



A Newsletter to Connect CWA Passenger Service Professionals

This is our sixth issue of the CWA Agents Connected newsletter. CWA represents more than 20,000 agents at American, Piedmont, and Envoy. In this newsletter we cover stories of interest to agents at all three airlines. If you'd like to suggest a story or share a picture of you and your coworkers taking action to build our union, email us at info@cwaagents.org.

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Hurricane Relief Efforts



We all witnessed the tragic devastation of three massive hurricanes over the past two months as they hit Texas and the Gulf Coast, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Our brothers and sisters in those areas are still suffering the brutal effects of winds and floods, and will continue to feel those effects for months. CWA President Chris Shelton has urged members and locals to contribute to both the [District 3 Disaster Relief Fund](#) for victims of Irma and Maria. Both efforts are still funneling money directly to our members in affected areas.

We've seen an outpouring of help in the form of money, goods, and volunteers, including more than 300 union volunteers organized by airline unions, the AFL-CIO, and United Airlines, who assisted with relief in Puerto Rico. Please read the stories our members shared on our website, and continue to support the [District 6](#) and [District 3](#) relief efforts in any way you can.

"More Love Than Water" in Houston

Gina Lenahan, a 26-year American Airlines veteran based in Houston, didn't come from a union family. "I was never a union person. Now I want to volunteer to be on board for anything the union needs." Gina, a Premium Customer Service representative, recently went through steward training, and as a result says she feels more connected to her fellow workers than ever before, especially after the warmth and messages of solidarity that poured into Houston after Hurricane Harvey.

Continued online: <http://bit.ly/2ASnUWk>

Searching for Hope in Puerto Rico

CWA Local 3140 and TWU Local 501, which represents the ramp workers at San Juan airport, are fighting for their lives. Georgina Felix and Heyda Delgado from 3140 are working hand-in-hand with TWU leaders to coordinate the movement of essential supplies from Miami to Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. The schedule of flights in and out of San Juan is limited, but the Locals have been working with doctors to make sure medical supplies and other essentials are getting through. As of mid-October, Jorge Rodriguez, Staff Representative from District 3, is sending funds to CWA members in Puerto Rico—both AT&T Mobility and airline agents.

Read more online: <http://bit.ly/2ASnUWk>

Piedmont Workers Stand Together at CLT: “We’re Worth More!”

In Charlotte, North Carolina, last week, more than two dozen members of Local 3645 mobilized to call attention to low wages and difficult working conditions at Piedmont Airlines. The mobilization took place during an annual charity event on the tarmac, where airport workers were raising money for the United Way.



At the event, managers and executives—including Piedmont President Lyle Hogg—watched Piedmont ramp and gate agents turn their vests inside-out in protest, linking arms with their backs to the crowd. The message was simple and powerful: Solidarity! Kevin Silver, a ramp agent, explains that he was proud to stand with his brothers and sisters to show the company that, “We need better wages, and we’re worth more.”

The event included barbecue and cake, but during the action, the workers refused to take the food. They distributed round tokens to Piedmont executives who were serving the cake. “The tokens said to Piedmont leadership that we need and deserve better wages,” says Kevin. “Right now we’re doing more work than ever, without enough

manpower, and making only \$15 an hour. We all have to feed our families with our wages. I’ve been working at Piedmont for 11 years, but I still make less than a kid working at a movie theater.”

Conway Bernard, a 16-year Piedmont veteran, agrees. “We were trying to educate management to understand our pain. Piedmont is not a mom and pop airline anymore, so they have to change. A lot of Piedmont workers have to work double shifts just to survive.” Kevin adds, “We’re doing the same jobs as mainline workers do—and the planes couldn’t fly without us.”

Read more: <http://bit.ly/2B9i3Om>



Envoy Bargaining Update

Envoy agents are in the midst of bargaining for a fair new contract to improve wages and benefits. They met on shift trades, classifications, and a flow through agreement in September, and reached tentative agreement on several issues, including profit sharing and part-time employees. The bargaining committee expects to start dealing with economic issues during the next session, scheduled for October 30-November 1.

Follow the latest news from the Envoy bargaining table here: <https://envoyagents.org/category/bargaining-updates/>

Does Envoy See Workers As Assets or Liabilities?



Sheryl Bachman started working for American Airlines in 1985, and ten years later, when her station shifted to American Eagle, Sheryl kept the uniform, the responsibilities, and the same hourly pay. Today Sheryl works for Envoy, with the same protocols as those of American Airlines agents—but her responsibilities have increased. In Wichita, Sheryl and her Envoy coworkers all have to be qualified to work the ticket counter, baggage, and ramp.

“Back when I started at American, I really appreciated the way the company treated us. If you were a good worker, the company was good to you,” Sheryl says. “Now Envoy seems to want skilled workers at unskilled workers’ wages. In the past 20 years, my wages have gone up less than 50 cents.”

After 2001 U.S. airlines reduced their workforces again and again, and the stress of too few agents doing too many jobs is now reaching a dangerous level for both mainline and regional employees. “In Wichita, we’re short-handed all the time,” says Sheryl. “The passengers see inconsistencies and don’t understand why we don’t have more people to help them. They think that Envoy agents are American agents because it says American behind our counter. Most of the time you are the only agent trying to work an oversold flight, meet it, retrieve gate checks, clean the plane, reload it, and solicit for volunteers—all with no assistance available, and all in just 15 minutes. Envoy wants the door closed 10 minutes prior to departure, which makes it difficult to provide the help passengers expect and deserve. Many times agents are alone on the ticket counter for check in of two flights, acceptance of counter-to-counter shipments, ticket reissues, and tagged bags from the kiosk. We can’t call someone else to help because there is no one else available. We’re working at a bare bones level, and that can’t be right.”

Read more: <http://bit.ly/2BDJKAd>

Dates to Remember:

Envoy Bargaining: October 30-November 1

Piedmont Bargaining: November 6-9

Air Rage Update

The fight for more powerful protections for passenger service agents who face verbal and physical abuse on the job continued through the summer and early fall. Congress considered new regulations in the House and Senate tied to the FAA Reauthorization bills, but those amendments were not part of the bill rushed to a vote in October to keep the agency funded. The FAA Reauthorization bill that includes the Airport Rage language may be brought to the House and Senate floors in the next few weeks.



In August, CWA members initiated a postcard campaign and hand-delivered more than 3,000 signed cards to the Senate, demonstrating the strength of our support for clear, effective protections for all passenger service agents. The postcard campaign targeted Senators in the key states of Texas, North Carolina, and Florida. Members of CWA Local 3140 in Florida gathered more than 600 postcards.

We are continuing our efforts as the FAA Reauthorization bills are re-addressed. We're advocating for language in the bill that will include all the key protections and procedures our agents need and deserve. “What we need now is a bill that protects all agents through passenger education about the consequences of abusing airline employees—as well as training, support, and backing from airports, airlines, and law enforcement. We are definitely on our way,” says Jo Deutsch, a longtime labor advocate who is helping to lead the charge with CWA. “We’ll be asking for the support of all our members in order to get these protections solidified in the coming months.”

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