

# Waypoint

A SWAPAFAMILY  NEWSLETTER



## HURRICANE HEROES

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SWAPAFAMILY members help those affected by  
hurricane damage across the country.



SWAPAFamily Outreach Chair Jean Peck with her husband, ATL CA Dave Peck, daughter, Caroline, and son Justin.

## *Ends and New Beginnings*

While it has been a trying 2017, we close out the year with amazing grace. We've shared the best of times at gatherings and celebration events, the scariest of times with back-to-back nightmare hurricanes in the southeast and devastating wildfires out west, and the saddest of times as we said goodbye to friends and family who have passed this year. The one thing that stands out through all of this is that we have done all of these things together, holding each other up through both the good and the bad. You all are the heroes.

### **HURRICANES AND WILDFIRES**

August brought us Hurricane Harvey, then came Irma. And while the devastation from those disasters was immense, we were able to quickly put the SWAPA Pilot Relief Fund Immediate Response Program (IRP) in place, offering every Pilot and their family who applied \$500 to cover immediate needs caused by the evacuation. Food, a dry place to stay, and for some,

clothing that had been left behind in the rush to get out. There were 42 members who applied and received the grant. We also set up the same emergency offer for people who were affected by the California Wildfires IRP, but received no requests. However, during the storms, the thing that was the most touching to me was the numerous people in the SWAPAFamily Facebook group who offered to take in and assist families who were fleeing the storms. Well over 200 of you offered up your homes to these Pilot families in need. It was truly awe-inspiring. Dave and I had Pilot family friends from Florida for several days during Irma's wrath. It was fun for all until we lost power and had a falling tree come through the roof!

### **CANCER AWARENESS**

We designated October as Cancer Awareness month and through the ties, scarves, pins, socks, and t-shirt sales, we were able to raise \$18,502 that was donated to the Breast Cancer

Foundation, the Prostate Cancer Foundation, and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. We also distributed the pink lanyards and you all sent in your pictures wearing all of the swag. This was a great experience that showed Pilot and family support and solidarity. I'd like to offer a special thank you to Kelly Hanley (MDW/#88387) for her persistence and dedication to getting the ties set up and approved for use.

### **SWAPAFAMILY CELEBRATION EVENTS**

We had an incredible year, with five celebration events that brought out 1,450 Pilots to events in PHX, BNA, DAL, DEN, and LAS. Lots of old friends were reunited and a host of new ones made. The unity that brought us together last year is still holding strong and it's an awesome sight to behold. If you haven't been to one of these events, don't worry because we have more coming up in 2018. Take a look at page 12 to see the schedule for the coming year and start planning now!

### **SWA NEW HIRES**

There were almost 1,000 new hires this year and we are expecting close to the same for 2018. We are averaging three classes consisting of 28 new hires every month. SWAPAFamily's No. 1 goal with new hires is to ensure that you connect with your SWA family on day one! We want to make sure that your experience with SWAPAFamily continues

throughout your career at SWA. This is why we give out the swag bag filled with items to keep us at the forefront of your thoughts and why we hold pizza and beer night to help answer all of your questions. If you need ANYTHING or if you are struggling with something, please call us first. Speaking of new hires, if you haven't watched any of the Probie to Pro series that are being emailed to you, I highly recommend that you take a look. Each volume is designed to coincide with where you are in training and offer you tips and guidance to help you navigate your way through your first full year at SWA.

### **JOIN US!**

Finally, if you haven't joined the SWAPAFamily Facebook page, please do so. Just type in SWAPAFamily in the Facebook search bar and look for us in Groups. There are many families from across the U.S. in our group and we help each other with anything from A to Z. You can also get information from SWAPAFamily.org or by calling me or fellow committee member, Greg Jones, or his wife, Mary Ellen. We are all here to help with any difficulties you may be facing: sickness, death in the family, assistance with childcare, anything. That's what SWAPAFamily is all about: caring for one another. And as 2017 shows, we are pretty good at it!

**JEAN PECK**, Chair

SWAPAFamily Outreach 



SWAPA President Jon Weaks with his wife, Dawn, and daughter, Braya.

## *Gratitude and Anticipation*

What a year 2017 has been! It was our first full year operating under our new contract, and it was a year marked by triumphs and tragedy. Most of all, it was a year marked by unity and fellowship, which have become hallmarks of our Pilot group and their families.

We had much to be thankful for in 2017. Our new contract provided increased pay and retirement benefits to our Pilots, which made 2017 a prosperous year for our Pilots and their loved ones. But we are not resting on our laurels. SWAPA is fully engaged in preparing

for Contract 2020 where we intend to build on our gains from 2016 to ensure that every SWAPA Pilot can look back on their career with satisfaction and gratitude when they hang up their headset for the last time. Our unity was key to our accomplishments in 2016, and it will again be the key to 2020.

