

JANUARY 5, 2016

# unity update

Your bi-monthly  
Unity supplement



## TWU 556 NEGOTIATING TEAM

Negotiations Update

*Straight from the Source!*

Friendly reminder: Please take the opportunity to make your voice heard by participating in our Negotiations Survey, if you have not already. The deadline to take the survey is Monday, January 11 at Noon Central. Once the survey closes, we will be analyzing the data, combined with the third-party random polling, to develop our proposals as we return to the bargaining table. If you have not completed the survey you were emailed a unique survey link yesterday afternoon. If

you have not received the email, please contact us at [survey@twu556.org](mailto:survey@twu556.org).

We have secured negotiating dates with Southwest Airlines for the first quarter, and we will meet with Management January 25-27, February 26, and March 7-9. We will continue to keep you updated as we move forward in the process.

-TWU Local 556 Negotiating Team

## Reflecting on the Past and Looking Forward to the Future



*Denny Sebesta is a Dallas-based Flight Attendant and Shop Steward. Denny previously served as a Member of the TWU Local 556 Negotiating Team and is a regular contributor to Unity Magazine and Unity Update.*

Wow! Where does the time go? I can remember when I was eight years old thinking time is so slow and summer vacation will never get here! Now, I wish that time would somehow slowdown so I could savor that extra hour or day spending time with a family member/pet or friend who may be visiting or is no longer with us. Reflecting on past memories can bring you joy – it may be something as simple as remembering the joy of watching the fireworks and listening to the patriotic music on the 4th of July or, remembering that adrenaline rush along with the beauty of nature while sky diving or skiing down the runs on the mountain slopes. It is simple - just doing something that brings you joy and that you love adds to those good memories of the past.

For me, reflecting on 2015 also includes simple but sweet memories while working as a Flight Attendant – those giggles from a child who was so excited to be flying for the first time, then beams as you give them a pair of wings to wear; a Co-worker who surprises the entire Crew with homemade goodies to share on a very long day; the extra tall man whose face lights up as you point out the seat at the exit row that will make them more comfortable, then thanks you for thinking about them; the pride and gratitude that exudes from the Military man or woman when you or a Passenger recognizes them for their service (this always makes me tear up); the excitement and blush

from every Passenger you and your Crew recognize for their birthday or anniversary over the PA!

Yes, 2015 also had some not so great memories to reflect on for our Workgroup. We lost far too many of our Co-Workers due to illness or unexpected circumstances and they will be dearly missed! We elected a new Executive Board and experienced some turmoil within our Union administration. We had a failed Tentative Agreement, which also led to changes to our Negotiating Team. Whether anyone agrees or disagrees with the changes within our Local Union, we should all remember, that is now the past and we must look to the future.

What that future holds is up to **all of us** as Members of TWU Local 556. We are very fortunate to be Unionized and protected by a Collective Bargaining Agreement that affords us many, many benefits that we must continue to protect in the negotiations process. We must also remember that while we work as Flight Attendants for a great Company that continues to prosper because of all Employees, it takes each of us doing our part on a daily basis to help continue our Company's success. I hope that 2016 will bring each of you personal happiness, peace and prosperity. In addition, for our workgroup, I hope this New Year will bring us all closer in Unity, strength and one voice toward a Contract that rewards all of us for the contributions, dedication and hard work we provide each and every day. Here's to 2016!

# AirTran Points Conversion



*Trish Krider is an Atlanta-based Flight Attendant. Trish serves as a Member of the TWU Local 556 Negotiating Team.*

Understandably, there is great concern and some anger among those of us who transitioned from AirTran about the “attendance points” situation. Unfortunately, there has also been some misinformation shared that has added fuel to this fire. As a former Officer of AFA Council 57 and one of the ones who sat at the table with Southwest Airlines Management to decide how AirTran attendance points would be converted upon transition to Southwest, I would like to give you an overview of the points situation and an update as to where we stand right now. First, let me give you some background. The AirTran points system was significantly different from the way points are calculated here at Southwest. First, we had a two-track system: one for attendance, and one for reliability. Either of these could reach twelve points at which time you were subject to termination. Many of our point accumulations were much more severe than they are here (eg. a No-Show earned you six points) and although our points dropped off after only twelve months, our system was strictly punitive with no chance for record improvement.

