

Let the Summer Travel Season Begin



Like many of you, I love to travel. I suppose that's a good thing, if not a requirement, as I've worked for Southwest Airlines for the past 26 years. I can still remember my first flight: It was back in 1972 and, yes, it was on Southwest! These days I'm on a Southwest plane at least twice a month, and I still get as excited to travel now as I did on that first flight.

When Southwest first took off, only 15 percent of Americans had

ever flown on a commercial flight. Today, that number is well over 85 percent, and I'm proud of the role that Southwest has played in democratizing the skies. We acquired AirTran Airways last May, and, combined, we serve more than 100 million Customers a year, taking them to nearly 100 destinations.

I'm proud of the fact that Southwest carries more passengers in the domestic U.S. than any other airline.

Customer Service in Action

Earlier this year, one of our Houston Mechanics was traveling to Tampa when he encountered an elderly Vietnamese lady who had missed her flight. She didn't speak English, could not get another flight until the next day, and had no family with her to help. Our Mechanic happens to speak Vietnamese, and he was able to translate between the Customer and our Employees at the airport. By the end of the conversation, he had arranged to fly her back to Houston, accommodate her overnight in his family's home, and escort her to her flight the next morning. He also stayed in constant communication with her family to ensure her safe arrival. Just another wonderful example of one of our Employees going above and beyond the call of duty!

It's deeply gratifying to play such a vital role in connecting people to the things most important in their lives. I love to hear stories from Customers who fly to see their grandkids; take their families on vacation every summer; maintain a long-distance relationship thanks to Southwest; or who simply depend on us for their weekly business travel.

This month promises to be an especially busy one on our planes, and I'm sure we'll see all of the above and more onboard. As the month draws to a close, we turn our attention to pay tribute on Memorial Day to all of the brave men and women who have died fighting for our country. The holiday, originally known as Decoration Day, originated after the Civil War to honor fallen soldiers. Today, almost all of us will reflect and remember our loved ones who are no longer with us, whether they served in the military or not. And of course, the holiday serves as the unofficial start of the summer vacation season—celebrated with family gatherings, picnics, trips to the beach, fireworks, and travel.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to serve you, regardless of your reason for traveling this month. You are why we do what we do, and we look forward to continuing to connect you to the important moments in your life.

Gary Kelly
Chairman, President, and CEO
Southwest Airlines