In 2017, SWAPAFamily matured into a grassroots force within our group. It was a force for good that enabled the strengthening of the bonds within our Pilot family through the numerous SWAPAFamily events and celebrations

as well as a resource for assistance for those among us who faced trying times.

We certainly did face our share of trying times in 2017. Between two major hurricanes in the Southeast, a mass casualty event in Las Vegas, and wildfires along the west coast, there were many members of our SWAPA family who faced hardships in 2017. I could not be more proud of our Pilot group and their families as you all stepped up to provide assistance to your fellow Pilot families who were facing trials in their lives. This is the true spirit in which SWAPAFamily was created, and I am thankful for your care and support of your fellow man.

While we close out 2017 with gratitude and concern, we look forward to 2018 with anticipation for another prosperous and eventful year. With an ever-strengthening economy, we look forward to our Company continuing to be a juggernaut in the airline industry and the resulting benefits from working for such a prosperous Company. I am optimistic based on the growth trajectory that our Company is currently on. As we all know, growth in an airline is the rising tide that lifts all boats.

2018 will also be the year that we lay the foundation for the contract that we will begin negotiating by the end of 2019. As with last year, your awareness and engagement in the process will

again be the key to our success. Our Company has been, and continues to be, incredibly successful. The contract is the mechanism by which we are able to share in that success.

In closing out 2017, I would like to once again thank you for your immense support and unity throughout this year. I am thankful for the trust you have placed in your Association and proud to lead such a fine collection of talented and caring people. I wish each and every one of you a happy and prosperous new year.

Leading Forward,

**JON WEAKS**

SWAPA President 



## *Hurricane Heroes*

August 25, 2017 was the beginning of a surreal couple of weeks as we watched Hurricane Harvey bear down on South Texas. Hurricanes Irma and Jose followed suit, wreaking havoc on Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and the Caribbean. Thousands of gallons of waterfall, gale force winds, hundreds of thousands of people rescued and out of power, yet the stories that came out of the back-to-back blows from the hurricanes were the countless acts of SWA heroism and selflessness that were, and still are, truly inspiring. HOU was crippled and ultimately shut down for a week due to weather, flooding, and no operable navigational aids. MCO operations, as well as all other SWA Florida and Caribbean destinations were halted by Irma and Jose. By Monday, August 28, SWAPA had initiated the Immediate Response Program, which offered financial help for the stranded and/or displaced Pilots and their families. Southwest had also implemented emergency financial relief through its charitable fund, the Southwest Airlines

Employee's Catastrophic Fund. Both charity funds would be instrumental in providing relief for not only Harvey victims, but Irma survivors as well. While we still have long recoveries ahead of us and many are still devastated from this natural disaster, the extraordinary latitude of these storms was no match for the energy and drive that volunteers from near and far brought to helping the people impacted. As all three storms swept across the land, we immediately saw the SWA warrior spirit prevailing to help those in need and in the wake of the disaster true heroes emerged. It is safe to say that when our SWA family needs help, we show up with boats, supplies and lots of love! To recognize all of the people who put their own lives on hold and, in some cases, on the line to be a part of the rescue efforts would be a monumental task — we simply don't have enough paper to name them all, but below are a few stories that highlight the incredible spirit of our group.

## HARVEY WREAKS HAVOC ON SOUTH TEXAS - HOU FLT OPS AND SWAPA BRACE FOR IMPACT

Early Saturday morning, August 25 HOU Crew Coordinator Liz Thomas reported for work. Business started out as usual, but it really was “not normal,” says Liz. “We were in touch all morning with the Network Operations Center (NOC), our meteorology department and dispatch were trying hard to prepare us for what was about to happen.” The phrase of the day was “batten down the hatches because this is one nasty storm heading our way.” The storm inundated Southeast Texas with torrential rain for days, causing deadly floods and billions of dollars worth of damage.

