

## From Teller to Cadet

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American Airlines Credit Union team member Barbara Flores is loved by her customers in Miami. She is known for her friendliness, wit and dependability and has built strong relationships with her customers. Her true passion, however, is up in the air flying airplanes.

Barbara was born in Chile and immigrated to the United States in 1993 with her parents when she was three years old. Her father worked as an Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT) most of his career. She always had a love of airplanes and dreamed of working in the aviation industry.

In 2016, Barbara joined the American Airlines team as a bank teller at the American Airlines Federal Credit Union branch at Miami International Airport. Married and taking care of a young son, she encouraged her husband, Caleb, to get his pilot's license — something he had always wanted to pursue.

As Barbara supported him on this new journey, her desire to sit in the cockpit arose to the surface.

"While I watched him chase his dream, I realized that I also wanted to be a pilot," Barbara said. "But I always thought it would be harder as a Hispanic woman to become a pilot."

During her time at the Credit Union, she was able to meet several female pilots and began talking to them about their career path in the industry. One of those pilots happened to be short like her. After meeting that pilot, Barbara realized that she, too, could become a pilot.

"I always thought there was a height requirement," Barbara said.

In April 2018, American launched the American Airlines Cadet Academy (ACA), a first-of-its-kind program designed

to help future aviators receive the training, financing and mentoring opportunities they need to fly for the world's largest airline. AACA provides an opportunity for future pilots to become first officers at one of American's three wholly owned regional carriers with the possibility of eventually flying larger aircraft at American.

When Barbara heard about AACA, she immediately started researching the opportunity. Not too soon after, Barbara made her 2019 New Year's resolution to become a pilot.

Barbara believes her Hispanic culture plays a big part in working towards her goal. She attributes the unity that is part of her Chilean roots with helping her follow her dreams.

"With the support of my whole family, the door opened a little wider," Barbara said.

Barbara was accepted into the AACA and started her training Sept.3. She is most excited about flying and most nervous about letting her family down. "I want to make them proud," Barbara said.

Her father, Sergio, also accomplished a lifelong goal he had — becoming an AMT for American. He was hired in 2008 as a Fleet Service Clerk and became an AMT for the company in July 2019.

Having seen her father never let go of his own dreams lit the fire in her to pursue her lifelong dream of flying airplanes.

Barbara is the first Credit Union team member to go to the AACA.

"I'm doing this for my son," Barbara said. "I want to show him that not everything comes easy. And that through hard work, patience and planning, you can get to where you want to be."

Barbara Flores