

METROPOLITAN

Airport News™

MARCH 2026

The Journal of the Metropolitan New York Airport Community



2026

LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

Local Airport leaders share their insights on diversity, workforce, and sustainability.

May 9, 2025 • St. John's University



The Ultimate Airport Team Building Event!

Register Your Airport Employee Team to Bring Home the Cup!



The Airport Community Foundation (ACF) is excited to announce the 2nd Annual ACF Cup, a **5v5 soccer tournament for airport employees** that benefits the New York airport community. This event brings together teams of airport and aviation staff for a day filled with competitive play and camaraderie. In addition to the on-field action, the tournament focuses on supporting the next generation of aviation professionals, strengthening community connections, and fostering teamwork and friendly rivalry among members of the airport community.



WWW.ACF-CUP.COM



Contact us for additional information (718) 750-4441 or info@acfhelps.org

Airport Community Foundation, Inc. is a qualified 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization registered in the U.S. under Federal Tax ID: 33-1522353.

PUBLISHER

Kathryn Bliss
kbliss@metroairportnews.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Julia Lauria-Blum
jblum@metroairportnews.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Raymond F. Ringston
rringston@metroairportnews.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Michael Del Purgatorio
mdelpurgatorio@metroairportnews.com

PHOTOGRAPHER

Beverly Holder
bholderphoto@gmail.com

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Roberta Dunn
rdunn@metroairportnews.com

ADVERTISING

Edward J. Garcia
egarcia@metroairportnews.com

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Tanya Austin
taustin@metroairportnews.com

Maureen Katz
mkatz@metroairportnews.com

Jonathan Katz
jkatz@metroairportnews.com

Robert G. Waldvogel
robertw@metroairportnews.com

**METROPOLITAN
AIRPORT NEWS**

JFK International Airport
PO Box 300877
Jamaica, NY 11430
Tel: (347) 396-0904
info@metroairportnews.com

www.metroairportnews.com

Permissions: Material in this publication may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. The views and opinions expressed in *Metropolitan Airport News* are those of the authors and advertisers, and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the publisher. Articles presented in this publication are for general information and educational purposes and do not constitute legal or financial advice.

©Copyright 2026 by Airport Media, Inc.
All rights reserved • Printed in the USA

Empire State Development
Certified MWBE
Woman-Owned Business Enterprise

New York Press Association
NYFA

Welcome to the March 2026 issue of *Metropolitan Airport News*. While I understand ‘Snow Season’ at the Metro Airports goes through April, I truly hope that the worst is behind us. As soon as it all clears, I’m looking forward to those tiny purple crocuses and tulips popping up as the first sign that Spring is here!

March is a truly wonderful issue for me. March is Women’s History Month, and March 8 kicks off Women In Aviation Week. It’s a great time to get to know a few of the women who inspire us at the airports. We are delighted to share with you remarkable insights into 17 successful and inspirational women who work extremely hard in their respective industries, all within the airport community. We say it all the time: it’s not just the terminals or airlines; it’s hundreds of companies working together with thousands of employees across myriad business sectors that make the entire airport community an incredible economic engine that benefits the entire local community.

The airport leaders we featured in this month’s issue are at the top of their fields, demonstrating leadership and tenacity in all they accomplish. These women represent airlines, technology, management, concessions, construction, hotels, retail, education, and more.

While we are on the topic of Women’s History, I’d like to share an upcoming event that you can show your support for, which will reach even further into the community, ensuring women have a chance to excel in their careers at the airport. **WINGS at JFK** is launching a women’s mentorship program to support women in their careers at JFK airport, providing valuable training, mentoring, and networking to advance their careers. There will be an Inaugural Brunch at the beautiful Rockaway Hotel on March 19, and I hope to see you there! Registration is available online at www.wingsatjfk.org.

I hope you enjoy this issue, and I look forward to seeing you at the airports!



KATIE BLISS, *Publisher*
kbliss@metroairportnews.com



ABOUT THE COVER

The 2026 Leadership Insights cover photoshoot took place at the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. Each year, this event continues to grow, with past contributors returning to offer support and network with the current year’s contributors. We eagerly anticipate this photoshoot each year, as it provides a wonderful opportunity for women at all stages of their careers to share their stories and inspire one another. (Cover Photo: Beverly Holder)

FORTBRAND



**INTRODUCING NORTH AMERICA'S FIRST POOLED
GSE AT JFK T6, PROUDLY PROVIDED BY
FORTBRAND.**



LEASING



REFURBISHMENT



RENTALS



MAINTENANCE



50 Fairchild Ct, Plainview, NY 11803



(516) 576-3200



info@fortbrand.com

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Harriet's Enduring Legacy

Pioneering American Aviator, Journalist, and Screenwriter

BY JULIA LAURIA-BLUM
jblum@metroairportnews.com

Harriet Quimby was once described to me by her biographer, Giacinta Bradley Koontz, as “a woman moving forward with purpose.” In Koontz’s book, *The Harriet Quimby Scrapbook: The Life of America’s First Birdwoman, 1875- 1912*, Quimby’s life story is that of a modern woman living in a not-so-modern age “that touched the fringes of the Civil War, the Industrial Revolution, the Ragtime Era, and the new Age of Aviation.”

Born on a Michigan homestead in 1875, Harriet moved to San Francisco in 1888. Though she initially sought a stage career, her sharp writing led her to journalism and a move to New York City in 1903. From 1903 to 1912, Quimby was a world-traveling journalist for Leslie’s Weekly. A lover of speed, she personified feminine independence by driving and repairing her own car, smoking cigarettes, and living on her own

After attending the 1910 Belmont Air Meet, Harriet Quimby began lessons at the Moissant School of Aviation on Long Island in 1911. That August, she became the first American woman to earn an aviator’s license, officiated by the Aero Club of America and certified by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI).

Harriet soon joined the popular exhibition flying circuit, bringing glamour to the male-dominated field in her custom-designed plum satin flight suit.

In 1912, while still a journalist, she became the first woman to fly across the English Channel in a Bleriot XI monoplane. Later that year, during a publicity flight for the Boston Aviation Meet, with her

manager as a passenger, hundreds of spectators watched in horror as Harriet and her passenger fell to their deaths when the aircraft suddenly pitched forward. The ongoing speculation as to the cause of the aircraft’s malfunction spawned the development of safety devices for pilots and several parachute patents. Just prior to her untimely death at age 37, Harriet wrote in her article for *Good Housekeeping*, “There is no reason why the aeroplane should not open up a fruitful occupation for women. I see no reason they cannot realize handsome incomes.”

Reflecting upon Harriet’s legacy, she left behind a vision of courage, glamour, and intelligence. With a pen and camera, she provided an intimate view of life at the turn of the century—a ‘person’ in a society defined by the binary of ‘man’ and ‘woman.’ She remains a timeless role model who redefined her destiny, serving as a metaphor for the American Dream and the limitless potential she realized throughout her life.

While Quimby’s place in history as a pioneering aviator is most notable, the many stories of her predecessors, contemporaries, and successors involved in various aviation interests have largely gone unnoticed. Yet, women have been essential to every era of aviation history, from the first balloons to fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and jets, to the Space Shuttle and beyond.

It is a pursuit that continues today, with the expanding technology of air travel and future careers for women in aviation. Such is the case of the women who grace the cover of this month’s *Metropolitan Airport News* – all who are women moving forward with purpose. ■



American pioneering pilot Harriet Quimby with a Moissant monoplane 1911.

CRADLE OF AVIATION MUSEUM



COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

BKLYN Blend

A beloved Black-owned juice bar and health food restaurant, offering nourishing smoothies, shakes, meals, and fresh juices since 2016.



Since January 2016, Brooklyn Blend has been a staple Black-owned juice bar and health food restaurant in the Brooklyn community, known for providing healthy smoothies, shakes, nutritious food, and fresh juices from our juice bar. We are passionate about inspiring and encouraging a wellness-focused lifestyle, especially within communities that are underserved and overlooked. What began as a way to assist our parents throughout their retirement, evolved into a desire to positively impact our culture for generations to come. www.bklynblend.com

Keishon Warren CEO, BKLYN Blend



What inspired the creation of BKLYN Blend?

BKLYN Blend is built on the motto, “Spread[ing] Love, It’s the Brooklyn Way!” We founded this business to support our hardworking parents as they approached retirement. Fueled by the love of our community, our mission evolved to focus on serving nutritious meals with kindness. We recognize the importance of offering diverse, healthy choices, and we intentionally designed our brand to reflect this commitment.

What are you looking forward to the most when T6 opens its doors?

I am most looking forward to the moment when travelers step into Terminal 6 and experience the heart of Brooklyn through our food, our culture, and our hospitality. Opening at T6 represents more than expansion, it is an opportunity to share the essence of our community and our mission. I’m excited to see guests from around the world discover new flavors, enjoy healthier options, connect with our story, and feel the warmth and kindness that define Bklyn Blend. Just as we strive to uplift our local communities, I look forward to creating

meaningful job opportunities, building partnerships with local organizations, and expanding our mission of serving nutritious meals with kindness to an international audience.

What unique flavors and experiences can travelers expect when they visit BKLYN Blend at T6?

Our BKLYN Blend menu is infused with a vibrant Caribbean flair. We proudly feature unique ingredients, such as our signature house-made chipotle and tamarind sauce, to add a delightful kick to our drinks and food. From an array of refreshing smoothies, shakes, and juices to our range of delicious and inventive vegan patties (Savory Lentils or Hearty Pumpkin, anyone?!), every sip is a taste of paradise, and every bite is bursting with flavors.

In what ways has your Brooklyn upbringing influenced the concept and offerings at BKLYN Blend?

We were intentional about incorporating into our brand the iconic essence of Brooklyn, where unique communities flow into one another. Each item on the BKLYN

Blend menu, from the Park Slope Salmon Sandwich to the Fulton Street Shake, pays homage to the streets, landmarks, and neighborhoods of this remarkable borough. We personally designed and built all our locations using reclaimed wood and materials sourced from various parts of Brooklyn, including materials from the Coney Island Boardwalk, old water tanks, and demolished buildings in our neighborhood.

How has your experience with the Port Authority’s Institute of Concessions (IOC) influenced your path to becoming a concessionaire at T6?

My experience with the IOC program has been transformative and has truly opened doors for me to realize and pursue my dreams. The connections I’ve made within the airport community and the resources available through the program would not have been easily accessible otherwise. ■



ON DUTY

News of promotions, appointments, and honors involving professionals within the aviation and airport communities.

■ **Alyssa Burke** has been promoted from Director of Operations & Logistics to Vice President of **The ARK at JFK**, reporting directly to the President, **Elizabeth Schuette**. Alongside the Chief Operating Officer, **Michael Falacara**, Alyssa supports all aspects of ARK's operations, including logistics, facility and fleet management, technology, airline relations, and human resources.



Alyssa Burke

Alyssa joined The ARK in 2018 and has become an integral part of the management team. She brings a wealth of aviation experience to the position, with over 15 years at JFK Airport across passenger, cargo, and ground handling. Her commitment to the airport community, her excellent customer experience, and her dedication to animal welfare drive her many achievements.

■ The **Airforwarders Association (AFA)** has confirmed that Executive Director **Brandon Fried** will retire at the end of the year, following a long-planned decision announced to members at the Airforwarders Association General Meeting last month.

During the transition period, Fried will continue to carry out his responsibilities in full, leading the AFA's advocacy, policy engagement, and member activities until his successor has been appointed. The Board of Directors has employed an executive search consultant to recruit the new leader and an appointment is expected



Brandon Fried

toward the end of the year. Fried was elected Chair of the Board of Directors in 2001 and has served as Executive Director since 2005, growing the number of corporate members to more than 225.

■ **On The Go (OTG)** has recently announced that **Matt King** has been appointed Chief Executive Officer. Matt brings over 30 years of leadership experience in multi-unit foodservice, hospitality, and airport concessions, with a strong track record of driving operational excellence, enhancing guest experience, and delivering financial performance across complex, distributed businesses.



Matt King

"Matt is the right leader for OTG at this moment," said **Ed Sirhal**, Chair of People & Talent Committee of OTG. "He brings a rare combination of industry insight, sound judgment, and a people-first leadership philosophy. The Board has great confidence in Matt's ability to steward the company through its next chapter and position OTG for sustained, long-term success." As CEO, Matt will focus on operational performance, elevating guest experience, advancing the company's use of technology, and supporting disciplined growth across existing and new airport locations. ■



Airport Snow & Ice Management Services

Snow Removal • Snow Melting • Chemical Applications
sales@carusosnowgroup.com • (857) 273-5015



**Zero Shutdowns:
Stay Open & Safe**

With decades of experience in aviation snow operations, we support multiple airport locations across the country. Contact us to learn how our teams deliver reliable winter response when operational continuity matters most.



www.carusosnow.com

PHOTO BY: BEVERLY HOLDER



2026

LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

Airport leaders share their insights on diversity, workforce, and sustainability.

(L.-R.): Dawn Kelly, Denicia Marshall, Gursonia Clair, Jaclyn Randazzo, Dianna Rose, Natasha Lelia Turner, Kathleen Pettit, Sonjay Murray, Darci Williams, Lucia Oswald, Leslie Bresnaider, Catherine Gonzalez, Donna Draghi-Lemay, Elisabeth Sailer, Katarzyna Sek.

The aviation and airport industries encompass a wide range of career paths and opportunities related to air travel and transport, from airside and landside jobs to work in terminals and even off-airport jobs like publishing.

According to a 2024 New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) economic report, New York airports support more than 454,000 aviation related jobs, and aviation jobs are high paying and outperform many jobs in other sectors of the economy.

This month, *Metropolitan Airport News* focuses on women in the aviation industry, including women-owned businesses in and around the New York metropolitan area airports. We asked each of these featured women questions about their careers, their work in their

respective areas of the industry, women in leadership, and sustainability, and here we offer their one-on-one insights in their own words.

