



JULY 20, 2014

unity update

Your bi-monthly
Unity supplement

President's Message



Todd Gage is an Oakland-based Flight Attendant and the 1st Vice President of TWU Local 556.

As I celebrate my one-year anniversary as your 1st Vice President, I reflect on all of the great things that have been accomplished by this Union during the past year. I believe these accomplishments are due to the strong and positive leadership of our President, **Audrey Stone**

who, like me, recently completed her first year in office.

Although Audrey did not run for President, she kindly accepted the position after it fell onto her shoulders. Like the true professional that she is, she assumed the responsibilities that came with such an important role and literally hit the ground running. Ten days after becoming the President of TWU Local 556, Audrey was sitting across the table from Southwest Airlines Management as the Lead Negotiator for the opening of our Contract Negotiations. As reported in the last Negotiations update ([click here to see the latest NT Update](#)), we are making progress and continue to move forward. Also under Audrey's leadership, the finances of our Union (your dues monies) have gone from being in the red to being firmly in the black.

Treasurer **John Parrott** deserves a big shout out for his hard work in this successful turnaround as well. During the last round of Membership Meetings, charts accompanied the TWU Local 556 Financial Report that illustrated this upswing in our financial health. The Executive Board passed a balanced budget last January, which included a savings goal. I am happy to report that TWU Local 556 currently operates within this budget and we are actually well above our current savings target. If you ever want to see the detailed financial report, I encourage you to attend a Membership Meeting!

When Audrey became our President, the number of active Grievances was considerably high. At Audrey's request, Southwest Airlines Management agreed to two formal Grievance Summits. At these summits, many grievances were settled after lengthy discussions. This was very beneficial for our Membership. Since then, Grievance Chairperson Becky Parker has continued to work hard, along with our amazing Grievance Team, to reach resolution for our Member's grievances and keep the numbers low. Kudos to the Grievance Team!

The way Audrey conducts the Union's business as our President has also helped to restore the respect and admiration that TWU Local 556 built over the years. Audrey leads by example and has demonstrated to those of us that work with her the importance of forming respectful relationships, not only Southwest Airlines Management, but with TWU International as well. These working relationships have proven to open the direct lines of communication, whether it is with concerns, questions, positive feedback or even disappointment. Her style of open communication helps everyone to accomplish what's best for you, the Membership.

I have known and worked with Audrey for almost a decade. Her humble personality does not allow her to acknowledge the great leader that she truly is. However, I feel it is important to bring to our Membership's attention that positive results cannot take place without a great leader. Things have turned around for TWU Local 556 over the past year because President Audrey Stone is a great leader. I am honored and privileged to serve as her 1st Vice President. Thank you Audrey and happy One Year Anniversary!

On a more somber note, I offer condolences on behalf of TWU Local 556 to the families and friends of those on Malaysia Airlines Flight 17. Please keep the Flight Attendants, Pilots and Passengers in your thoughts.

TWU Local 556 Resolution of Support for VX

Virgin America Inflight Team Members (that's what they call their Flight Attendants) are currently voting on whether or not to unionize under the Transport Workers Union. This is the second time they have voted. The Virgin America (VX) Flight Attendants failed to unionize after a vote in December 2011. Back then, VX Management attacked the Union and made many promises to the VX Inflight Team Members that they would make improvements to their quality of life and working conditions. As soon as the election was over, the Flight Attendants quickly saw those promises broken.

TWU Local 556 fully supports the VX Flight Attendants in their quest to unionize and become our Brothers and Sisters in the Transport Workers Union, and has adopted the following resolution.

*[click here to view resolution in full size PDF](#)
or see mini version on following page.*

Reflections on the Relay for Life

Carol Basilone is a Chicago-based Flight Attendant and a Member of the joint TWU Local 556/Southwest Airlines CISM Team.

Being part of a group like Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) really reminds me every day about the goodness in people. It's in our nature to want to help and make things better for others. That is something I see in most Flight Attendants, too. We all want to do that one thing that makes someone's journey more enjoyable. Each of us has projects on the side and ways we give back to the community; I wanted to share the story of mine.

The Relay for Life is the American Cancer Society's signature fundraiser. I have had the pleasure of being involved with this event most recently in Herndon, Virginia, and many others throughout the years. These Relays take place all over the country; there's probably one happening this summer close to where you live. Everyone is welcome to volunteer, start up a team, or just raise money that then goes to the ACS for research.

The Relay begins with The Survivor's Lap. It is the first lap around the track and it's the embodiment of the entire event. Everyone who has been touched by cancer, including the many caregivers, take the first steps around the track to open the day. I believe it sets the tone for the whole two days. Looking into the faces of friends, family, and community lining the track is like walking into the light after being in a dark tunnel for too long. People from all over brought together for one common goal, to stop cancer from taking one more life. It may sound dramatic and awesome...it is. I didn't know most of the people that I was walking with, but it didn't matter. We were connected in a most intimate way. We shared a disease and we were all Survivors. We wore sashes and ribbons and buttons to indicate our fights, (the more bling--the better!) but the people lining the track cheering us on should have worn their own sashes. They showed their love, support and undying dedication to the success of all of us. And it is because of them...because of everyone that cares... that we are able to celebrate. That's what the Relay For Life is all about. Life is truly a celebration and we are there to celebrate the lives of everyone, past and present, who fought the good fight. I have many family members that are no longer here because of cancer and this is my way to make sure their fights were not in vain.

