American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

Encouragement goes a long way

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Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) Customer Service Manager Angela Johnson has a remarkable mission in life: Help and encourage others to be the best version of themselves. She lives that purpose every day as mother, grandmother, leader at American Airlines, and pastor in the church she opened near the community where she grew up.

Greater Love, Greater Works Outreach International, a church and charitable organization Angela and her husband Robert started 15 years ago, serves as a place of worship and solace for families in the multicultural neighborhoods near Chicago's west side. The church offers bible studies, youth ministry and community service opportunities, and provides groceries, baby supplies and other essentials for those in need. "It's my life's work, my heart of hearts. It's what I live for, and I would truly be sad if I could not help people the way we are able to," Angela says.

Through the church, Angela and her staff direct youth ministry programs for young people to develop and explore their passions. Kids and young adults are mentored in music, art, job skills, leadership training and more. Angela says she pulls experiences from her own career at American, sharing advice on how to work toward a management position at a large company.

"I want our kids to grow in what they love to do," she said. "You'll see a wide age range in our programs because we stick with our youth into adulthood. I see myself in some of those kids because I was a young person that the neighborhood counted out at times. But I had someone that believed in me — and that person was my mom. She and my godmother encouraged me to be the best version of myself, and, now, I want to be that voice for others."

The youth programs help kids and young adults cope with the pressure and responsibilities in their lives, like financial hardship or caring for family members. No matter the personal challenges, families know they can lean on

Greater Love, Greater Works for support.

But this year has been especially tough without the ability to gather during the pandemic. Greater Love, Greater Works is offering virtual services and programs to continue to stay connected to their community — especially in light of recent events calling for racial justice and an end to systematic racism.

Reflecting on Black History Month, Angela says a hopeful outlook is more important than ever this year. “We are so much better together, so in this season of our lives, let’s decide to keep moving forward. I believe that this is our time as a culture to win and persevere. To all African American people, don’t let anything stop you. With such great opportunities for change in front of us, we must move forward in dignity and we will fulfil our destinies and dreams.”

At work, Angela’s colleagues describe her as a respected mentor and support system for many team members. She spent most of her 32-year career with American on the ramp at ORD where she was hired as a Fleet Service clerk before moving up to crew chief and then to customer service manager, trailblazing a path for other women to succeed in a predominantly male work area of the airline. “It was very much about girl power. I knew that with the right mindset I could accomplish anything. Throughout my life, I never took no as a final answer, but rather, as an opportunity for growth,” she says.

Today, Angela is flourishing in a job where she talks to fellow team members about attendance, safety and leaves of absence. It’s a job in which she says she can live out her mission of encouraging others and be a resource to them.

Angela’s encouraging spirit extends beyond church and work to her everyday life. She built a community through a radio show and podcast that shares “information, inspiration and revelation,” she says.

Angela says she is still evolving and working on her best self. That’s why she’ll continue to encourage herself and others to have faith, help each other and live with love. When asked for her best advice, Angela says she approaches each day with these words:

“Today is a gift from God, and what you do today is a gift back to him.”

Download image

Angela hosts a radio show to inspire and empower through sharing the diverse stories of her listeners.

Download image

Angela speaking at a family and youth retreated hosted by Greater Love, Greater Works.

Download image

Angela and her husband Robert started a community church in the Chicago community they grew up in.