As SWA Flt Ops and CISM were getting their “Call Center” set up to offer support to the hundreds of Pilots whose houses were either flooded or blown away along with those who were stranded or displaced from their families, the local efforts were left in the hands of Chief Pilot David Newton, Assistant Chief Pilot Rick Carrasco, Crew Coordinator Liz Thomas and SWAPA HOU Domicile Rep Stacy Devillier for coordination. HOU CA Michael Cook and HOU FO Kingston Lampley were among some of the Pilots stranded at HOU. Lampley, a commuter from Birmingham, had no hope of making it home that day as all flights were cancelled. Cook, a resident of the Houston suburbs, had no choice but to stay as his car was totally submerged in the employee parking lot. Despite their stranded situation, they volunteered to

help Flight Ops and Devillier “disseminate up-to-date information to other stranded Pilots and ultimately both wound up flying marooned SWA airplanes out of HOU,” says Devillier. Lampley says “as unfortunate as it was to be stuck in HOU during the storm, we were at least able to be of service.” In addition, Cook was able to escort the mother of one of our dispatchers through security to board one of the rescue flights from HOU to DAL. Hundreds of passengers and SWA employees were also stranded at the airport because operations had ceased due to the weather and flooding. Pappas gave out free food for those stranded, but “our own Liz Thomas was a godsend, purchasing food for our stranded crews as the hotel supplies dwindled. She also shuttled Pilots to and from the airport to catch rescue flights even when the hotel van drivers were unable to navigate the flooded roads,” says Newton.



**HOU Crew Coordinator Liz Thomas worked tirelessly round the clock to support stranded crews during Hurricane Harvey.**

## **HOU CA BILLY JENKINS – ROOFTOP RESCUER**

A resident of Spring, Texas, HOU CA Billy Jenkins pulled an all-nighter to rescue many nearby residents including one of our own, HOU flight attendant Sherilyn Gerhardt, who was trapped in the second story of her home for more than 12 hours. Through swift and debris-laden waters, Jenkins tried several attempts in a motor-driven boat to reach her, but ultimately wound up having to paddle his kayak over a mile to rescue her because there were so many obstacles. “It was surreal,” says Jenkins, “but when I found out it was one of our flight attendants, I knew I had to do something! She was one of ours and we have to take care of our own.” Jenkins wound up rescuing 50-plus other nearby

neighbors who were trapped on their rooftops or second stories throughout the ordeal.

## **HOU FO RICHARD GARDNER – HAVE BOAT, WILL RESCUE!**

After 18 hours and counting, HOU Flight Ops was busting at the seams with fellow Pilots waiting in the wings for relief from Harvey. HOU FO Richard Gardner was worried about his family in Pasadena, Texas, and in desperation began his journey to get home. “I was texting with a buddy of mine and he says he can pick me up on HWY 45 if I can get there” says Gardner. Leaving his bags in the crew room, he hiked in waist-deep water and made his way to the rendezvous point. “I just had to make sure my family was ok.” Once he confirmed that his family was safe and sound, he responded to a friend’s phone call to rescue others in East Houston. The next five hours were spent rescuing approximately 40 people by boat alongside the Texas National Guard.

## **ONE LUV WIVES AND SWAPAFAMILY SHOW LUV AND SUPPORT**

As Hurricane Harvey was quickly gaining strength and about to rip through South Texas, so many families had to evacuate with only the clothes on their backs and what they could fit in their automobiles. HOU FO Ryan Luchsinger and his wife Alicia were among those who had to abandon their home in Rockport. With two small children in tow, they headed to El Paso with a plan



**HOU FO Ryan Luchsinger and his wife, Alicia, and their two children, Lilly and Gabe.**

for Alicia and the kids to head to Florida to her parent's house and Ryan would stay back and assess the damage after the storm passed. Alicia remembers it was "a crazy couple of weeks" because once she made it to Florida, she and her family had to evacuate to get away from Irma. Alicia posted her status and frustrations with the situation in the One Luv Wives and SWAPAFamily Facebook groups so her friends would know she and her family were all right. Several of the wives saw Alicia's desperate situation and without her knowledge put together a "gift of cash" for food, clothing, and essentials. Even though she knew her family would eventually get disaster emergency financial help from the SWAPA Pilot Relief Fund as well as the Southwest Airlines Catastrophic Fund, Alicia states, "it took a huge worry off my shoulders to know that we could get

things we needed however long we had to live in other cities while our home was being repaired. We are truly grateful to be a part of such a wonderful Company and honored to be a part of the SWA and SWAPAFamily." 



**HOU FO Kingston Lampley with his wife, Dawn.**



**HOU CA Michael Cook with his wife, Sheila.**



## Spouse Spotlight

Alex Apolinaris, husband of FO Brandi Apolinaris (ATL/#74019), made the decision to retire and stay home for the benefit of their entire family.

By **Andrés Trujillo**

While being a stay-at-home parent is never easy, it holds some special challenges for former AirTran flight attendant Alex Apolinaris. Alex has been a full-time stay-at-home dad since 2013, when he and his wife, FO Brandi Apolinaris (ATL/#74019) made

the decision for Alex to retire and stay home with the kids. The Apolinarises are parents to: Michael, 7, Katie, 5 and their baby brother Mark, is 2. "It's mentally draining," Alex said. "I knew it was going to be tough," but it was for the benefit of their entire family.