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The Union of Southwest Airlines Flight Attendants

TWU 556

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION (TWU)
CAMPAIGN TO HELP VIRGIN AMERICA INFLIGHT TEAM MEMBERS FORM A UNION**

Whereas, there are over 850 Virgin America (VX) Inflight Team Members employed by Virgin America; and

Whereas, all VX Flight Attendants are currently unrepresented "at will" employees; and

Whereas, VX Flight Attendants have played and continue to play an integral role of the success of Virgin America; and

Whereas, VX America Flight Attendants seek to have a legitimate voice in their workplace in order to improve their quality of work life; and

Whereas, unionized Flight Attendants in the United States have better pay, work rules, and working conditions than non-unionized Flight Attendants; and

Whereas, VX Flight Attendants seek to attain a collective bargaining agreement to ensure their compensation, benefits, and work rules cannot be changed without a vote; and

Whereas, Virgin company employees in other countries are represented by unions and have collective bargaining rights; and

Whereas, the Transport Workers Union of America AFL-CIO (TWU) is a strong supporter of all workers and their right to organize a union; and

Whereas, VX Flight Attendants have partnered with the TWU in an organizing campaign; and

Whereas, VX Flight Attendants have made astounding efforts to gain representation by the TWU; and

Whereas, VX Flight Attendants and TWU are committed to establishing a collaborative working relationship with VX Management to ensure the future success of the company and preserve the company culture; and

Whereas, VX Flight Attendants have thus far, overcome major obstacles in their efforts to form their union; and

Whereas, TWU has been the exclusive bargaining representative for Southwest Airlines Flight Attendants for almost 40 years; and

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Whereas, TWU Local 556 has maintained industry leading contracts and representation for many years while enjoying the benefits of Local autonomy supported steadfastly by the TWU; and

Whereas, the Coalition Flight Attendants representing over 90,000 professional Flight Attendants is stronger as we work together toward legislation to protect the health, safety, and standards of our profession;

Whereas, we reserve the right to support Southwest Airlines expansion and success; we also support our VX Inflight Team Members right to support Virgin America's expansion and success;

Be it resolved, that TWU Local 556 representing Southwest Airlines Flight Attendants fully support the VX Flight Attendants' campaign to become Members of the TWU; and

Be It Further Resolved, that TWU Local 556 Members extend solidarity and support to all VX Flight Attendants when working together, at airports, hotels and any other flight attendant or labor events; and

Be It Further Resolved, that TWU Local 556 encourages fair participation in this organizing campaign and stresses the importance of laws that protect airline workers right to organize to VX; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that TWU Local 556 requests neutrality from Virgin America and all Virgin companies and spokespersons as VX Inflight Team Members vote for the right to be represented by a Union.

Adopted by the TWU Local 556 Executive Board on this day, May 14, 2014.

The Executive Board
of Transport Workers Union Local 556

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The Relay for Life holds so many wonderful memories for me. The lighting of the luminaria at sunset is incredibly moving. Lining the track are luminaria bags with names written on them and lit candles commemorating the lives and spirits of those who passed before us and those who were victorious. There is a moment of silence in this makeshift church in which you can feel all of them with you. It may sound like it's sad but it really isn't. It's reflective and cathartic, and a way to honor them. I had candles lit for my father, my best friend's mother, and there were even some for me that my friends lit in my honor.

I really don't spend my days thinking about my fight with cancer and I don't want to. But once a year I want to revel in my triumph and give others the luxury of being as "forgetful" as me. I want to look at children born today and know that they will not have to deal with cancer in their lifetime, that no one will. The statistics are getting better. Through research and hard work, we understand more about our genetics each and every day. There is plenty of information on the American Cancer Society Website, www.cancer.org, and on the Relay-specific site, www.relayforlife.org. You can find out where the next Relay near you will take place or educate yourself with the newest information available. If you or someone you know is newly diagnosed with cancer, please reach out for assistance. There are many groups out there that want to help and you can get the info you need. No one is alone when there are so many communities waiting to help. Take advantage of them! CISM is always there as a peer support system and can point you in the right direction. Although we are not counselors, we can listen and be subjective.

Here's to the future!



Minimums



Paul Sweetin is a Dallas-based Flight Attendant and a Member of the TWU Local 556 Negotiating Team.

Each time negotiations rolls around, questions around the dreaded "minimums" become a hot topic. Is Southwest Airlines Management going to ask for minimums? Would my Negotiating Team (NT) and fellow Union Members entertain minimums? What in the world are minimums?! Hopefully this article will answer these questions, and help ease some fears.