In sharing their experience and passion for the aviation and airport industry, their work honors the women who have come before them and, today, carry their legacy into the 21st Century.

This year's 2026 Leadership Insights cover photo shoot took place at the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI), located in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens. NYSCI is New York City's premier hands-on science center with more than 450 interactive exhibits, a 3D theater, and a science playground. Founded during the 1964-65 World's Fair, NYSCI focuses on STEM education through "Design, Make, Play" for all ages. ■



Leslie Bresnaider, LCB, CCS

National Director of Customs Brokerage & Compliance – Savino Del Bene U.S.A.

Leslie Bresnaider is a licensed U.S. Customs Broker and logistics executive with more than 30 years of experience navigating the complexities of international trade. She currently serves as National Director of Customs Brokerage and Compliance at Savino Del Bene USA, where she leads high-performing teams, drives operational modernization, and ensures regulatory excellence in an increasingly complex global environment. She also serves as President of the JFK Airport Customs Brokers & Freight Forwarders Association.

A respected industry voice, Leslie is committed to strengthening collaboration between government and trade stakeholders while mentoring the next generation of women leaders in aviation and logistics.

How did you begin your career in aviation or at the airports?

Leslie Bresnaider: I began my career in aviation unexpectedly. After graduating from Cornell University, I worked in the export department for a fabric company shipping globally through a freight forwarder. When I decided to return to school and needed part-time work, that same forwarder hired me for administrative support. Over time, the owner recognized my interest in the business and offered to sponsor my customs broker education. I passed the broker's exam, brought the customs brokerage function in-house, and ultimately became Vice President of Customs Brokerage for the company. What began as a temporary role evolved into a long-term leadership career in international trade and airport logistics.

Can you share how mentorship has influenced your career?

Leslie Bresnaider: I have been fortunate to have several mentors. The owner of my first company invested in my education and encouraged me to obtain my broker's license. He taught me the technical and commercial foundations of the business and set high expectations for professionalism and accountability.

Later, through the JFK Airport Customs Brokers & Freight Forwarders Association, I met two women who owned their own companies and went on to become Presidents of the Association. They welcomed me onto the Board and demonstrated through action that women's leadership in our industry carries both authority and impact. Their example reinforced the importance of representation and advocacy.

How has networking and involvement in the airport community benefited your career?

Leslie Bresnaider: Networking has been instrumental in my development. My first company was small, and there were limited internal resources to draw upon. By joining an international agent network, I attended conferences around the world and gained broader insight into global trade practices and cultural perspectives. I also became active in both local and national customs

broker associations. Building those relationships required intentional effort, but over time it created a trusted professional network across the country. At the local level, engagement allows us to work directly with U.S. Customs and other government agencies, as well as carriers, terminal operators, and airport stakeholders, to resolve operational challenges collaboratively.

Are you a member of any civic or business groups related to the local airport?

Leslie Bresnaider: I currently serve as President of the JFK Airport Customs Brokers & Freight Forwarders Association at JFK Airport. The Association represents the customs brokerage and freight forwarding community and works closely with federal agencies and airport leadership to address regulatory, operational, and modernization initiatives affecting cargo operations.

What is your most memorable career moment?

Leslie Bresnaider: What makes this career compelling is that no two days are alike. Over the years, we have navigated major Customs system transitions, the closure of airports and seaports during Hurricane Sandy, labor disruptions, a global pandemic, and ongoing tariff volatility.

Each disruption requires adaptability, technical precision, and coordinated leadership. At the same time, some of the most memorable moments come from the unexpected. I have met clients at the airport to personally facilitate the clearance of hand-carried emergency fashion show pieces hours before an event. During COVID, our team worked tirelessly to clear masks and other critical PPE for emergency responders and essential workers. I have even overseen the export of a live crocodile to the Philippines. Successfully guiding teams and clients through both crisis and complexity has been one of the most defining aspects of my career. ■



SAVINO DEL BENE
Global Logistics and Forwarding Company

Savino Del Bene
149-10 183rd Street
Jamaica, NY 11413
www.savinodelbene.com



Deborah Ann Brown

Business Manager, ARFF, JFK Airport – Port Authority of NY & NJ

Debbie Brown has been employed in the aviation industry for almost 20 years. She joined the Port Authority of NY & NJ in 2017 and has recently taken on the role of Business Manager at JFK Airport's Aircraft Rescue Firefighting (ARFF) Division. Throughout her career, her enthusiasm for serving others through civic, private and professional settings started off at a young age.

After raising her sons and completing her education, she embraced aviation with passion and purpose. A strong believer in mentorship, Deb dedicates her time to guiding students, interns, graduates, and professionals through programs that build confidence and open doors to new opportunities. She thrives on connecting people, fostering collaboration, and helping others grow both personally and professionally. With a commitment to continuous learning and teamwork, Deb embraces challenges and inspires others to reach higher, making a lasting impact on individuals and organizations alike.

How did you begin your career in aviation or at the airports?

Deborah Ann Brown: I often say that aviation found me. At the time, I was pursuing a second career in higher education when an administrative opportunity opened up at Farmingdale State College in their Aviation Program. It turned out to be a perfect fit. I was able to use my background in operations and organization to help streamline flight school scheduling, coordinate aircraft maintenance rotations, and manage student accounts for the Private Pilot program based at Republic Airport.

What started as an administrative role quickly became a passion for the industry. After my time at FSC, I was hired at Republic Airport to manage new business contracts and oversee the security badging system, a role I held for nearly ten years. That experience gave me a deeper understanding of airport operations, compliance, and stakeholder coordination.

Can you share how mentorship has influenced your career?

Deborah Ann Brown: Early in my career, I did not have the benefit of a consistent mentor — particularly a female mentor. At that time, there were very few women in senior roles, and those who had advanced were navigating significant challenges of their own. The environment was competitive, and understandably so. Many were focused on maintaining their position and progressing forward in spaces where opportunities for women were limited.

While I did not experience intentional mentorship in the way we define it today, I learned a great deal by observing. I saw resilience, determination, and the reality of what it took to succeed. That observation shaped me. It strengthened my independence and sharpened my focus. At the same time, it clarified something deeply important to me: I never wanted advancement to come at the expense of lifting others. One of my core values is service. The absence of mentorship in my early years became one of the greatest drivers in my leadership philosophy. I strongly believe that women should not have to climb alone.

How has your company or institution adapted to the sustainability initiatives at our airports?

Deborah Ann Brown: I'm proud to be part of an agency that is committed to and has implemented many aspects of sustainability initiatives throughout the region, including the five airports. This agency has set a benchmark for sustainability, advancing the Port Authority's industry-leading commitments to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and to facilitate the same goal for its operational partners. Our agency highlights the historic transformation of JFK Airport into a 21st century, world-class aviation hub that is not limited solely to the passenger's experience, but to ensuring that JFK remains a vital link in the global supply chain for decades to come.

How are the insights of women in leadership roles important in fostering innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity?

Deborah Ann Brown: Women in leadership bring perspectives shaped by lived experience, collaboration, and resilience — and those insights are essential when we're navigating transformation like we are at JFK. Redevelopment, sustainability, and inclusivity all require thoughtful decision-making that balances operational demands with long-term community impact. Women leaders often approach these challenges with a focus on people, partnership, and future generations. That lens fosters innovation because it encourages diverse voices at the table, considers broader stakeholder impact, and prioritizes sustainable growth over short-term gain. When leadership reflects inclusivity, the outcomes are stronger, more creative, and ultimately more beneficial for everyone we serve. ■



Port Authority of NY & NJ
John F. Kennedy International Airport
14 S Service Road
Jamaica, NY 11430
www.panynj.gov



Gursonia Clair

Data Engineering Manager – Kubrick Group

Gursonia relocated to New York City from the UK in 2024. She holds a BSc in Biomedical Science and an MSc in Chemistry and Drug Discovery, bringing a scientific and analytical foundation to her work in data consulting. Since being placed with an aviation client through Kubrick Group over a year ago, Gursonia has become a subject matter expert in maintenance planning and ATA coding, delivering multiple data solutions that support operational efficiency and compliance across the maintenance planning space. She works at the intersection of data technology and aviation operations, helping clients modernize processes and improve decision-making through better use of their data. Gursonia is an active participant in the New York aviation community and is passionate about encouraging women and career changers to consider aviation as a destination for their skills.

How did you begin your career in aviation or at the airports?

Gursonia Clair: Aviation was never something I had planned – and honestly, that makes my journey into it all the more exciting. My career began in data consultancy with Kubrick Group, where I worked across different industries based on client need. My first major placement was in insurance, which gave me a deep understanding of how data can drive decision-making in complex, highly regulated environments.

When I was placed with an aviation client over a year ago, I came in as a data professional, not an aviation expert. But I threw myself into learning – the technical language, the regulatory frameworks, the operational nuances. I didn't expect to fall in love with the industry, but I did. Aviation has this interesting combination of precision, safety, and scale that makes the data work we do genuinely meaningful. What started out as a placement has become a passion.

Are there any airport redevelopment projects you're particularly excited to see completed?

Gursonia Clair: Having relocated to New York from the UK, I've arrived right in the middle of one of the most ambitious periods of airport infrastructure investment in the city's history. The transformation of LaGuardia has already been remarkable – it was famously criticized for years, and watching it become a modern, functional airport has been genuinely impressive. But the projects I'm most excited about are the continued redevelopment at JFK and the new Terminal A at Newark. JFK's transformation feels significant beyond just aesthetics – it's about repositioning New York as a world-class international gateway, and the scale of ambition behind it is striking.

As someone working in aviation data and operations, I'm also interested in what these new facilities mean from an efficiency and technology standpoint – modern terminals aren't just prettier, they generate better data, enable smarter operations, and create opportunities to improve the passenger experience in ways that older infrastructure simply can't support.

How are the insights of women in leadership roles important in fostering innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity?

Gursonia Clair: I think the most important thing women in leadership bring is the demonstration that there is no single model for success in aviation. My path – from data consultant to working within the insurance industry, relocating across the Atlantic, and becoming an aviation expert by doing – doesn't fit a conventional aviation career. And I think that matters. When people see someone who looks like them, or who came from an unexpected background, succeeding in a technical, traditionally male-dominated field, it changes what feels possible. Innovation thrives on having diverse perspectives and inclusive decision-making. And true inclusivity means building cultures where people from all backgrounds can contribute their best work.

Would you consider using a pilotless, autonomous eVTOL aircraft for short trips?

Gursonia Clair: Honestly, yes – and I think my answer might surprise people. Working in data and technology, I have a fairly deep appreciation for how rigorous the validation and testing processes are before any new aviation technology reaches passengers. The word "pilotless" triggers instinctive concern for most people, but autonomous systems in aviation are built on layers of redundancy and data that, in many cases, reduce the margin for human error rather than increase risk.

I think the honest answer is that trust will be the real barrier – not the technology itself. The industry will need to bring the public along on that journey carefully and transparently. As someone who works at the intersection of data and aviation operations, I find eVTOL genuinely exciting. I'd be first in line, I think! ■



Kubrick Group
156 West 56th Street, Suite 1104
New York NY, 10019
www.kubrickgroup.com



Donna Draghi-Lemay

IT Products and Systems Director – The New Terminal One at JFK

Donna Draghi-Lemay is a seasoned aviation and technology executive, currently serving as Director of IT Products and Systems for The New Terminal One at JFK, where she helps drive the technology vision for the next-generation international terminal opening in 2026. Previously, Donna held senior leadership roles in IT at JetBlue Airways for over fifteen years, overseeing airline IT operations and complex enterprise systems. A proven program management leader, she is known for aligning technology with business goals, steering large-scale portfolios, and delivering impactful projects. At the New Terminal One, Donna leads a team to deliver resilient, passenger-centric platforms that power everything from terminal operations to the guest digital journey, while fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

How did you begin your career in aviation or at the airports?

Donna Draghi-Lemay: I actually started my career in finance and banking, where I focused on customer service and supporting clients. Aviation wasn't something I had ever considered at that point, but everything changed during a training session when we watched a film highlighting companies known for exceptional customer service, and one of the examples was FedEx. The way they operated — the precision, the teamwork, the commitment to doing right by the customer — really resonated with me. It opened my eyes to aviation as an industry built on service, coordination, and purpose. A few months later, I took my first-ever flight on Piedmont Airlines. Flying wasn't something my family could afford when I was younger, so the experience was completely new to me. I remember sitting there thinking, "This is incredible — I want to be part of this world." That moment stayed with me and ultimately set me on the path that led to my career in aviation and airport operations.

Was aviation your first career choice?

Donna Draghi-Lemay: Not at all. In the beginning, I thought my career would stay in banking or another customer-facing environment. But that training film about FedEx planted a seed, and my first flight on Piedmont brought it to life. The experience opened my eyes to how powerful aviation is in connecting people and how much teamwork and coordination it takes to make every journey possible. Even though it wasn't my original plan, aviation quickly became the right path for me — and once I stepped into the industry, I knew I had found where I belonged.

Can you share how mentorship has influenced your career?

Donna Draghi-Lemay: I didn't have a formal mentor early in my career. What I did have was the opportunity to work with a wide range of people — some truly great, and some who taught me what not to do. I learned a tremendous amount simply by observing. I've always believed that character is who you are when no one is looking, so I paid close attention to how people behaved in

the everyday moments — how they treated others, how they handled pressure, and how they showed up when things were hard. Much later in my career, I did have a formal mentor for a period of time, and that experience reinforced the value of having someone who can offer perspective, encouragement, and honest feedback.

It helped me refine my leadership style and reminded me how important it is to invest in others. Because of all of that, I've always tried to give freely of my time — to mentor, coach, answer questions, share stories, and simply connect with people. If something I've learned along the way can help someone else, I'm always happy to pass it on.

