NEWS RELEASE

Live your life with passion

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In the June issue of American Way, Owen Cotto Vitiello, a Miami-based Airbus A320 first officer for American Airlines, kicked off Pride Month by sharing his career path with the company, how he has given back to the community and his pride in the company's support of inclusion and diversity.

When I was growing up, I dreamt about becoming a pilot and traveling the world. I didn't see many Latinos like me become aviators, but I was determined to live my dream, so I took advantage of every opportunity.

When I started at American Airlines nearly three decades ago as a Reservations representative, I was finishing my college degree and serving in the U.S. Navy Reserve. I spent time learning how our airline operates by working on the ramp and as a Customer Service agent. With the support of my family, friends and colleagues, I landed my wings as a flight attendant with American in 1995 and as a pilot with American's regional carrier Envoy in 2007. Today, I fly our mainline Airbus A320 family of aircraft.

I've been lucky enough to receive help in both my personal and professional pursuits, so I believe it's important for me to help others. I know I can't save the world, but helping just one person makes a difference.

My passion for aviation and being a part of the American Airlines family has led me to some of the most rewarding life experiences. I've volunteered at American's Military and Veterans Gala and met aspiring pilots through the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals.

I also have the opportunity to help thousands of children and their families through the Something mAAgic Foundation (SMF) as a board member and volunteer. SMF brings young children with life-threatening conditions on unforgettable trips to the Give the Kids the World Village in Orlando, Florida, where they visit the local theme parks.

Aviation also brought me my greatest love — my late husband Greg. We met in Hartford, Connecticut, the day after 9/11, when my crew was grounded there. At the time, we didn't know what the future held for us, but we went on to spend 15 wonderful years together before he lost a brief but courageous battle with cancer.

Losing Greg was the hardest challenge I've ever faced, but again my American family was there. The support I received from family, friends and colleagues after my unthinkable loss is what kept me going. Last year, I was able to put his name on American's Stand Up To Cancer Airbus A321 aircraft, which is one of the aircraft models I fly for the airline.

I'm proud to be part of a company that celebrates diversity and helps me live my passion every day.

On behalf of my American Airlines colleagues, thank you for flying with us today.

First Officer Owen Cotto Vitiello
Miami International Airport (MIA)