Knowing that these systems were so different, we understood that we were going to have to be creative to come up with some fair way to transition AirTran points to Southwest points. It wasn't an easy task! **Travis Bruce**, AFA Council 57 Vice President at that time, and I used actual attendance files and calculated what the point total would be under the AirTran system, and how they would have looked using the Southwest system. We then brainstormed to come up with some calculation that would most fairly represent what an AirTran Flight Attendants' point total would have been if they had been on the Southwest side. After two long days, we came up with a number of suggestions on fair ways to make the transition, knowing which one we would recommend. **Alison Head**, Travis Bruce and I, as the Officers of AFA Council 57, took these ideas with us to a joint meeting with TWU Local 556 Leadership and Southwest Management. After careful review and with a few minor tweaks, we all agreed on the method of point conversion.

As part of this discussion, we had to decide how to deal with the sixteen-month roll-off. Understandably, since we were converting the point total, there was no way to identify when a point was accrued. This meant that there was no way to accurately calculate when the sixteen-month time clock was up for it to roll off. The compromise that we came to was that the points that were carried over to Southwest would be considered new points at the time of transition, and that is when the sixteen-month clock would start. At least that was our understanding.

It was not until earlier this year that we were made aware Southwest Management had interpreted it quite differently. It all comes down to one line on the bottom of publications sent out to both AirTran Flight Attendants in a “Must Read,” and

Southwest Flight Attendants in an “RBF,” explaining the point conversion. On the bottom of both documents were the words, “There will be no sixteen-month record improvement associated with the new Southwest Point Total.” At the time, we had no reason to question this, as we understood it to mean that the points would not roll off sixteen months from the original occurrence (because there was no longer any way to calculate exactly when that was). Since transitioning over meant you were under the TWU Local 556 Contract, the sixteen-month roll-off clock would then begin from that transition date. Clearly, Southwest Management had a different understanding.

There were many e-mail exchanges and conversations between current and former TWU Local 556 and AFA Council 57 Leadership to try to clear this up, during which there were some misunderstandings and misinterpretations, which led to anger, frustration and, ultimately, some misinformation going out to the Membership. So let me clear up two very big pieces of misinformation. First, it is not true that there are former AirTran Flight Attendants who are out of a job due to this issue. Although there may be some who have been terminated for points, they would not yet have been here for sixteen months, so this was not an issue. Second, this interpretation does not mean that these points are on your record “forever.” These points are eligible to be dropped for any other “record improvement” (no chargeable occurrences during a quarter, perfect attendance during a quarter, December Bonus, etc.).

After many months of trying to mesh schedules, on November 13, 2015, a meeting was held at the TWU Local 556 Offices to try to resolve this issue. That morning, Leaders from both TWU Local 556 and AFA Council 57 who were actually at the meeting when this issue was originally decided, sat across the table from current TWU Local 556 Leadership. We explained exactly what our mutual understanding is of our agreement. After consulting with Legal Counsel, TWU Local 556 believed that we were out of contractual timeframes to file a group grievance. However, we were assured that should we be unable to come to an agreement with Southwest Management, TWU Local 556 Leadership would file individual grievances on this issue, should they arise.

That afternoon both current and former TWU Local 556 Leaders sat shoulder-to-shoulder across the table from representatives of Southwest Management, some of whom had actually worked on this agreement. We discussed our concerns with their interpretation of the “sixteen-month roll-off” and they defended their position. While we hoped that they would just agree to treat these points as all points are treated under our Contract, they did point out that it would mean a review of all former AirTran attendance records and could adversely affect some people. While it is difficult to understand (believe me, people have tried to explain this to me to no avail!) there could be Flight Attendants who would be worse off to have their records recalculated if, by doing so, it meant they went to zero and had a “fresh start.”

That brings us to where we are today. To ensure that a resolu-

tion to this problem is not a detriment to anyone, our Grievance Team is in the process of doing research. First, they requested from Southwest Management a list of the Flight Attendants who transitioned with points. From that report which consisted of a list of all former AirTran Flight Attendants and how many points they carried over, a list of those who transitioned with points was extracted, and a new request has been submitted to view the attendance files of all of these individuals. Once this data is received, it will be reviewed and evaluated to assess

whether allowing the sixteen-month roll-off as we intended could adversely affect anyone's record.