What distinguishes the New York metropolitan area from other markets?

Donna Draghi-Lemay: I've spent more than 30 years in this industry, all of it in the New York metropolitan area, and I can say with confidence that this market is unlike any other. We operate in one of the most complex aviation environments in the world — from the density of our airspace to the age and scale of our infrastructure, to the sheer volume and diversity of the passengers we serve every single day. New York's airports sit at the intersection of global business, tourism, culture, and community. We're not just moving people from point A to point B — we're connecting and welcoming millions of travelers, and supporting a region that never slows down. That creates a level of operational intensity that you don't see in many other places.

What also sets New York apart is the constant balancing act between modernization and legacy. We're rebuilding terminals while still operating them, upgrading systems while keeping the operation running, and coordinating with an incredible number of stakeholders — airlines, agencies, partners, and communities — all with different needs and priorities. ■

**THE NEW
TERMINAL
ONE | JFK**

The New Terminal One at JFK
154-20-154-42 134th Street
Jamaica, NY 11430
www.anewjfk.com



FOD PROGRAM & STREET CLEANING



BUILDING FACADE & GLASS CLEANING



SPILL KITS



PRESSURE WASHING & RECLAMATION



EMERGENCY SPILL RESPONSE

Airport & Aviation Environmental Services

Aqueous Solutions serves as a critical environmental contractor at John F. Kennedy International Airport and LaGuardia Airport, providing around-the-clock specialized cleaning and emergency response services. Headquartered onsite at JFK Airport, with airside access, Aqueous Solutions is uniquely positioned for immediate deployment to address **biohazards, chemical spills, and general environmental remediation and reclamation.**

Our team members are SIDA-badged with U.S. Customs Seals and maintain PONYA-plated vehicles, allowing them to access the entire airport footprint, including the Air Operations Area (AOA) and aircraft, without requiring an escort. This high level of clearance ensures that environmental mitigation can begin instantly, **minimizing operational downtime** and ensuring compliance with DEC and EPA regulations.

A key component of our environmental services is the deployment and management of specialized **spill kits tailored for the airport environment.** These kits are designed to manage various hazardous materials, including aircraft fuel, oils, and de-icing fluids, preventing them from entering the airport's catch basins or local waterways.

In addition to **emergencyspill response,** Aqueous Solutions utilizes advanced technologies, such as electrostatic fogging and closed-loop reclamation pressure washing, to sanitize high-traffic areas, including terminals, ULDs (Unit Load Devices), and entire aircraft if needed. We adhere to Best Management Practices Plan (BMPP) implementation and management as required by the PANYNJ.

Aqueous Solutions' long-standing airport presence—including over a decade of biosafety work under USDA supervision at JFK—positions Aqueous Solutions as a primary partner for maintaining the complex environmental standards required at the nation's busiest airports.

- PANYNJ Janitorial Maintenance
Small Business Enterprise Certified (JMSBE)
- Interior and exterior window cleaning
- Building facade cleaning
- Steam cleaning for all surfaces
- Carpet cleaning & restoration
- Pressure and power washing
- Fire, flood clean-up, and restoration
- Ramp, roadway, & warehouse mechanical sweeping
- Foreign Object Debris (FOD) Programs
- Bio Hazard Remediation
- Emergency Spill response
- Bird-dropping cleaning
- Bird control, including netting and spikes
- Bird strike clean-up
- Catch basin cleaning
- Emergency aircraft cleaning & decontamination
- Heavy-duty equipment & Fleet washing
- PANYNJ airport escort services
- OSHA Certified and Aerial Lift Trained

Clean. Safe. Compliant.



John F. Kennedy International Airport
78a N Boundary Road., Suite 204, Jamaica, NY 11430
Tel: (718) 355-9080 • Hotline: 1-800-294-4950
info@aqsolution.com • www.aqsolution.com

Full-Service Cleaning and Maintenance Programs for Airport & Aviation Facilities



Aqueous Solutions is a Certified MWBE Woman-Owned Business Enterprise with the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, State of New York, and New York City



Catherine Gonzalez

Deputy Director – Cradle of Aviation Museum

Catherine joined the Cradle of Aviation Museum in 2012 after completing college. For many years, she worked in the Education Department charged with supporting the education mission of the museum through activities and curriculum for school-aged children in aviation and STEM. Catherine transitioned to Deputy Director of the Museum two years ago. Today, she works toward strategic fundraising efforts, assisting with the day-to-day operations, and cultivating community partnerships in an effort to help expand the Museum's reach.



How did you begin your career in aviation or at the airports?

Catherine Gonzalez: I wrote a letter, if you can believe it. I reached out sharing how passionate I was about working in a museum. Shortly after, I was lucky enough to interview for part-time work at the Cradle of Aviation Museum and I've had the honor of being a part of the Cradle ever since.

Was aviation your first career choice?

Catherine Gonzalez: Honestly, not entirely. I always knew I wanted to work in a museum that prioritized interaction and not just storytelling by observation. Aviation turned out to be the perfect fit. Airplanes are a great combination. There are so many deeply connected stories about individuals, history, exploration, but there's so much engineering and technology too.

How has networking and involvement in the airport community benefited your career?

Catherine Gonzalez: The airport community is incredibly vibrant! Working at the museum, I've had the privilege of connecting with inspiring leaders from across the industry. It has been invaluable to listen to their visions for modernizing the travel experience - from arrival to the runway. These insights help me build a deeper understanding of the regional goals ahead which can then weave directly into our future program offerings at the museum.

What is the most memorable moment in your aviation career or at the airports?

Catherine Gonzalez: I think aviation naturally draws people, there's an infectious excitement to travel. One of my most memorable experiences was touring the airport with a group of aspiring pilots. In this particular group, it was asked, 'How many of you have been on a plane?'; and I would say more than half of them had not. Yet, without hesitation or fear – only a dream to explore and push boundaries, they were ready to fly – it was inspiring.

Does your company offer internships or other programs to attract young employees?

Catherine Gonzalez: Yes! The Cradle of Aviation Museum really strives to build interest in the aviation field and the best way we are able to do that is through programming initiatives. We host a variety of camps and for the past two years, we've introduced workforce training courses. These initiatives, and our work with industry partners, encourages youth to explore the variety of career opportunities in aviation and aerospace.

How are the insights of women in leadership roles important in fostering innovation and the commitment to sustainability and inclusivity?

Catherine Gonzalez: I feel women in leadership bring unique collaborative perspectives to the table. I think there's a natural sense of community among women leaders encouraging each other to succeed. When we host girls in aviation programs, the girls tend to be quieter on the side, but once they know their voices are heard, everything changes.

When there is confidence, a genuine connection and a commitment to solving problems, I think it translates from the classroom to their (and our) professional lives. No matter our age or experience, feeling valued lends itself to innovation. ■



Cradle of Aviation Museum
1 Davis Avenue,
Garden City NY 11530
www.cradleofaviation.org

ROYAL

Waste Services, Inc.

SMARTER SOLUTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW

ZERO TO LANDFILL. ZERO CARBON FOOTPRINT.
THAT'S OUR GOAL — FOR OUR CLIENTS AND FOR OUR PLANET.



SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT • ORGANIC RECYCLING • CERTIFIED LEED REPORTING
SINGLE-STREAM RECYCLING • CONTAINER SERVICES • DOCUMENT SHREDDING



718-526-2623 • royalwaste.com



BIC #1240



Dawn Kelly

Founder & CEO – The Nourish Spot Inc.

Dawn Kelly is the award-winning Founder & CEO of The Nourish Spot Inc., a family-owned, certified MWBE and ACDBE fresh juice and wellness bar she launched in Jamaica, Queens in 2016 with her two children, Owen and Jade Duncan. What began as a reinvention, following her departure from a successful 30+ year career in public relations and marketing, has grown into a trusted community hub for health, healing, and economic opportunity.

During National Small Business Week in 2019, The Nourish Spot was named Microbusiness of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration (NY District). Dawn has been honored as a Distinguished Woman of the Year by NYS Senator Leroy Comrie (2020) and selected as one of six Entrepreneurs of the Year by NYS Empire State Development and the Queens Economic Development Corporation. In recent years, Kelly has secured partnerships with the New York Liberty, Citi Field, and the USTA US Open. Now, as an ACDBE and JV partner with AVOLTA, she is expanding The Nourish Spot to JFK Terminals 5, 6, 7, and 8, joining four other airport deals in her growing portfolio.

What are the essential skills that a new airport worker should possess to succeed?

Dawn Kelly: Airports move fast—there's no room for guesswork. You need adaptability, accountability, and strong communication. It's a highly regulated environment where every role is public-facing. I've gone from corporate public relations and marketing to entrepreneurship and now operate as an airport concessions operator and joint venture (JV) partner, and what I've learned is simple: show up on time, stay aware, and treat every interaction like it matters—because it does.

In New York, especially, airport workers are representing the city before travelers even leave the terminal.

How has networking and involvement in the airport community benefited your career?

Dawn Kelly: In aviation, relationships are currency. That was true when I was a corporate executive, and it's even more true now. Being present in the Southeast Queens airport ecosystem—listening, collaborating, building trust—allowed The Nourish Spot to grow from a single Queens storefront into an airport concessions operator and JV partner.

Airports are not siloed; success comes from knowing how the whole system moves and where you fit within it.

How are the insights of women in leadership roles important in fostering innovation and sustainability in aviation?

Dawn Kelly: Women bring a long-view perspective. Across my career—from corporate leadership to entrepreneurship to being an airport concessions operator and JV partner—I've seen how women naturally consider impact, access, and legacy. In aviation, that perspective matters. It leads to smarter innovation, stronger sustainability practices, and systems that work not just for today, but for the communities that depend on them long term.

Are you a member of any civic or business groups related to the local airport?

Dawn Kelly: Yes. I'm a member of the JFK Rotary, the Queens Chamber of Commerce, and the Airport Minority Advisory Council (AMAC), and I attend JFK Redevelopment Committee meetings. Being in these spaces ensures that local businesses and community-rooted operators are part of the conversation as airport redevelopment and modernization continue to reshape the region.

Are there any airport redevelopment projects you're particularly excited to see completed?

Dawn Kelly: I'm excited by all the new terminal projects that are not just modernizing infrastructure, but are also rethinking who gets to participate. Airports are the front door to a city. Growing up nearby JFK and with my background in brand strategy, I see redevelopment as an opportunity to tell a fuller New York story—one that includes local operators, reflects the community, and elevates the passenger experience without losing authenticity.

What distinguishes the New York metropolitan area from other markets?

Dawn Kelly: New York is its own category. The scale, the pace, the diversity—you can't replicate it. Operators here have to serve the world while staying grounded in local culture. From an operational and branding standpoint, that's a challenge—but it's also what makes this market super special. Just like Frank Sinatra crooned "If you can operate here, you can operate anywhere!" ■



The Nourish Spot, Inc.
10705 Guy R Brewer Blvd
Jamaica NY 11433
www.thenourishspot.com



OPENINGS AVAILABLE FOR

Duty Manager and Supervisor
Office Agents • Warehouse Agents • Tractor Trailer Drivers

REQUIREMENTS & QUALIFICATIONS

Must be at least 18 years old • Must be able to lift 70 lbs. on a regular basis (Warehouse)
Valid driver's license with excellent driving record

Must Pass 10 year background check • Must have authorization to work in the U.S.
Starting Salary \$19.00+ per hour for Warehouse and Office Agents

For immediate consideration, please stop by our JFK Facility
Delta Cargo Building 21A Room 202 between the hours of 10:00am & 1:00pm
Please bring your resume and ALL government I.D's.

Apply for Open Positions On Our Website

Alliance Ground International provides airline cargo handling services to 55 airlines at thirteen airports: Atlanta, Chicago, Fort Lauderdale, Kansas City, LaGuardia, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New York JFK, Orlando, Salt Lake City and San Francisco. Warehouse and ramp operations schedules are constantly adjusted to flight operations. With partners such as Cargo Force and The Cargo Security Company; Alliance Ground International can be your "one-stop-source" for all of your cargo handling needs. The culmination of years of experience with its industry partners, Alliance Ground International offers a vast range of services: Cargo Handling, Ground Handling, Mail Handling, Passenger, and Security.

WWW.AGI.AERO



LGA Airport Recruitment Event

Passionate About Food and Thrive In Fast-Paced Settings?

Join CAO's Food Service Recruitment Event at LGA Airport and discover rewarding career opportunities in airport hospitality!

March 31, 2026 • 10:00am-1:00pm

LGA Airport, Terminal B, Ground Floor, Near Dunkin', Queens, NY 11371

Looking to Fill Numerous Positions!



Council for Airport Opportunity (CAO)

Tel: (718) 523-7100

www.caonynj.com

All Applicants Must Present:

- Social Security Card (Unlaminated)
- State Driver License, Learner's Permit, or Non-Driver ID
- Working Documents Required
- Will Be Drug Tested (Cannabis Included)





Denecia Marshall

Academic Internship Manager/Industry Employment Specialist – York College/CUNY

Denecia Marshall, M.A., Ed.M. has prepared students for successful careers in the aviation industry since 2023. She serves as an Academic Internship Manager/Industry Organization Specialist at CUNY York College where she specializes in career launch readiness, leadership development, and professional identity for aviation students. Her work emphasizes bridging the gap between academic preparation and industry expectations through experiential learning, career coaching, industry exposure, and leadership skill-building. A certified coach and educator, Denecia leverages 18 years in finance and 14 years in psychology and higher education to prepare students for the aviation industry. She combines industry rigor with career strategy and student-centered coaching to develop the aviation workforce. Her work includes coordinating internships, facilitating career and leadership workshops, organizing airport site visits, hosting professionals and aviation industry events to connect students' jobs and networking opportunities. Through these efforts, Denecia helps students translate academic learning into real-world aviation career pathways.

