World War II Museum in New Orleans. The students were selected based on essays they wrote highlighting why they wanted to participate.

Flight attendants from DFW, ORD and MIA volunteered their time to participate in the Soaring Valor charter over a two-day period.

Veterans and students were given a spirited welcome as they arrived at MSY.

Chicago O'Hare (ORD)-based First Officer Greg Gruchot welcomes the veterans aboard their flight from CVG to MSY.

Glenn Williams, a Fleet Service Clerk in Boston (BOS), has participated in more than 35 Honor Flights and was grateful to participate in the Soaring Valor flight from CVG. He remembers his first charter and how overwhelmed he was by what he saw.

"I knew it was something I wanted to be part of for years to come," Glenn said. "For some of these veterans, this trip may be their last hoorah, and to give them opportunities like this — the impact is immeasurable. It gives them something to look forward to and to have their stories recorded and shared for generations to come."

"Being able to participate in this flight is the best," added Linda Rossi, a Dallas Fort Worth (DFW)-based Flight Attendant who coordinated the Soaring Valor trip. "It breathes life into you by doing it. I have watched a lot of documentaries, but you don't get the real-life experience from a television screen as you do sitting next to someone who has actually been there, and you can see the words coming out of their mouth and the emotions in their face. This experience has been priceless for my colleagues and me."

More than 7,000 of Linda's colleagues are either veterans themselves or still actively serving in the National Guard or Reserves. During May — Military Appreciation Month — and all throughout the year, American and its 130,000 team members pay tribute to them and all servicemen and women. Learn more about American's long history of honoring those whose sacrifices have given us the freedom to fly by visiting **aa.com/ourheroes**. There, you can also donate AAdvantage® miles to the Miles for Our Heroes program, which assists organizations that work to support veterans, military members and their families.