

NEWS RELEASE

True Champions for Children

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For PHL-based flight attendant Natasha Chowdry, her involvement with UNICEF began long before her career with American. In high school, she was a member of the Key Club, a group for students to lead through service and volunteer work. A big part of the Key Club experience was Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF in October. The members would place change collection boxes in every classroom and donate the money to UNICEF. Years later, during her new-hire training at American, UNICEF did a presentation about the Change for Good (CFG) program. She was instantly excited for the chance to get involved with UNICEF again.

Natasha Chowdry, Carole Winer-Sorensen, Wally Gustafsson and Bruce Lawson

Natasha, Carol Winer-Sorensen (LGA), Bruce Lawson (DFW) and Wally Gustafsson (LIM) have been named UNICEF Champions of the Year for their commitment to the CFG program. Named Champions for Children, these flight attendant volunteers support the program, which allows passengers on flights to international destinations and Hawaii to donate their spare change left from travel abroad — in any currency or amount — to UNICEF.

Every year, Champions can vote on which country's program will receive 25% of their annual CFG collections. They can also apply to join a UNICEF field visit to see first-hand the life-saving impact of UNICEF's work.

One of Natasha's most rewarding experiences onboard was when she recruited three children, with their parents' permission, to help with the collection. They jumped at the opportunity and were so eager to help that passengers responded well with their donations, and the experience renewed her passion for the program.

"My family is from Bangladesh, which is one of the countries where I can see first-hand what UNICEF delivers for children in need," Natasha said. "UNICEF has a special place in my heart, not only because of their impact around the world, but in my own country as well."

For Bruce Lawson, his involvement with the program began nearly 30 years ago — when he was working in an administrative office at Miami International Airport. His manager at the time had believed American flight attendants should do something to help people in need. Collecting foreign change from people coming back to the United States seemed like a novel idea and flight attendants embraced the initiative.

“As I traveled to countries in Latin America, I realized how lucky we are in the United States,” Bruce said. “My hope is that through our program we are able to do our part to improve children’s lives and help communities flourish. This has been a driving force for me.”

Carol Winer-Sorensen believes it is vital to protect and take care of all children. She believes it is everyone’s responsibility to help those who cannot help themselves because of their circumstances. One of her most rewarding moments was when a customer put several one hundred dollar bills in the collection pouch and wanted to learn more about the program.

“It’s surprising how many people are unaware of UNICEF’s work worldwide,” Carole said. “I have not had the opportunity to visit a UNICEF project yet, however I look forward to doing so in the coming years.”

Wally Gustafsson was the most nominated champion and recruited more champions, expanding the program at his home base of Lima, Peru (LIM). With his passion and commitment to the program, the LIM base broke the record for any Latin America base’s monthly collections for UNICEF. September collections raised more than \$8,500 — a 500% increase from the previous month — and were allocated to Hurricane Dorian relief efforts.

“I want to help the children and feel that I do something with a purpose,” Wally said. “Every flight is important, but it is especially rewarding when I see children eager to donate.”

Since 1994, American has collected more than \$17 million to support UNICEF’s CFG program. Volunteers raise more than \$1 million annually, helping to save and improve the lives of millions of children around the world.