How did you begin your career in aviation or at the airports?

Denecia Marshall: My career originally began as a banker in real estate doing middle-market lending. I reentered college after 18 years and majored in psychology with the intention of becoming a counseling psychologist. At the same time, I got a certification in executive coaching and did some coaching assignments. When I got my internship at a hospital, I excelled at psychoeducation groups and career seminars. At the same time, I also did career seminars for students as well as career seminars for the alumni association at Adelphi University and Nassau County Libraries. My association with Adelphi University led me to teach Industrial Organization Psychology in the master's program at Adelphi University. At the same time, I also taught financial literacy at the State University of New York/City University of New York.

My experience at Adelphi University with career services also provided me with an offer to work in Career Services at the CUNY/SUNY Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center. My passion is people development, which includes students. My involvement with teaching students led me to Career Services. I love developing students and assisting them in launching their careers.

How has networking and involvement in the airport community benefited your career?

Denecia Marshall: Networking and involvement in the airport community is the backbone of my career, as it has propelled me to assist the students in the Aviation Management program at CUNY York College. Networking helps me launch aviation careers for students and graduates in a variety of roles such as Interns, as well as jobs as Remote Pilot Operators, Operation Supervisors, IOC Coordinators, Airline Customer Service Professionals, Airport Auditors, Ramp Agents, Turnaround Coordinators and more.

Networking and involvement enabled me to attend a variety of events where I both learned diverse aspects of aviation from financing, leasing, fixed based operations, commercial aviation,

environmental aviation as well as diverse types of aircraft and their impact on the communities that they serve. Due to consistent changes in technology and its impact on air travel, there is always more to learn in aviation. Having students attend these events enables them to open their minds to endless career possibilities in aviation.

What is the most memorable moment in your career?

Denecia Marshall: The most memorable moment was establishing a partnership with LaGuardia Terminal B, as one of our Aviation Management alumni played a key role in forming this alliance with LaGuardia Terminal B and the Aviation Management program at CUNY York College. This partnership has resulted in students interning in the field of airport operations, as well as in obtaining jobs. My relationship with an alumnus who was a graduate of the Aviation Management program at CUNY York College created a bridge to foster careers of the students in aviation management and those who came after him. Relationships such as this, as well as others, are key to students entering careers in aviation.

What are the essential skills that a new airport worker should possess to succeed?

Denecia Marshall: In order to succeed in a career in aviation, you need to have a passion for aviation. A new airport worker needs to be customer focused, able to coordinate with diverse teams at the same time, able to solve problems, and have a foundation in safety and security. Adaptability is also important as new rules and regulations may require changes in the way airports and terminals are managed. ■



York College / CUNY
94 - 20 Guy R. Brewer Blvd.
Jamaica, NY 11451
www.york.cuny.edu



Sonjay Murray

Customer Service Agent – Delta Air Lines

Sonjay Murray brings a strong background in community engagement, public service, and customer advocacy to her role at Delta Air Lines. She earned both her Bachelor of Arts in sociology and her Master of Social Work from Syracuse University, academic experiences that shaped her people-centered approach to service. Sonjay began her career with Girl Scouts of the USA as a Membership and Community Development Liaison for the Northeast region, working with diverse communities to expand access and engagement.

She later joined the U.S. Department of Justice, contributing to mission-driven work at the federal level. After taking time to focus on starting and raising her family, Sonjay reentered the workforce with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, where she served on the community affairs team, supporting outreach efforts and strengthening relationships between the District Attorney's office and local communities.

How did you begin your career in aviation or at the airports?

Sonjay Murray: My career in aviation began long before I ever worked at an airport – it started in 1970 on my very first flight with Delta Air Lines. I was amazed by the genuine hospitality and courtesy shown by the Delta staff, and in that moment, I promised myself that one day I would become a “Delta person” too. That dream stayed with me for decades. In 2021, I took my first step toward that goal when I interviewed with Delta, and today I am proud to be working at JFK Airport for Delta Air Lines. I feel a deep sense of pride and accomplishment to be part of a company known for its excellence, consistently recognized across the industry for its operational performance, customer experience, and people first culture.

What is the most memorable moment in your aviation career or at the airports?

Sonjay Murray: One of the most memorable moments in my aviation career has been mastering My Delta Experience – the training program that shapes how we deliver the Delta Experience to every customer. Completing my training and celebrating that achievement with classmates and coworkers from many different cultures and parts of the world was especially meaningful, because it reflected the teamwork and shared pride we all bring to our work. Being part of a company that celebrates excellence every day and feeling that sense of accomplishment with others who have the same passion made it a truly unforgettable moment.

What distinguishes the New York metropolitan area from other markets?

Sonjay Murray: The New York metropolitan aviation market is truly unique for several reasons. First, it is served by three major commercial airports – John F. Kennedy International Airport, LaGuardia Airport, and Newark Liberty International Airport – which together form one of the largest and most complex airport systems in the United States and a major global gateway for domestic and

international travelers. Because of its size and strategic importance, the New York area operates in some of the busiest and most challenging airspace in the world, requiring advanced coordination and making the market highly competitive among airlines.

Culturally and commercially, New York itself is a diverse global hub -with world class attractions, a rich mix of people and backgrounds, and a constant flow of business and tourism which drives huge passenger demand and connects the region with cities everywhere. That combination of high traffic volumes, major international connections, and a vibrant metropolitan environment makes the New York aviation market stand out from other regions.

What are the essential skills that a new airport worker should possess to succeed?

Sonjay Murray: First, excellent communication is key — you need to clearly and respectfully communicate with passengers and team members, often from many different cultures and backgrounds, and sometimes in stressful situations. Strong customer service and courtesy help create a positive experience for travelers, whether greeting them, answering questions, or assisting with issues that arise. Professional appearance and pride in wearing the Delta uniform reflect the brand's commitment to excellence and help set the right tone for every interaction.

Being attentive to all situations, adaptable to change, and confident in handling unexpected challenges also ensures that service remains smooth and consistent, representative of Delta's high standards. These skills – **communication, cultural awareness, professionalism, and attentiveness** – are widely recognized as essential for airport staff to perform effectively and contribute to a world class travel experience. ■



Delta Air Lines
1030 Delta Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30354
www.delta.com

THE SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME EDUCATIONAL CENTER PRESENTS

SHUFFLE INTO SPRING

CELEBRATING:

Katherine Mooney
Development Manager
UA3



Raymond Ringston
President
ACF



The Semantics
Community Partner Award

TUESDAY

APRIL

21

2026

6 - 10 PM

Russo's on the Bay, Howard Beach
sonia.saleh@ssndecwomens.org | 718-738-0588



Lucia Oswald

Vice President, Business Development – Global Elite Group

Lucia Oswald is the Vice President of Business Development at Global Elite Group, Inc., an aviation security company located in Garden City, NY.

Lucia joined Global Elite in 2008 and has held various positions within the company, including Director of Operations and Vice President of Operations, before taking on her current role. With over 45 years of experience in the aviation industry, Lucia has also worked for TWA in both the U.S. and Europe, as well as for Spirit Airlines, Jet Airways of India, and Maxjet.

How did you begin your career in aviation or at the airports?

Lucia Oswald: I started out working in aviation for TWA in 1968 until the American Airlines acquisition of TWA in 2001. During these years, my TWA airline career included multiple positions and locations both in the U.S. and Europe. In 2001 after American Airlines closed down JFK, I continued in aviation working for Jet Airways of India, Spirit Airlines and Maxjet. Ultimately I came on to Global Elite Group in 2008, certainly on the “other side” of aviation as an aviation security service provider instead of airline direct. My work with Global Elite has also provided a broader view of the aviation industry from the service provider side.

Was aviation your first career choice?

Lucia Oswald: Aviation was not my first choice, but I took a position with TWA so that I could travel for a couple of years. That was my initial intention – I thought I would stay for two years while going to school and to get some travel in. In those early years working for an airline was a big plus with great benefits for travel. As it turned out, working for TWA, at the time a premier airline, was an incredible experience. The people I worked with and the whole aviation network was energizing and so dynamic. I also kept getting promoted. So as time went on, I ended up staying and fell right into it with no regrets.

What are the essential skills that a new airport worker should possess to succeed?

Lucia Oswald: Team work, customer service, communication skills, adaptability to changing and challenging situations, and product knowledge. Remember, you are the public face of the company that you work for.

How has networking and involvement in the airport community benefited your career?

Lucia Oswald: One of the benefits of my airline career when I started with Global Elite in 2008 (the other side of aviation) was the knowledge of airport operations, airline operations, and overall knowledge of the industry. I found that having worked in airports, and through the network of people I experienced over the years, has provided a great benefit in my positions with Global Elite.



Global Elite Group recently celebrated Lucia Oswald's '16 years of Excellence' with the company.

Are there any airport redevelopment projects you're particularly excited to see completed?

Lucia Oswald: The ongoing JFK redevelopment plan is exciting and great. Having worked at JFK for many years as I have, I believe the current construction is well worth it to elevate the airport to world-class standards, especially as a major gateway to the United States. Aside from JFK, I know there are numerous other airport re-development programs going on around the country and it is exciting to see that the U.S. is upgrading their airports for better efficiency and customer/passenger access and ease.

What distinguishes the New York metropolitan area from other aviation and airport markets?

Lucia Oswald: For aviation markets, the New York metropolitan area stands out with having three major airports, both for connections and, of course, access to Manhattan, a major business and leisure destination. New York City is a major hub for airlines with a multitude of connection capabilities to international destinations, as well as domestic destinations. As congested as its airspace might be, it is still the preferred gateway and connection point in the United States. ■



Global Elite Group
825 East Gate Blvd, Suite 301
Garden City, NY 11530
www.globaleliteinc.com



Kathleen Pettit

Corporate Director of New Business Development – HHM Hotels

Kathleen Pettit is a distinguished leader in the New York hospitality sector, currently serving as the Corporate Director of New Business Development for HHM Hotels. With a career spanning over three decades, Kathleen has become a cornerstone of the NYC hotel industry, recognized for her ability to merge high-level sales strategy with a deep-rooted commitment to community and crisis response. Based in the New York City area, Kathleen oversees business development for a diverse portfolio of over 230 hotels. Her trajectory at HHM Hotels is marked by a series of high-impact leadership roles, including Regional Director, Task Force Leader, and Area Director of Sales. Her expertise is uniquely specialized in the aviation and emergency management sectors. Since her first role at LaGuardia (LGA), she has built an unparalleled network of partnerships spanning major airlines, airport vendors, government agencies, and military groups.

Was hospitality your first career choice?

Kathleen Pettit: “Not initially. I began my professional journey in the banking industry during my college years, which provided me with a vital analytical foundation. However, I soon realized that my true calling was in dynamic, people-driven environments. This led to a pivotal crossroads early in my career when I was recruited simultaneously by Delta Air Lines and a major hotel brand.

I ultimately chose the hospitality route, drawn by the sophisticated guest experience, the ‘family’ culture of the team, and the complexity of high-level operations. That decision launched a career dedicated to the unique energy of the New York aviation community. My true passion lies in Sales and New Business Development—specifically within the NY, JFK, and LGA markets—where I’ve been able to transform daily interactions into long-term strategic partnerships and lifelong professional friendships.

How has networking and involvement in the airport community benefited your career?

Kathleen Pettit: Beyond helping me achieve critical revenue goals for our properties, networking has been the cornerstone of my professional fulfillment. It has allowed me to develop deep-rooted friendships and partnerships within the airport ecosystem that remain as strong today as they were when they began.

What is the most memorable moment in your aviation career or at the airports?

Kathleen Pettit: My most memorable moments fall into two categories: operational resilience and professional milestones. I have witnessed the incredible ‘heart’ of the JFK and LGA communities during some of our most challenging times—from the recovery efforts of the two US Airways flights, Sully in the Hudson and major hurricanes like Irene and Sandy, to the unprecedented hurdles of the COVID-19 pandemic and our annual winter weather events. Seeing airline staff, hotel teams, and local agencies pull together seamlessly to care for thousands of displaced travelers is a constant reminder of why I love this industry.

On a personal level, I am incredibly proud to have been recognized by my peers and the airport communities for my contributions over the years. Receiving honors such as Women of the Year, the Bishop Wright Award, Star Leader, and most recently, the Star Women in Leadership award, are pivotal moments for me. They represent not just my own hard work, but the strength of the partnerships I’ve built within New York and the aviation market.

Can you share how mentorship has influenced your career?

Kathleen Pettit: I was fortunate to be mentored by Gary Isenberg, who served as the Vice President of Operations.

Gary was instrumental in my development; he invested significant time in teaching me the intricacies of financials while constantly challenging me with high-stakes projects, including restaurant openings and complex hotel operations. His guidance shaped my holistic understanding of the business outside of the sales operation.

What distinguishes the New York metropolitan area from other markets?

Kathleen Pettit: I travel monthly to create partnerships for my hotels at many different airports, and the community at JFK Airport is truly unique. It is a highly involved network that continuously provides for those in need and stays deeply invested in the surrounding airport communities.

In addition, the annual events, trips, dinner dances, and fundraisers keep us together throughout the year. The bonds and partnerships built here over the years are unlike any other airport community in the U.S. ■



HHM Hotels
463 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10018
www.hhmhotels.com



Jaclyn Randazzo

Controller – The ARK Import Export Center

Jaclyn Randazzo is the Controller for JFK International Airport's animal health, reception, and quarantine center at The ARK at JFK. She oversees all accounting functions, including bookkeeping, financial reporting, budgeting, and risk management/assessment alongside management. Jaclyn partakes in operational work with all departments, having specific oversight of the Equine Import/Export Operations.