First, we should start by answering the question "What is a minimum?" In the airline industry, minimums are the number of hours (or TFP) someone must work to continue employment. Some airlines calculate these hours monthly, quarterly, or yearly. A majority of airlines with minimums will not allow employees to trade below the set minimum, which can greatly affect a person's ability for time off for vacations, taking care of a family member, or any number of reasons. The chart below is an example of some of the minimums currently in our industry.

US Airways – 40 hours/month	Equates to 34.80 TFP/month
AirTran-70 hours/month	Equates to 60.8 TFP/month
Virgin America – 70 hours/month	Equates to 60.80 TFP/month
Jet Blue – 70 hours/month	Equates to 60.80 TFP/month

Minimums often get confused with productivity incentives. Productivity incentives are rewards for employees that work a certain amount. One example in our current Contract is Sick Leave accrual. Article 16 – Sick Leave/On The Job Injury states, "A Flight Attendant will accrue one (1) TFP sick leave for each ten (10) TFPs for pay flown or credited during the month." Another productivity incentive is Productivity Pay in Article 21 – Compensation, which states, "In months the Company offers Productivity Pay, Flight Attendants will receive an additional \$5.00 for each straight-time TFP over 102 TFPs picked up and flown from Open Time or credited for Reserve." While both of these require a Flight Attendant to work a certain amount to receive the incentive, those who choose not to fly are never at risk of losing her/his job.

Now that we have a good understanding of what a minimum is, let's talk about: "Is Southwest Airlines Management asking for minimums?" and "Would my Negotiating Team and fellow Union Members entertain minimums?" Even though I am not at liberty to discuss the specifics of talks at the table, let me say that since our inception, TWU Local 556 and its Members have fought hard to keep employment-based minimums off the table. We have made it clear at the Negotiating Table, in the Press, and to the Membership that your NT will not entertain employment-based minimums. The flexibility to be able to give away trips when our lives allow or fly as many as we want is one of the biggest draws for the vast majority of our Membership.

Now that that is out of the way, go out there and continue to enjoy all the rights afforded to you through our past negotiations, and your Negotiating Team will continue to fight for the Membership. Continue reaching out to us, staying informed, and we look forward to seeing you on a trip soon (or not if you want to give it away!) If you have questions or comments about minimums, contact the Negotiating Team at NT@TWU556.org.



- As a Commuter, there are two words that are very important: List and Present! Flight Attendants must create a listing on the airline you choose and present yourself at the gate in order to be covered under Article 33 – Commuter Policy.
- If you are commuting in for a pairing, the flight must be scheduled to arrive in the domicile one (1) hour prior to scheduled check-in, or thirty (30) minutes prior to contact time on Reserve.
- If you are commuting on Southwest, you must list and present for one (1) flight, and for off-line carriers you must list and present for two (2) flights (these can be different carriers). Flights on AirTran Airways are considered off-line.
- If you are unable to make your flight(s), you need to notify Crew Scheduling as soon as possible prior to scheduled check-in or contact time.
- There are a variety of options which Crew Scheduling may utilize if you are unable to make your report time which are listed in Article 33.1.A.
- If you have a pairing pulled, you have thirty (30) days to pick up a comparable pairing (3-day for 3-day, 2-day for 2-day, etc.) from Open Time, otherwise Crew Scheduling will assign you one. The pairing may be on any day of the month within the 30-day window and from any base.
- When you pick up a comparable pairing from Open Time, call Crew Scheduling so they can mark you off the list, and you will be available for SWAG (if you meet the other SWAG requirements).

Contract Negotiations Update



Our TWU Local 556 Negotiating Team (NT) met with Southwest Airlines Management on July 8 and 9. Management presented their proposals concerning Article 8-Hours of Service, Article 9-Additional Flying, Article 11-Reserve, and Article 28-Scheduling Policy, followed by productive discussions between the parties. We presented our proposals on Articles 8, 9, and 11 the following day and believe we are headed towards Tentative Agreements. Management also presented their proposal on Article 32-Attendance Policy.

We have received dozens of screenshots and calls concerning reschedules; thank you for continuing to keep us informed with all operational issues you are facing. In our last Unity Update published on July 5th, the President's Message addressed the continued challenges we know you have been dealing with online. We have been bringing your most pressing concerns to Management using your direct examples, in a manner that is easily explained. We are seeking resolutions with Contract language that is easily understood and applied. Management has also expressed their most important concerns, and we have addressed these with direct, clear dialogue. While it remains true that we cannot and will not "negotiate off the table" by talking about the specifics of each proposal, please keep informed about our negotiations through our Union publications, your local Contract Action Network (CAN) Leaders, and by contacting the NT directly at nt@twu556.org.

At this time we have scheduled negotiating dates at the bargaining table through the beginning of October, and they are as follows:

July 30-31
August 20-21
August 28-29
September 10-11
September 24
October 1-2

Your Negotiating Team (NT) hopes that you all had a wonderful Fourth of July weekend and we are proud to represent the best Flight Attendants in the industry. Thank you all for your continued support.

unity
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Unity and Unity Update are official publications of **Transport Workers Union Local 556**, representing the **Flight Attendants of Southwest Airlines**.

TWU Local 556

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