Alex and Brandi met in June 2006 when he was working a flight that brought him to Dallas. Later that evening a few members of the flight crew, including Brandi, went out to dinner. “She was complaining about how she was new to Atlanta and didn’t know anything about this area,” Alex said, “So I offered to show her around.”

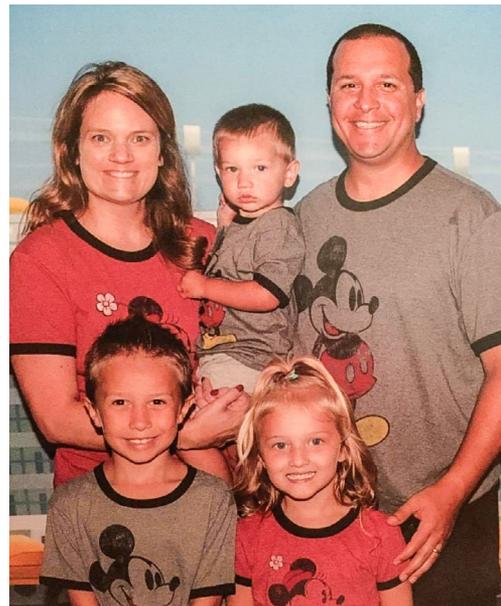
At the time, Brandi was living in the northern part of Atlanta but most of her fellow Pilots lived in south Atlanta so she felt a little isolated. Fortunately, Alex had lived in Atlanta since he was 9 and knew the city particularly well. So, they exchanged phone numbers and met up for dinner and a movie a couple of weeks later. They started spending more time together and nine months after their first date, Alex proposed.

They were married on the beaches of Galveston, Texas, and as their family began to grow they started working opposite schedules in the fall so at least one parent could be with their kids at all times. Then during the summer months, the couple would work the same schedule and hire a nanny to take care of the kids while they were away.

In 2011, however, things began to change. Southwest Airlines had just bought AirTran and Alex and Brandi were having to commute for work more often. Once AirTran was fully integrated into Southwest Airlines in 2013, Brandi was going to have to leave for a few

months for training. “We didn’t have grandparents that could watch the kids,” Alex said, “So I asked to see if I could take a leave of absence while my wife was in training so that I could stay with the kids, but unfortunately I couldn’t.” So, after discussing it with his wife, Alex decided to retire early and take care of the kids while his wife continued to fly. “We didn’t want someone else raising our kids,” he said, “What’s the purpose of having kids if you’re not going to raise them?”

While Alex sometimes thinks he would rather be working a full-time job, when he sees his kids doing well in school and knows that Brandi is at peace flying the jet, he knows he made the right decision. “Now that I look at the situation, this was the best for our kids. Our kids come first.” 



# 2018

# SWAPAfamily



### 3 CELEBRATION EVENTS

DATE	LOCATION	VENUE
February 23	MCO	Main Event 9101 International Dr. Suite 1032 Orlando, FL 32819
June 19	HOU	Main Event Houston
August	MDW	Main Event Chicago



### 3 GRASSROOTS EVENTS

DATE	LOCATION	VENUE
March 15	ATL	TBD
May 3	BWI	TBD
July 19	OAK	TBD



**FIRST OFFICER KELLY HANLEY (MDW/#88387)** was the driving inspiration behind SWAPAFamily's Cancer Awareness campaign that ran in October. "I saw the pink epaulets on a Qantas Airways female Pilot's Facebook page and just thought, 'What a great, easy way for Pilots to show support for cancer awareness,'" says Hanley. Last year, she personally received and distributed approximately 475 pairs of epaulets and raised \$6,200 for breast cancer research. This year, she knew she could raise even more but she would need the support and approval of the Company since the pink epaulet wasn't an approved uniform item and, technically, Pilots weren't allowed to wear them. "In February, I began crafting a letter to send to Gary Kelly, Mike Van De Ven — everyone all the way down to my MDW Chiefs. I was finally happy with it and sent it on April 12. I got a response on May 30 from Alan Kasher detailing why the epaulets were turned down but that he wanted to discuss other options. We landed on the pink tie option, with the goal to raise money and awareness not only for breast cancer, but for several cancers." This year through Hanley's and SWAPAFamily's fundraisers we were able to donate **\$18,502** to The National Breast Cancer Foundation, St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, and The Prostate Cancer Foundation.















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