From Long Island, NY, Jaclyn graduated from Molloy College with a bachelor's degree in accounting and a minor in finance, where she was also part of the softball and equestrian teams. With a family background in JFK aviation and a lifelong love for animals, Jaclyn combined her passions at The ARK. While earning her degree, she balanced roles in accounting, audit, and tax with hands-on experience at a dog boarding and grooming facility.

How did you begin your career at the airport?

Jaclyn Randazzo: Aviation has always been a part of my family's story. My grandfather, John Morganti, served in the Air Force before working for Pan American and ultimately completing his career with the FAA, where my grandmother, Ginger Morganti, also worked until her retirement. My mother began her own career with the FAA as well. Because of this, I was always aware of the many career paths within the aviation industry.

It was not until my grandfather mentioned the development of a state-of-the-art animal reception center that my interest was truly sparked. I was still in high school at the time, but after graduating college, I revisited the idea of working at JFK and knew I wanted to be part of The ARK at JFK. Although there were no open positions posted, I took the initiative to submit my resume and cover letter, highlighting not only my financial background but also my lifelong love for animals and my desire to integrate that passion into my career.

I am grateful that our President & CEO, **Elizabeth Schuette**, took a chance on a young, newly graduated accountant/animal enthusiast. Since then, I have been fortunate to grow, learn, and build my career alongside this incredible organization.

Are you a member of any civic or business groups related to the local airport?

Jaclyn Randazzo: The ARK at JFK is an active member of KAAMCO, the Queens Chamber of Commerce, the Airport Community Foundation (ACF), and the JFK Rotary. The events and meetings hosted by these organizations help keep the JFK community informed while creating collaboration and a strong sense of connection across the airport network.

More recently, a group of accomplished women leaders within the JFK Airport community, led by our President & CEO, Elizabeth Schuette, founded **Women Inspiring Nex-Gen Stars (WINGS)** at JFK, an organization dedicated to mentorship, education, networking, and leadership. I have been fortunate to serve as an Administrative Officer during the early stages of forming this nonprofit, learning from and collaborating with outstanding

women—many of whom have been featured in this publication in past years. I am excited to see the positive impact WINGS will have on women throughout the JFK community.

What are the essential skills that a new airport worker should possess to succeed?

Jaclyn Randazzo: Adaptability and a strong desire to learn are essential skills for any new airport employee. Regardless of job title or position description, working at an airport like JFK will present a wide range of experiences and challenges.

Each day brings new situations to navigate. Learning how to respond effectively to these challenges allows you to continuously build your knowledge and strengthen your skills, preparing you to handle whatever comes next with confidence.

How are the insights of women in leadership roles important in fostering innovation and the commitment to sustainability and inclusivity?

Jaclyn Randazzo: Women leaders often bring diverse perspectives shaped by varied experiences, which encourages thoughtful problem-solving and more creative approaches to complex challenges. This diversity of thought leads to more innovative solutions and more inclusive decision-making.

In addition, women in leadership frequently emphasize collaboration, mentorship, and community impact, all of which are critical to building sustainable organizations. By championing inclusive practices and supporting the development of future leaders, they help create environments where people feel valued, empowered, and motivated to contribute their best work. This, in turn, drives meaningful progress for both the organization and the broader airport community. ■



The ARK at JFK
Cargo Building 78A
78A N. Boundary Road
Jamaica, New York 11430
www.arkjfk.com



Catherine Romano

Director of PAX Services – ASAK Solutions

Cathy Romano is a seasoned Executive Manager with over 30 years of experience in the aviation and ground handling industry, specializing in delivering exceptional customer service and operational excellence. Renowned for fostering strong client relationships, Cathy has a proven ability to lead high-performing teams, resolve complex challenges, and ensure customer satisfaction at every touchpoint. With a customer-first mindset and expertise in service delivery, Cathy is dedicated to creating seamless, world-class experiences for clients and stakeholders alike.

Was aviation your first career choice?

Catherine Romano: Aviation was not my first choice as a career. I have a B.S. degree from St. John's University in paralegal studies. My airport career began in 1989, when I started working for British Airways as a part-time customer service agent.

Can you share how mentorship has influenced your career?

Catherine Romano: I did not have a mentor, but I did have a manager who was amazing, strong, fair, and respected, one that I emulated and strive to be like one day.

Are there any airport redevelopment projects you're particularly excited to see completed?

Catherine Romano: I am very excited and anxiously awaiting the opening of Terminal 6 at JFK Airport. This new terminal will be the first in North America to operate pooled electric ground support fleets. The transition to electric ground support equipment is part of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's (PANYNJ) roadmap to achieving net-zero emissions. ASAK is extremely proud to be a part of this initiative, and help to lead the way.

How has your company adapted to the sustainability initiatives at our airports?

Catherine Romano: We have brought our electric tug conversions in-house, which allows us to maintain full control over the entire process, from start to finish. By converting these vehicles to electric power, we can significantly reduce both emissions and noise pollution. Our in-house capabilities streamline the conversion timeline and ensure that each vehicle meets our performance and safety standards.

Additionally, by integrating telematics into our converted electric tugs, we are making strides not only in sustainability but also in operational intelligence. Telematics allows us to monitor vehicle usage, battery health, and maintenance needs in real-time, ensuring maximum uptime and efficiency. This data-driven approach helps us optimize fleet performance and supports our broader commitment to clean, sustainable technologies.

This effort benefits both the environment and our financial performance, and we are proud to lead the way in creating a cleaner airport ecosystem.

Does your company offer internships or other programs to attract young employees?

Catherine Romano: Since our company opened, we have been committed to providing training and employment opportunities for young people in the New York area.

Our CEO, **Arnold Sue**, is an alumnus of Aviation High School in Long Island City, and we have partnered with the school to create an internship program for students interested in pursuing careers in this industry and at JFK Airport. I believe the way we treat our staff speaks volumes and attracts new workers and provides a wonderful introduction to the airport and the aviation industries.

Are you a member of any civic or business groups related to the local airport?

Catherine Romano: I participate in the JFK Rotary Club and the JFK Airport Chamber of Commerce. ASAK Solutions is an active member in the Airport Community Foundation (ACF), KAAMCO, and several other industry related associations.

What is the most memorable moment in your aviation career or at the airports?

Catherine Romano: I love what I do and take great joy in helping people. One of the most memorable moments I experienced was when I drove an unaccompanied French minor from the airport to Manhattan so he could reunite with his group, which had arrived on an earlier flight that he had missed.

It was his first time in NYC, and his face lit up every time he saw a tunnel, bridge, or skyscraper. This experience was truly rewarding and humbling for me. ■



ASAK Solutions
78A N Boundary Road,
Jamaica, NY 11430
www.asak.aero



Dianna Rose

Principal – Dianna Rose & Associates

As Founder and Principal of Dianna Rose & Associates, Dianna leads initiatives that bridge local businesses to institutional marketplaces, particularly within major transportation infrastructure projects. Her firm serves as program coordinator for the JFK Airport Institute of Concessions, a nationally recognized pipeline initiative designed to position minority-owned and local businesses for meaningful participation in airport redevelopment, procurement, and long-term supplier ecosystems.

She expanded MWBE access across aviation, retail, and local economies. Recognized for her work in sustainability and infrastructure inclusion, Dianna has earned multiple accolades, including honors for her role in the JFK Airport redevelopment. Driven by her Caribbean heritage and immigrant roots, Dianna Rose advances economic development through equity and community ownership. By bridging public infrastructure with sustainable enterprise, she transforms vision into measurable opportunity and generational wealth.

How did you begin your career at the airport?

Dianna Rose: I began my aviation career, first as a Customer Service Agent, then as an Operations Control Coordinator with JetBlue Airways, from 2005 to 2012. That role provided deep exposure to airline logistics, safety coordination, and real-time operational decision-making. It sparked my appreciation for how airports function as complex ecosystems. Today, I build on that operational foundation through economic development and large scale infrastructure work focused on connecting local businesses to airport opportunities and institutional marketplace.

How has networking and involvement in the airport community benefited your career?

Dianna Rose: Networking is paramount! Because your network equals your net worth. Networking has been instrumental. Although the aviation industry is vast, it's also very interconnected. Relationships across airlines, airport authorities, concession developers, and community stakeholders have allowed me to bridge operational knowledge with economic development opportunities.

Are you a member of any civic or business groups related to the local airport?

Dianna Rose: Yes. I previously served as a board member of Gateway JFK, an organization focused on strengthening connections between the airport, local businesses, and surrounding communities. That experience reinforced how critical collaboration is to equitable airport development.

Are there any airport redevelopment projects you're particularly excited to see completed?

Dianna Rose: Absolutely. Personally, as the Program Coordinator of the JFK Airport Institute of Concessions, that one stands out for me. It was designed to ensure local and diverse businesses can meaningfully participate in the historic \$20+ billion JFK Airport redevelopment through operational readiness, procurement

navigation, and long-term sustainability support. While it's been incredibly rewarding to see graduates already securing partnerships, contracts, and product placements, I'm especially excited to see the long-term KPIs emerge, things like sustained business growth, job creation, repeat contracting, and generational economic impact. That's where we truly measure whether infrastructure investment translates into lasting community wealth.

How has your company or institution adapted to the sustainability initiatives at our airports?

Dianna Rose: Sustainability is increasingly integrated into how businesses prepare for airport participation. Through my consulting work and community engagement, including environmental education initiatives, I emphasize responsible sourcing, operational efficiency, and environmentally conscious practices. Airports today must balance environmental stewardship with economic inclusion.

How are the insights of women in leadership roles important in fostering innovation and the commitment to sustainability and inclusivity?

Dianna Rose: When I began my aviation career, women were significantly underrepresented across many roles. Seeing the growth of women across aviation from ground operations to executive leadership has been incredibly inspiring.

Research increasingly shows that gender-diverse leadership teams often drive stronger innovation, greater attention to sustainability initiatives, and more inclusive decision-making. I've seen that firsthand in aviation, where diverse leadership perspectives help organizations think more holistically about operational resilience, environmental responsibility, and workforce inclusion. ■

**DIANNA ROSE
& ASSOCIATES**

Dianna Rose & Associates
149-18 Guy R Brewer
Jamaica, NY 11434
www.diannaroseassociates.com



Elisabeth Sailer

Chief Commercial Officer – LaGuardia Gateway Partners

Elisabeth Sailer serves as COO for LaGuardia Gateway Partners, the manager of LaGuardia Terminal B, where she leads the commercial strategy for Terminal B, working closely with commercial partners and overseeing revenue development, guest experience, and marketing. She brings more than 20 years of international experience in airport management, commercial revenue growth and business development, with a longstanding tenure at Munich Airport Group, including her most recent role as Chief Commercial Officer at Terminal A at Newark Liberty International Airport.

Elisabeth holds an MBA in General Management and is an International Airport Professional (IAP), accredited through the ACI-ICAO Airport Management Professional Accreditation Program. Known for her collaborative leadership style and focus on innovation, partnership, and excellence, Elisabeth is passionate about creating outstanding airport experiences.

How did you begin your career at the airport?

Elisabeth Sailer: I began my career in aviation as an intern at Munich Airport's corporate real estate department and worked my way up through commercial operations. I am very grateful for that path, because it allowed me to learn the business from the ground up. You quickly understand how operationally demanding airports are and how many moving parts must come together every single day.

From there, I moved into consulting and international business development working on airport projects across different markets. That global exposure broadened my perspective on partnerships, commercial strategy, and large-scale development. I later moved to the United States and took on a management role in the redevelopment of Newark Terminal A, bringing together operational experience and strategic development in a transformative airport project. Today, in my role with LaGuardia Gateway Partners, I continue to focus on evolving the exceptional commercial and guest experience in the New York airport environment.

How are the insights of women in leadership roles important in fostering innovation and the commitment to sustainability and inclusivity?

Elisabeth Sailer: Diverse leadership perspectives are essential to innovation, and that absolutely includes the insights of women in leadership roles. Airports are complex ecosystems serving highly diverse passenger groups. To design experiences, policies, and spaces that truly work for everyone, leadership teams must reflect a broad range of lived experiences and viewpoints.

A diverse group of leaders brings unique view points, different personalities, and varying backgrounds to the table. Driving sustainability and inclusivity requires cross-functional alignment, cultural change, and the ability to balance commercial performance with social responsibility. Innovation thrives where different perspectives are heard and valued. When leadership teams are diverse, discussions become richer, blind spots are reduced, and solutions become more resilient. In that sense, representation is not just about equity: it is a strategic advantage.

How has networking and involvement in the airport community benefited your career?

Elisabeth Sailer: Networking and active involvement in the airport community have been priceless during my career. Aviation is a relationship-driven industry, where collaboration and trust are essential to delivering complex projects and long-term success.

For me, networking has never been about collecting contacts. It's about staying curious, learning from different perspectives, and building meaningful relationships across airlines, operators, developers, and partners. Many of the most valuable insights and opportunities in my career have come from genuine conversations, often long before there was a specific objective attached.

But authenticity is key. If networking becomes transactional, it loses its value. Real impact happens when relationships are built on mutual respect, openness, and a willingness to contribute, not just to benefit. In such a connected industry, your network becomes your sounding board, your benchmark, and sometimes your strongest advocate. That has certainly been true in my journey.

Are there any airport redevelopment projects you're particularly excited to see completed?

Elisabeth Sailer: All of them. I have had the privilege of being involved in the redevelopment and operation of terminals across the New York/New Jersey region, each with its own scale and ambition. Seeing these projects come to life and watching passengers experience them for the first time never gets old. I am particularly excited about the opening of JFK Terminal 6, developed and operated by our partners at Vantage Group. It represents the next chapter in redefining the passenger experience in New York, and I look forward to seeing its impact on the region's aviation landscape. ■



LaGuardia Gateway Partners
LaGuardia Airport, Terminal B
East Elmhurst, NY 11371
www.laguardiab.com

ASAK

ONE OBJECTIVE. YOURS.