That is where the process is right now. We will keep you updated on any further developments. Meanwhile, be assured that if you find yourself in a situation where you transitioned with points, have been here more than sixteen months, and are disciplined for points, your TWU Local 556 Grievance Team is ready and willing to fight for you, as it does for all Members.



Look in your wallet right now. As a fellow Flight Attendant, I know I have at least a few singles in there for van tips. A couple dollars, maybe three or four, not by any means a large amount of cash; I can't even buy a Starbucks with that. Did you ever think that the three dollars in your wallet is the same price as an eight-year-old Cambodian girl on the black market?

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery and happens in every country all over the world including the United States. At the 2015 Super Bowl in Phoenix, fifteen girls were recovered from a prostitution trafficking ring. Trafficking comes in many forms including sexual exploitation, forced labor, domestic servitude, and even the removal of organs. Many of the victims are children who are transported on commercial aircraft every day.

On March 30<sup>th</sup> of last year, twenty-five passionate Flight Attendants, including ten current and former TWU Local 556 Executive Board Members, gathered in Atlanta for a seminar on human trafficking and what role the airline industry plays in aiding traffickers. We discussed what we could do as Flight Attendants to recognize victims and raise awareness to this growing epidemic. The seminar was coordinated by the Union's Civil and Human Rights Committee and hosted by Atlanta Domicile Executive Board Member Pamila Forte. Guest speakers included two FBI Special Agents and an Assistant United States Prosecuting Attorney, all working in human trafficking arrests, recovery and prosecution.

Human trafficking is defined as modern-day slavery in which human beings are controlled and exploited for profit. Although human trafficking violates national and international laws, it is a rapidly growing criminal enterprise because it holds relatively low risk with high profit potential. Criminal organizations are increasingly attracted to human trafficking because, unlike drugs, humans can be sold repeatedly.

Not only are the human rights violations an atrocity, the economic effects can be seen globally. It is estimated that in 2014, slave traders made \$32 billion in profit. That's more than Nike, Starbucks, and Google combined. The availability of forced and cheap labor hinders employment opportunities reducing the

per capita income of the nation and encouraging illegal immigration with promises of work.

#### ***Here's how you can help:***

As airline Employees, we are in trafficking "hot spots" all the time: airports, hotels, and on the airplane. We are trained to constantly be aware of our surroundings, from unattended bags, to Passenger behavior. Throughout our workday, we engage Passengers for security purposes, and we can use these same skills to possibly identify victims of human trafficking.

Some basic identifiers include:

- Not in control of travel documents;
- Frightened, ashamed, or nervous;
- Under the control of traveling companion;
- Unaware of origin or destination.

Just like with any security threat, it starts with a conversation. No one is going to be waving their arms and screaming, "Help me." Victims may not want to talk out of fear, but simple non-threatening conversations create trust. Flight Attendants have saved lives with just a conversation.

The indicators listed are just a few that may alert you to a potential human trafficking situation. No single indicator is necessarily proof of human trafficking. If you suspect that a person may be a victim of human trafficking, please call the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip-line at (866) 347-2423. You can also report online at [www.ice.gov/tips](http://www.ice.gov/tips).

To reach a non-governmental organization for confidential help and information, 24 hours a day, please call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at (888) 373-7888.

In all the following success stories, Pilots contacted the local authorities and Customs and Border Protection to meet the flight and in all three cases the Flight Attendants were able to prevent human trafficking.

**Delta Airlines** – Patty McPeak sat down in the boarding area next to a man and little girl – about four years old. Making small talk, she asked how old the girl was. The man said that the girl was about two years old: he had picked her up from



her mother so he wasn't sure. He got very nervous and disappeared for a few minutes and when he returned the child appeared to be drugged. Patty notified the Flight Attendants and showed them the Hotline number. Pilots called and authorities met the flight.

**jetBlue** – Daniel Sheth and the Airline Ambassador Humanitarian Team noticed two teenagers (a boy and girl) who were visibly upset – the girl was crying. They were with a woman who said they were going to New York. The team watched as the two were handed over to a man on the other side of Customs. When questioned, the kids looked down, but the man said they were going to Boston. Daniel informed the Flight Attendants who had the cockpit call the hotline number.