- GROUND HANDLING
- PASSENGER SERVICES
- GSE MAINTENANCE
- CARGO & MAIL HANDLING
- FUMIGATION SERVICES
- ANCILLARY SERVICES
- SNOW REMOVAL & DE-ICING



PROUD TO BE A PART OF

JFK | T6



**PORT AUTHORITY
NY NJ**
SERVICE-DISABLED
VETERAN-OWNED
BUSINESS
CERTIFIED

**PORT AUTHORITY
NY NJ**
SMALL BUSINESS
ENTERPRISE
CERTIFIED

**PORT AUTHORITY
NY NJ**
MINORITY-OWNED
BUSINESS
ENTERPRISE
CERTIFIED

USDA
Fumigation Facility
AUTHORIZED

NEW YORK
STATE OF
OPPORTUNITY
MBE CERTIFIED

FOR FURTHER INFO:
WWW.ASAK.AERO



Katarzyna "Kasia" Sek

Director, Operation Planning & Implementation, Vantage Group

As Director, Operations Planning and Implementation, Kasia is a key member of Vantage's Operational Readiness and Transition (ORAT) teams, currently supporting facility design and phasing activities at JFK Terminal 6. Kasia provides oversight for all JFK Terminal 6 ORAT planning and implementation initiatives, a role she also held at LaGuardia Gateway Partners during the transition to the award-winning Terminal B. Kasia's additional airport specializations include security, health and safety, and passenger services. Prior to joining Vantage Group, Kasia spent a decade with JFK IAT, where she held roles in both Operations and Safety. In the Operations Department, she served as a coordinator supporting terminal and airside operations, including capacity and gate planning. She later moved into the Safety Department, focusing on SMS, conducting incident and accident investigations, and supporting safety-related initiatives. Kasia began her career with Swissport, where she worked as a passenger service agent for multiple airline accounts, gaining hands-on experience in check-in, boarding, customer service, and day-of-travel operations in a fast-paced airport environment.



Rendering of Terminal 6 at JFK Airport

How did you begin your career in aviation or at the airports?

Kasia Sek: I began my journey in the industry by taking an entry-level role after spending a college summer working check-in at John F. Kennedy International Airport. That summer ultimately inspired me to shift my career path toward aviation.

Was aviation your first career choice?

Kasia Sek: No, however, my degrees in education and psychology have been an asset in aviation. It gave me an understanding of human behavior and communication, which is essential in managing passenger environments and driving operational excellence in a people-focused industry.

How has networking and involvement in the airport community benefited your career?

Kasia Sek: Aviation is a 'small' industry and built on strong relationships, collaboration and a shared commitment to improving the passenger experience. In a field built on partnerships, networking isn't an option, it's a core part of success.

What are the essential skills that a new airport worker should possess to succeed?

Kasia Sek: To succeed in the airport environment, strong communication skills, situational awareness, and problem-solving skills are key assets.

What is the most memorable moment in your aviation career or at the airports?

Kasia Sek: The most memorable moment of my aviation career was contributing to the first major terminal replacement across our three airports. Being part of the Terminal B redevelopment at LaGuardia, reshaping New York City's gateway and setting a new standard in passenger experience was both a privilege and incredibly rewarding for me. ■



Vantage Group
JFK Airport, Terminal 7
Jamaica, NY 11430
www.vantagegroup.com

Natasha Lelia Turner, ACE

Project Manager, JFK Redevelopment – Port Authority of NY & NJ



With a strong foundation in aviation education, operations, and community engagement, Natasha is committed to driving impactful outreach, education, and business inclusion initiatives within the aviation sector. Natasha earned a B.S. in Aviation Management & Pre-Law from CUNY York College and an M.S. in Aviation & Aerospace Technology from Purdue University Polytechnic Institute, where her research on NTSB-reported aircraft and helicopter incidents, aviation forecasts, and operational safety received academic recognition. As Project Manager for JFK International Airport's multi-billion-dollar redevelopment, Nat

tasha leads community engagement, educational pipelines, and local business partnerships for the Port Authority of NY & NJ. Natasha designs community engagement and educational pipelines, partnering with local businesses for redevelopment participation. She also builds innovative data-tracking systems and creates outreach programs to inspire future aviation professionals. She is ACE-certified (FAA-AAAE) with credentials in OSHA (10, 30, PPE, Confined Spaces), FEMA Emergency Management, and AOPA AirSafety.

How did you begin your career at the airport?

Natasha Lelia Turner: I began my aviation career with my first summer job at Duty Free Americas at JFK Airport. Beyond assisting travelers, I gained early exposure to the systems that keep airport retail running smoothly. I was very interested in how new inventory arrived, how it was processed, and the training we completed to follow required procedures. At that age, the moment that really sparked my curiosity was seeing how purchases were tagged and routed so they could be delivered seamlessly to passengers at boarding.

Was aviation your first career choice?

Natasha Lelia Turner: Yes, aviation was my first career choice, long before I had the words for it. My love for it started during visits to JFK with my aunt. There was a specific gas station near the airport she loved to stop at, and my twin sister Nicole and I would tag along. Back then, JFK was not easy to navigate, so I would 'help' by pretending to give my aunt directions. Really, I just wanted us to drive around the landside area. I was captivated by everything: planes taking off and landing, passengers arriving and departing, and the energy of the airport. Between those moments and traveling out of JFK with my family, I always knew that one day I wanted to work in an airport, for an airport authority.

What are the essential skills that a new airport worker should possess to succeed?

Natasha Lelia Turner: The sky is the limit for anyone entering airport work. The biggest key is being open to learning, always willing to grow, develop, and step into new opportunities. At the same time, communication and safety are everything. When you communicate clearly and keep safety at the center of what you do, you set yourself up to succeed and you support the entire operation.

To truly succeed, new airport workers should also bring adaptability in a fast-paced environment, situational awareness to stay alert to changing conditions, and attention to detail. Teamwork and

collaboration are critical since airport operations depend on multiple groups working in sync. Strong customer service matters too, because every interaction reflects the airport experience. And finally, professionalism and accountability, showing up prepared, following procedures, and taking ownership are what build trust and long-term growth in this industry.

What is the most memorable moment in your aviation career or at the airports?

Natasha Lelia Turner: I have made so many memories working with the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey on the JFK Redevelopment Program, but one moment that is especially near and dear to my heart is our JFK Redevelopment 'Girls in Aviation Day' event. We host it in collaboration with Women in Aviation International, the JFK Redevelopment terminal developers, Cradle of Aviation Museum, local high schools and colleges, and local businesses.

Over the past four years, we have welcomed over 300+ girls in grades 1–12 to JFK to meet and learn from professional women in aviation; pilots, mechanics, and leaders across the industry. Watching their faces light up during the airside experience – seeing aircraft take off and land, visiting our ARFF stations, and getting a behind-the-scenes view of the airport and aircraft... it is truly unforgettable.

What makes it even more meaningful is when those moments turn into real outcomes. I have had students return and tell me, "I want to go to August Martin High School", "I want to be a pilot", "I want to work for an airport agency", and "I got accepted to Aviation High School". It's incredibly rewarding and a powerful reminder of why I do the work I do. ■



Port Authority of NY & NJ
JFK Community Outreach Center
144-33 & 144-35 Jamaica Avenue
Queens, NY 11435
www.panynj.gov



Darci Williams

Senior Analyst, Ground Experience Product Development – JetBlue

Darci Williams helps shape how millions of customers experience the airline before they ever leave the ground. From the moment customers enter the airport to the time they step onboard, Darci builds the details that define JetBlue's signature experience, including her contributions to the redevelopment of the airline's flagship Terminal 5 at JFK Airport. Darci's journey began more than a decade ago in airport operations, where she gained firsthand insight into the complexity and the humanity of air travel.

Curious and driven, she moved across disciplines spanning operations, administration, commercial strategy, and people leadership, building a rare, 360-degree understanding of how airlines function from the inside out.

Each role deepened her belief that the airport experience is not just operational, but emotional – a space where thoughtful design, seamless execution, and human connection matter most. Today, Darci brings that perspective to product development, bridging strategy and real-world execution to create environments that feel intuitive, elevated, and distinctly JetBlue.

How did you begin your career at the airport?

Darci Williams: My career began 12 years ago with a part-time role as an airport operations crewmember, though my introduction to JetBlue was admittedly unconventional. As I knew aviation was a competitive field and I had no prior experience, I chose to just be my authentically silly self, submitting my application and a cover letter that opened with, "I want this job slightly less than I want to solve world hunger, and slightly more than I want to marry Matthew McConaughey".

The recruiting manager called me the very next day, amused. That moment signaled to me that JetBlue was a culture where authenticity was enjoyed and likely valued and I was excited to potentially become a part of it.

Was aviation your first career choice?

Darci Williams: It was not. I had worked in several fields prior. Aviation was just an interest. But what started simply as 'a job' quickly became something much more meaningful. JetBlue demonstrated a genuine commitment to its people, grounded in compassion, integrity and growth. I discovered an environment that encouraged curiosity and ingenuity, and fostered continuous development if that was your desire.

Aviation itself is dynamic and often unpredictable, and I found myself enjoying the complexities. I fell in love with the industry, and with JetBlue. My career evolved more by inspiration than by design and I was luckily able to integrate some of my previous skills in marketing and communications to build something special here.

What are the essential skills that a new airport worker should possess to succeed?

Darci Williams: Having started my career in airport operations and now working in product development, I've seen firsthand that the most essential skills across all areas of aviation are rooted in adaptability and mindset. Airports are fast-paced environments shaped by many uncontrollable variables, so the ability to remain

calm, focused, and solution-oriented under pressure is critical. Equally important is the ability to adapt quickly and problem solve in real time, as operational challenges require both resilience and sound judgment.

What ultimately elevates these skills is a genuine sense of care for your customers, your team, and the operation as a whole. That sense of ownership drives better decisions and stronger outcomes. While technical skills and systems knowledge can be taught, soft skills create lasting impact and open the door to long term growth and leadership opportunities.

Did you have a mentor at the start of your career? Can you share your experience with them and how they influenced your career?

Darci Williams: I have been fortunate to have several mentors at every stage of my career. I proudly work for the first major commercial airline in the United States to have a female CEO, **Joanna Geraghty**. Having had the opportunity to work with her across various initiatives, I've witnessed her resilience, authenticity, and unwavering commitment to JetBlue. She has not only made history in aviation but continues to foster an environment where individuals feel empowered and inspired to grow.

I'd also like to recognize my former Airport Operations Manager, **Marilyn Motisi**. She has since retired but she was a veteran of the industry who led with compassion and by example. Her genuine care for crewmembers and her dedication to mentoring others played a foundational role in my early development. She helped me see my potential and she gave me the confidence to pursue opportunities I may not have otherwise considered. ■



JetBlue Airways
2701 Queens Plaza North
Long Island City, NY 11101
www.jetblue.com

AIRPORT EMPLOYMENT

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

As an Assistant General Manager with Paradies Lagardère, you will help bring the Starbucks experience to life being part of the management team where you will partake in management of daily store operations, drive financial success, and build great teams.

Starbucks
Job No.: 000480
Food Service & Hospitality
Full-time
JFK Airport

BARISTA

The Barista is responsible for creating an amazing experience by interacting with guests and preparing and serving tea, coffee, and espresso drinks.

Paradies Lagardère
Job No.: 000482
Food Service & Hospitality
Full-time
JFK Airport

SOUS CHEF

Proficient in the following dimensions of restaurant functions: food planning and preparation, purchasing, sanitation, security, company policies and procedures, personnel management, record-keeping, and preparation of reports.

Paradies Lagardère
Job No.: 000481
Food Service & Hospitality
Full-time
JFK Airport

RETAIL MULTI-UNIT MANAGER

This role ensures all retail stores within the assigned terminal/concourse/zone maintain exceptional standards for cleanliness, staffing, operational readiness, and financial performance by holding management accountable for results.

Dufry by Avolta
Job No.: 000476
Sales, Retail, & Customer Support
Full-time
LaGuardia Airport, NY

SHIFT SUPERVISOR

We are looking for passionate individuals to fill our roles in a retail and dining environment that is diverse and inclusive.

Paradies Lagardère
Job No.: 000479
Food Service & Hospitality
Full-time
JFK Airport

OVERNIGHT STARBUCKS BARISTA

Hudson is North America's leading travel retailer. For over 30 years, Hudson has met the needs and wants of travelers in more than 1,000 duty-free, duty-paid, and food & beverage stores.

Starbucks
Job No.: 000477
Food Service & Hospitality
Full-time
LaGuardia Airport, NY

RETAIL MULTI-UNIT MANAGER

This role ensures all retail stores within the assigned terminal/concourse/zone maintain exceptional standards for cleanliness, staffing, operational readiness, and financial performance by holding management accountable for results.

Dufry by Avolta
Job No.: 000476
Sales, Retail, & Customer Support
Full-time
LaGuardia Airport, NY

MAC BEAUTY ADVISOR

Hudson is North America's leading travel retailer. For over 30 years, Hudson has met the needs and wants of travelers in more than 1,000 duty-free, duty-paid, and food & beverage stores.

Dufry by Avolta
Job No.: 000475
Sales, Retail, & Customer Support
Full-time
LaGuardia Airport, NY

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST

Hudson is North America's leading travel retailer. For over 30 years, Hudson has met the needs and wants of travelers in more than 1,000 duty-free, duty-paid, and food & beverage stores.

Dufry by Avolta
Job No.: 000474
Shipping & Freight
Full-time
Springfield Gardens, NY 11413

BEAUTY ADVISOR

We're looking for a knowledgeable and passionate Beauty Advisors for a growing list of prestigious brands such as Coty, Estee Lauder and Dolce & Gabbana at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK).

Dufry by Avolta
Job No.: 000473
Sales, Retail, & Customer Support
Full-time
JFK Airport

LUXURY BOUTIQUE BRAND AMBASSADOR

As a Brand Ambassador, you'll be at the heart of providing exceptional service to our customers at one of our luxury retail boutiques including Lacoste, Hugo Boss, Marc Jacobs & Longchamp at John F. Kennedy International Airport.

Dufry by Avolta
Job No.: 000472
Sales, Retail, & Customer Support
Full-time
JFK Airport

MARKETING MANAGER

As a Marketing Manager you are accountable for implementing the defined strategy and action plan set by the Director of Marketing.

Dufry by Avolta
Job No.: 000471
Office & Administrative Support
Full-time
JFK Airport

AIRPORT EMPLOYMENT

UTILITY

Ability to work various shifts in a 7/365 team-oriented environment including nights, weekends, and holidays.

Paradies Lagardère
Job No.: 000478
Food Service & Hospitality
Full-time
JFK Airport

CUSTODIAL SUPERVISOR

The Custodial Supervisor will inspect areas, equipment, and working conditions to ensure compliance with sanitation and OSHA regulations.

SBM Management Services
Job No.: 000470
Janitorial & Facility Services
Full-time
Queens, NY 11430

WAREHOUSE AGENT

The work of a Warehouse Agent includes the following: loading and unloading of cargo (mail, express, freight, and company material) on and off aircraft; the transporting of cargo between terminals and aircraft; the ramp transfers of cargo where required.

Worldwide Flight Services
Job No.: 000469
Warehouse
Full-time
JFK Airport

HR EMPLOYEE RELATIONS SPECIALIST (JFK)

The position of HR Generalist will work closely with senior HR management in supporting the HR function in the assigned geographic regions.

Worldwide Flight Services
Job No.: 000468
Office & Administrative Support
Full-time
JFK Airport

OFFICE SUPERVISOR

The work of Office Supervisor includes directing Leads and Agents within assigned functional area; overseeing and advising on staffing requirements; monitor/administer discipline/corrective action by or for subordinates; ensuring customer satisfaction by daily feedback.

Worldwide Flight Services
Job No.: 000467
Office & Administrative Support
Full-time
Jamaica, NY 11430

SPECIALIST-BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, AACU MARKETING

This job is within the American Airlines Credit Union (AACU). The role is responsible for creating AACU growth by driving awareness and promoting participation in Credit Union products and services among our key strategic partners, potential members and existing members.

American Airlines Credit Union
Job No.: 000462
Office & Administrative Support
Full-time
LaGuardia Airport, NY

IMPORT SPECIALIST

The role of the Import Specialist is to process and handle air and ocean import shipments for our customers, ensuring the highest quality standards.

An Import Specialist must ensure compliance with laws and regulations, as well as JAS Forwarding operating procedures.

JAS Worldwide
Job No.: 000466
Cargo Handling
Full-time
EWR Airport, NJ

PLANT MAINTENANCE MECHANIC - GROUND SERVICE EQUIPMENT

As you embark on a new journey, you'll tackle challenges with flexibility and grace, learning new skills and advancing your career while having the time of your life. Feel free to enrich both your personal and work life and hop on board!

American Airlines
Job No.: 000464
Janitorial & Facility Services
Full-time
JFK Airport

SUPERVISOR, FACILITIES MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS

Are you ready to explore a world of possibilities, both at work and during your time off? Join our American Airlines family, and you'll travel the world, grow your expertise and become the best version of you.

American Airlines
Job No.: 000463
Janitorial & Facility Services
Full-time
JFK Airport

MATERIAL LOGISTICS SPECIALIST

As you embark on a new journey, you'll tackle challenges with flexibility and grace, learning new skills and advancing your career while having the time of your life. Feel free to enrich both your personal and work life and hop on board!

American Airlines
Job No.: 000465
Warehouse
Full-time
LaGuardia Airport, NY

Visit our website to apply for these featured airport employment opportunities and search for additional jobs at the New York area airports. Register today to allow airport and aviation employers to match your skills with available positions.

www.airportworker.com



AIRPORT EMPLOYMENT

ALB - AIRPORT OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR

Assists the Operations Manager in the performance of operation and security functions at the Airport.

Avports

Job No.: 000461

Airport & Terminal Operations

Full-time

Albany International Airport, NY

AIRPORT MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN - VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT MECHANIC

Performs a wide variety of tasks involved in repairing and maintaining electric, diesel, and gasoline powered vehicle and equipment by performing the following duties.

Avports

Job No.: 000460

Ground Handling

Full-time

Albany International Airport, NY

RAMP AGENT

Ramp Agents play a critical role in supporting the safe, efficient, and timely movement of aircraft through the performance of essential ground handling duties.

Avports

Job No.: 000459

Ground Handling

Full-time

Westchester County Airport, NY

DIGITAL PRODUCT MANAGER

The Digital Product Manager is responsible for leading the execution of passenger-facing digital platforms. This role is at the forefront of enhancing the traveler experience by aligning digital product initiatives with operational goals, commercial strategies, and industry trends.

JFK International Air Terminal (JFKIAT)

Job No.: 000458

IT & Tech Services

Full-time

JFK Airport

AIRPORT ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Perform receptionist duties. Preparation of office inventories; maintaining accurate files; maintain and prepare reports, spreadsheets and other records as required on a daily, weekly, monthly basis.

Unifi Aviation, LLC

Job No.: 000457

Office & Administrative Support

Full-time

LaGuardia Airport, NY

AIRPORT CABIN DISPATCH AGENT - LGA

Dispatch Agents will deal with various airline systems and use effective communication with all cabin agents and leadership team to ensure passengers depart in a clean and sterile aircraft within a scheduled timeframe.

Unifi Aviation, LLC

Job No.: 000456

Aircraft Cabin Maintenance

Full-time

LaGuardia Airport, NY

AIRPORT CABIN AGENT - LGA

Cleaning and servicing of aircraft interiors, including cabin, cockpit, galleys, and lavatories.

Unifi Aviation, LLC

Job No.: 000455

Aircraft Cabin Maintenance

Part-time

LaGuardia Airport, NY

TRACTOR TRAILER DRIVER - CDL CLASS A REQUIRED

Tractor Trailer Driver provides all necessary and required under-wing ground support services as contracted by the customer to include but not be limited to loading and unloading baggage and cargo, marshaling, water and lavatory servicing.

Swissport

Job No.: 000454

Trucking & Intermodal

Full-time

JFK Airport

LOUNGE SUPERVISOR

The Lounge Supervisor is responsible for oversight of the lounge operations by ensuring exceptional customer service levels are met through proactive monitoring and supervision of employees and suppliers while fostering strong working relationships with Airline partners.

Swissport

Job No.: 000453

Food Service & Hospitality

Full-time

JFK Airport

DUTY MANAGER CARGO SERVICES

As a Cargo Duty Manager, you will be responsible for the day-to-day safe and efficient operation of cargo operations while ensuring customer service standards and contractual services are met.

Swissport

Job No.: 000452

Cargo Handling

Full-time

JFK Airport

GENERAL MANAGER- EWR (49338)

Global Elite Group is seeking a highly skilled General Manager to lead our full aviation security operation at Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR), one of the busiest, most complex international gateways in the country.

Global Elite Group

Job No.: 000451

Security

Full-time

EWR Airport

CARGO DUTY MANAGER

As a Duty Manager! Ideal candidates will have at least three years of ramp agent experience and three years of progressive aviation management experience.

Alliance Ground International (AGI)

Job No.: 000450

Cargo Handling

Full-time

JFK Airport

AIRPORT EMPLOYMENT

GSE MECHANIC

As a GSE Mechanic at AGI, you'll play a pivotal role in maintaining and enhancing our ground service handling equipment, ensuring the reliability and safety of our operations.

Alliance Ground International (AGI)
Job No.: 000449
Ground Handling
Full-time
EWR Airport

MATERIAL HANDLER

Material Handlers will be required to lift up to 70lbs per mail handling unit, required to sort, scan, load/unload both USPS mail containers and Airline cans.

Alliance Ground International (AGI)
Job No.: 000448
Ground Handling
Full-time
EWR Airport

GSE TECHNICIAN

GSE Technician is responsible for service and maintenance, keeping in good order all Ground Service Equipment at a designated station, keeping Swissport Ramp and other service agencies safe.

Swissport
Job No.: 000445
Ground Handling
Full-time
JFK Airport

SENIOR ACCOUNTING ANALYST

We are seeking a CPA-certified Senior Accounting Analyst with two to four years of audit experience and a proactive, growth-oriented mindset.

The New Terminal One at JFK Airport
Job No.: 000434
Finance & Accounting
Full-time
JFK Airport

TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Under limited supervision, operate computers to input data into files and databases. May undertake more complex tasks where necessary.

Swissport
Job No.: 000412
Office & Administrative Support
Part-time
Long Island Mac Arthur Airport, NY

AVIATION SNOW SUPERVISOR

This position is responsible for supervising the staff, processes and gaining complete understanding of snow removal operations. The Supervisor needs to be available to support snow events whenever they occur.

Outworks Group
Job No.: 000405
Airport & Terminal Operations
Seasonal
EWR Airport

OPERATIONS COORDINATOR

We are seeking a dedicated and detail-oriented Operations Coordinator to join our team. This position will be on call through the winter season, primarily working during winter weather events.

Outworks Group
Job No.: 000404
Airport & Terminal Operations
Seasonal
EWR Airport

GUIDE

We have an incredible opportunity for a dynamic Guide to join our growing New York Team!

DO&CO
Job No.: 000374
Food Service & Hospitality
Full-time
Jamaica, NY 11430

ASSISTANT FOOD AND BEVERAGE DIRECTOR - CHASE LUXURY AIRPORT LOUNGE

We are seeking a talented individual who will commit to the challenges of creating and delivering a culinary-driven, fine-dining experience within a thoughtfully designed travel oasis.

Sodexo
Job No.: 000347
Food Service & Hospitality
Full-time
JFK Airport

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

We are looking for service-oriented professionals with a passion for customer service and helping others.

Endeavor Air
Job No.: 000341
Passenger Services
Full-time
JFK Airport

JUNIOR PASTRY SOUS CHEF

We have an incredible opportunity for a dynamic Junior Pastry Sous Chef to join our growing New York Team!

DO&Co
Job No.: 000339
Food Service & Hospitality
Full-time
Jamaica, NY 11430

SCREENING SPECIALIST – CHARTER AVIATION SECURITY SERVICES

Global Elite Group- Providing world-class aviation security through innovation and people committed to excellence.

Global Elite Group
Job No.: 000300
Security
Per Diem
JFK Airport

Visit our website to apply for these featured airport employment opportunities and search for additional jobs at the New York area airports. Register today to allow airport and aviation employers to match your skills with available positions.

www.airportworker.com



AIRPORT INTEL

PANYNJ Launch Opportunity Scholarship Programs With Vaughn College & York College

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced the launch of the JFK Redevelopment Opportunity Scholarship programs at Vaughn College of Aeronautics & Technology and at the CUNY Aviation Center at York College, which will create opportunities in aviation and engineering for students from communities surrounding John F. Kennedy International Airport, while also helping to meet the demand for skilled professionals at the region's airport facilities.

The scholarship program will be funded jointly by the Port Authority and the private terminal developer partners: New Terminal One (T1), JFK Millennium Partners (T6), American Airlines (T8), Delta Air Lines and JFKIAT (T4).

Scholarships covering full tuition and fees for up to four years will be awarded to 10 high school seniors pursuing undergraduate bachelor's degrees with a focus on aviation and aeronautics at Vaughn College in East Elmhurst. The first class of five scholars will begin the four-year program in the 2026-27 academic year. Additionally, full-tuition scholarships and fees for up to two years



will be awarded to 20 graduate students to pursue a master's degree related to aviation at the CUNY Aviation Center at York College in Jamaica. The first class of 5 graduate students will begin the two-year graduate program in the 2026-27 academic year. Scholarship recipients will also have access to paid internships and fellowships with the Port Authority and JFK terminal operators. ■

Airside Jobs



Landside Jobs



Terminal Jobs



Off-Airport Jobs



Helping job seekers find airport and aviation-related jobs that match their skills while assisting hiring managers and recruiters to locate suitable candidates.

www.AirportWorker.com


Are You Looking for a New Job?

Airport Employers Are Looking for You Too!

Register Today and Get Found.



The LaGuardia Link Q70 Bus to the Subway Is FREE!

The **LaGuardia Link**  Q70 bus provides free non-stop service between **LaGuardia Airport** and the **E F M R 7** subway lines at Jackson Heights. It's a 15 minute ride and buses leave every 8-10 minutes all day.





— INAUGURAL EVENT —

March 19, 2026

The Rockaway Hotel

BEACH DRIVE, ROCKAWAY PARK • NEW YORK

— 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM BRUNCH —

*Building the next generation of women leaders
within the JFK Airport community –
through mentorship, connection, and opportunity.*

— Learn more: —

www.wingsatjfk.org

Sponsorship opportunities available
to support this mission.



Muse Air:

Dare to Compare and Compete

BY ROBERT G. WALDVOGEL
robertw@metroairportnews.com

The old saying of “If you can’t beat them, join them” may be well known. But Muse Air was the result of its unknown opposite, namely, the person who had already joined them tried to beat them. “Them” was a carrier that eventually grew into the nation’s fourth-largest airline, Southwest Airlines.

Southwest Competitor

The person whose airline ultimately bore his name and took on Southwest was **Lamar Muse**, a Houston native with more than three decades of aviation industry experience with the likes of Trans Texas, Continental, American, Southern, Central, Universal, and Southwest itself. Achieving the role of its president, he proposed establishing a similar Chicago-Midway carrier, but the board of directors opposed the strategy. Instead of ousting founding member Rollin King and taking control, he himself was fired, leaving colorful Herb Kelleher to take the helm.