**USAir** – On a flight from Reagan National Airport to Palm Beach, Florida, Deborah Sigmund watched as a man with a little boy ran up to the boarding gate late. "What is the little boy's name?" asked the agent. The man did not know and had to look up the boy's name in a file he was carrying. The man tried to shield the young boy from Passengers. Once Deborah made eye contact with the child, she asked him what he was going to do in Florida. The boy looked surprised and replied, "I think I'm going to North Carolina."

**Southwest Airlines** – Here's a story from our own Dallas-based Flight Attendant Jill Dahl:

*"About five or six years ago, I was flying 'A' on a flight from Dallas to Birmingham. We were only booked to about 80. Just before we closed the door, a man came on with a girl who appeared to be about thirteen or fourteen years old. She was dressed in an ill-fitting tank top and short shorts and carried a duffel bag. He had no luggage. They sat near the back of the aircraft. After service, the 'B' called to tell me that something about them didn't seem right. I walked to the back and saw her in a window seat. He was in the middle seat with his hand on her upper leg. The aisle seat was empty. I walked back through offering coloring books, decks of cards and seconds as an excuse to interact with them. When I asked her if she wanted a deck of cards, he held the Sky Mall magazine in front of her face and wouldn't allow her to respond. Later, I came through and said I was checking everyone's connections. He said they were going to Jacksonville but it appeared as if she was unsure of their destination. I called the Captain and told him something about the situation seemed off. At this point, I had very limited knowledge of trafficking. I simply knew something was wrong. I had the Pilots contact an Operations (Ops) Agent who was a friend of mine. He met the plane and I told him the situation. He agreed to watch them during their layover and call the Police if anything seemed strange.*

*Later the Ops Agent told me that they had them separated and questioned by Police. He was arrested and she was taken by DHS (some states call it CPS). However, I was never able to find an arrest record. Years later, I asked the same Ops Agent about it and he didn't remember much about it.*

*This situation caused me to research human trafficking and organizations that fight it in the DFW area. Now that I've been involved with Traffick911 for the last four years, I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that this child was being trafficked. This is why training for airline Employees, hotel workers, taxi and bus drivers, TSA, law enforcement and those in the medical field and education is SO important!*

If you are interested in getting involved there are many ways you can help:

Sign up for Airline Ambassadors International. They offer a Flight Attendant yearly membership for \$35 and host numerous training courses as well as volunteer opportunities here in the states and abroad, including some amazing work with transporting victims back to their families and mission trips to prevent human trafficking abroad. Check out the Polaris Project Website as well as Human Rights Watch for other donation and volunteer opportunities.

*Southwest Airlines International Volunteer Group (SWAVIG)* is a Flight Attendant run non-profit that takes groups of Employees, their friends, and families all over the world to volunteer. SWAVIG is a non-religious affiliated 501c3 that uses flight benefits to see the world and make a difference. Trips for 2016 include projects helping prevent and aid victims of human trafficking, animal conservation, education, construction and many other global needs. Visit our Website or Facebook page for more info, [www.swavig.com](http://www.swavig.com) or Facebook at "SWA International Volunteer Group."

There are many resources you can utilize if you suspect human trafficking activity that are available 24/7 in 300 languages. Please add this number to your contacts: National Human Trafficking Resource Center – (888) 373-7888

Additional Resources:

- Airline Ambassadors – <http://airlineamb.org/>
- Polaris Project – <https://polarisproject.org/>
- National Human Trafficking Resource Center – <https://traffickingresourcecenter.org/>
- FBI – <http://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>
- United Nations – <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

**unity** <sup>update</sup>  
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**TWU Local 556**

7929 Brookriver Dr. Ste. 750, Dallas, TX 75247

Phone: 800-969-7932 • Fax: 214-357-9870

Hotline: 800-806-7992 • [www.twu556.org](http://www.twu556.org)

**TWU Local 556 Editorial Team:**

Cuyler Thompson, Robin Brewer, Erich Schwenk, Audrey Stone, Matt Hettich, Donna Keith, Lori Lochelt, Mark Hoewisch, Trish Krider, Denny Sebesta, Matt Fearey, Kelly Lane, Brandon Hillhouse, Rachel Brownfield, Eden Hiett, Manny Ozaeta, Terri McCaffrey, Josh Rosenberg, Angie Kilbourne, David Kirtley and Jonathan Black.

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