Catalyst to his own creation came from his son, Michael Muse, who had also worked for Southwest between 1976 and 1978. After his father’s two-year retirement, during which he achieved many goals on his leisure bucket list, he urged him to re-enter the airline industry. That the period met the two-year stipulation before he legally could have, was no coincidence. And that Southwest had attracted an overwhelming number of passengers with its single-class, no-frills, “peanut fare” service, indicated that there was still untapped demand for such a competing carrier. Investors agreed.

“...Investors believed that Muse’s founder, Lamar Muse, whose tenure as president of Southwest ended in 1978 when he was unceremoniously booted out by the board of directors, could mint money twice out of Texans’ need for mobility,” advises Texas Monthly’s “Musing on What Might Have Been” article. Although the attempt to challenge Southwest’s monopolistic



Muse Air MD-82

status was originally intended for a date later than the one when it actually occurred, two MD-81s slated for financially strapped Austral Lineas Aereas of Argentina enabled it to be launched sooner with the \$4 million lease-financing plan that gave it wings.

Incorporated in January of 1980, Muse Air attracted a highly experienced, seven-strong management team by March of the following year.

Originally based at Dallas-Love Field, Muse Air, now with more than \$35 million in its coffers, became a publicly held corporation, and its entry into Texas skies was heralded by Time Magazine in its November 17, 1980, “Cut-Rate Fares & Hot Pants” article.

That it engaged in head-to-head competition with that carrier could not have been more apparent when its two MD-81s, “Spirit of Dallas” and “Spirit of Houston,” inaugurated service on July 15, 1981, on the same signature route as Southwest had—Dallas-Love to Houston-Hobby Airport with 13 daily roundtrips. Fares remained consistent at \$25.00 for “Leisure Time” and \$40.00 for “Prime Time” for the 50-minute journey in a market that attracted 1.25 million passengers annually.

Compare and Compete

Battling Southwest, its former carrier, with Muse Air, his current one, constituted, to a degree, face-to-face competition with himself.

Because of the route and fare elements, many dubbed the new carrier “Revenge Air”—or the “beat them” part of the strategy.

Peter Appleborne emphasized this phenomenon in his “Fasten Your Seat Belts” article in the November 1982 issue of *Texas Monthly*, when he wrote, “Once there was a scrappy little airline called Southwest. Now a giant, it is being challenged by scrappy little Muse Air.”

Lamar tempered the revenge factor when he stated, “Southwest made me a helluva lot of money, and I’m grateful to them for that, no matter what else happened. Now, we have to beat them, and it won’t be easy.”

Toward that end, Muse Air was structured so that it was not exactly a carbon copy of Southwest, striving for style and sophistication. In other words, it took the original formula and improved on it.

Southwest operated red and gold “love in the air” 737-200s with 6-abreast, unreserved seating, and offered beverage and peanut “love bite” service in the air. Muse Air operated cool-blue and cream-colored “aura of class” MD-81s with 5-abreast, reserved seating in the all-nonsmoking cabins and offered improved in-flight snack service. Muse Air also eliminated the boarding stampede sparked by Southwest’s ten-minute turnaround times by doubling the interval to 20.

“We’re aiming to be known as the best little airline in Texas, rather than the biggest bus service in the sky,” Lamar once claimed.

Continued On Page 40

Despite its ambitions, the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) strike, called only 19 days after it launched its operation, thwarted its efforts, and Lamar's son, Michael, soon assumed the CEO position. He summed up his formula for success as "good management, good equipment, and twice as much money as you think you need."

His prophetic vision was "right on the money," because it was that very money that was not right on. Its net loss for 1981 was \$3.97 million.

In Search of a Profitable Niche

Muse Air entered its second year of operations with promise. In July of 1982, it began taking delivery of its six specifically ordered MD-82s, and they were found to be reliable and easy to maintain, and consumed 16-percent less fuel than Southwest's 737-200s did. They also offered a greater range. The two leased MD-81s were returned in December.

Route expansion was cautiously progressive. By mid-May, it offered six weekday roundtrips to Midland/Odessa and Tulsa from Dallas, and in October, it inaugurated a Houston-Los Angeles route with three roundtrips at a \$130.00 fare.

Aside from the differing operational aspects of Muse Air, the new routes underscored the fact that it never intended to exist for the sole purpose of engaging in a competitive battle with what was originally perceived as its rival.

"Muse's long-term future does not depend on winning a dogfight with Southwest," according to Appleborne's article (ibid). "Even Lamar admitted the airline's original

strategy was to go head-to-head with Southwest only in markets where there was enough room for competition."

From Competitor to Cooperator

But Muse Air was financially failing, and its continued operation could only be assured with a lifeline thrown by its very competitor—Southwest.

In March of 1985, Southwest agreed to acquire Muse Air for cash and stock valued at over \$60 million, but continued to operate it as a separate subsidiary with its own identity, aircraft, route system, and on-board product.

"For almost four years, Southwest Airlines and Muse Air have been going nose-to-nose," Muse Air stated in its "Blood, Sweat, and Cheers" advertisement. "But now that fight is over. Southwest's acquisition has been officially approved. Southwest will continue to do what we do best. And so will Muse Air... In short, we've all won. And it's time to celebrate."

"Whatever financial problems Muse Air had, it also had valuable gate space at several airports important to Southwest; a market share on key routes; a solid crew of dedicated, well-trained employees; a low operating cost; and some excellent aircraft..." D Magazine reported in its October 1985 "Business Flight Plans: The Story behind the Southwest/Muse Air Merger" article. "By buying Muse Air, Southwest would be able to own its competition."

TranStar Airlines

■ Southwest implemented several changes to its previous competitor.

■ It realigned its route structure so that it could maximize Muse Air's fuel-efficient,

medium-range fleet, encompassing a southern transcontinental flow from Florida to New Orleans, Texas, and California.

■ It reinstated an onboard smoking policy.

■ It established a hub at Houston-Hobby Airport, with all flights either originating from or terminating at it, thus avoiding the Wright Amendment restrictions at Dallas-Love Field.

■ Most importantly, it changed its subsidiary's name to TranStar Airlines to distance it from the original Muse Air, as expressed in its marketing thrust of "Remarkable things happen when you change your name."

From Beat Them to Join Them

Despite the accolades and amenities, the reinvented Muse Air could not carve a profitable niche, especially when it engaged in price wars with Continental on the Houston-Los Angeles route, forcing it to offer unsustainable, \$59.00 fares to retain passengers.

Without choice, TranStar president and CEO W. W. Franklin announced, with reluctance, that the board of directors had elected to discontinue the brand and liquidate its assets as of August 9, 1987. "The existing competitive environment in the airline industry, and particularly in the markets served by TranStar, has made it virtually impossible for a small carrier such as TranStar to compete effectively."

It operated 18 aircraft and served 13 cities in California, Florida, Louisiana, Nevada, and Texas at the time.

With its demise, the story came full circle. Muse, who had once joined Southwest, left to beat them with his own airline, Muse Air. But the battle proved too brutal to win, leaving Southwest to beat Muse Air and, after an intermittent name change to TranStar, altogether eliminate it. ■



ROBERT G. WALDVOGEL spent thirty years working at John F. Kennedy International and LaGuardia airports with the likes of Capitol Air, Midway Airlines, Triangle Aviation Services, Royal Jordanian Airlines, Austrian Airlines, and Lufthansa in Ground Operations and Management. He has created and taught aviation programs on both the airline and university level and is an aviation author.



TranStar MD-82



MILES Petroleum Co. Inc.

We Keep Things Moving!

AVIATION / FLEET / INDUSTRIAL LUBRICANTS

**Free Delivery • Competitive Prices
Free Oil Analysis On Fuel Tanks & Lubricants**



ANGELA STERN
astern.mileswbe@gmail.com
Tel: (631) 767-8448

ED SULLIVAN
esullivan.mileswbe@gmail.com
Tel: (631) 767-8449

WE ENSURE YOUR CONTRACTURAL COMPLIANCE NEEDS*

Minority & Women Owned Certifications:

WBENC • ACDBE & DBE • Port Authority of NY & NJ • New York State • Nassau & Suffolk Counties



**Empire State
Development**



THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NY & NJ

* At the Port Authority of NY & NJ, we believe that our operations should reflect the diversity of our community. Because of this diversity, we have enacted a goal to award 20 percent of contracts to Minority-owned businesses, and 10 percent of contracts to women-owned businesses. We encourage each of our partners to also adopt these goals.

**20% participation goal with certified Minority-owned business enterprises (MBE)
10% participation goal with certified Woman-owned business enterprises (WBE)**

www.MilesOil.com

AIRPORT INTEL

PANYNJ to Test Self-Driving Shuttles at EWR

Autonomous Vehicles Among Options Under Review to Transport Passengers Between New AirTrain Newark and Existing Facilities During Airport Redevelopment

The Port Authority of NY & NJ (PANYNJ) announced that it is partnering with three autonomous vehicle technology companies to test electric self-driving shuttles at Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) throughout spring 2026.

PANYNJ is evaluating options to provide automated connections between EWR's existing facilities and the new AirTrain

have been working with self-driving technology successfully for many years, particularly at the airports, and believe autonomous shuttles offer a safe, efficient solution for moving passengers while we concurrently work to build a new AirTrain Newark and the brand-new Terminal B. These tests this spring will enable us to build on our knowledge and prior experi-

when JFK became the first North American airport to host a demonstration of a self-driving platoon of three vehicles. A test of a self-driving shuttle was also first conducted in mixed traffic at Newark Liberty in 2023, and a second in 2024.

The Port Authority has been testing self-driving technology since July 2022, when the agency successfully tested autonomous



Ohmio LIFT



Oceaneering REVO-GT



Glydways

Newark system currently under construction. The new AirTrain Newark is scheduled to open in 2030, and planning is underway for a future Terminal B that will be located adjacent to a future AirTrain station.

Zero-emissions vehicles from each firm will be tested separately in an area of the airport that is not publicly accessible during two-week periods. The tests are designed to simulate a high-capacity shuttle network with multiple vehicles operating simultaneously in a complex airport environment. Oceaneering will be tested in March, Ohmio in late March and Glydways in May. The tests are intended to qualify participating firms to respond to a formal Port Authority request for proposals, which may be issued in 2027.

“As we advance the redevelopment of Newark Liberty International Airport, we are looking for opportunities to improve our passengers’ time at our airport through unique customer-first experiences as soon as you step onto airport property,” said Port Authority Chairman **Kevin O’Toole**. “We

ences working with self-driving shuttles and create a highly customized journey that will be unique to Newark Liberty and tailored to our passengers’ needs.”

“Autonomous vehicles are in use around the world and around the country, and they are part of the modern travel experience whether in a private car, a for-hire vehicle or on public transit,” said Port Authority Executive Director **Kathryn Garcia**. “We are building a new Newark Liberty that meets the demands of the next generation of travel, so we must embrace a future that is inclusive of all the different ways we can move this region.”

The Newark Liberty tests build on several successive years of autonomous vehicle demonstrations conducted at Port Authority airports. These include testing in summer 2024 at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) that enabled members of the public to ride in autonomous vehicles at JFK’s long-term parking lot 9. Two other previous tests of autonomous platooned vehicles were held at JFK’s Aqueduct Parking Lot in 2022 and 2023,

platooning and lane-keeping technology on retrofitted buses in its Exclusive Bus Lane, which expedites bus travel into and out of the Lincoln Tunnel during rush hours.

Autonomous vehicles may offer a safer, more efficient, and more cost-effective solution than traditional busing, though the agency will also evaluate conventional electric buses as part of its broader review of mitigation plans during the redevelopment of Newark Liberty.

The Port Authority’s \$3.5 billion project to replace the existing AirTrain Newark began in October 2025 and advanced to major construction earlier this year. The current system is unable to be expanded or upgraded to newer technology, and its route will hinder future airport growth, while the new AirTrain Newark is being designed to be expandable. When the current system opened in 1996, the airport served approximately 30 million passengers each year. In 2024, Newark Liberty welcomed nearly 50 million passengers. AirTrain ridership is forecasted to grow by 50% by 2040, exceeding the capacity of the existing system. ■

30TH ANNUAL EVENING OF FINE FOOD



CELEBRATING
30 YEARS!

Queens Centers for Progress' most anticipated culinary celebration that offers a vibrant fusion of exceptional cuisine, meaningful connections, and community spirit.

Tuesday – March 24, 2026

Terrace on the Park
52-11 111th Street - Corona, NY 11368

6:30 PM to 9:00 PM



2026 CHEFS OF THE YEAR



Patricia Ornst

*Director, NYS & Local
Government Affairs*

Delta Air Lines



Richard S. David

*Director, Queens
Corporate Affairs*

Con-Edison



Ben Guttman

*Executive Director
Queens Economic
Development Corporation*

CLAIRE SCHULMAN
"SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY"
AWARD HONOREE



Loycent Gordon

Chief Executive Officer
Neir's Tavern

This Year's Participating Vendors Include:

- * Aigner Chocolates * Althea's Tropical Delights *
 - * Bevo's Kitchen * El Buho Mezcal * Il Nonno Ristorante *
 - * Marbella Restaurant & Catering *
 - * Mayahuel Restaurant & Bar * MumsKitchens NYC *
 - * Neir's Tavern * Rincon Salvadoreno Restaurant *
 - * Special Sweets * The Wine Room of Forest Hills *
- ... and more to be announced!**

Thank You to Our Corporate Sponsors:

Veronica Tsang

- * BDO * Boro-Wide * Gerald J. Caliendo, Architects *
- * Mutal of America * Ray-Block Stationery *
- * Tarek M. Zeid PE PLLC Consulting Engineer *
- * TotalCareRX * Valley Bank *



**Scan QR Code or Visit Link to
Reserve Tickets :**

www.tinyurl.com/26FineFood

A Winter Mediterranean Cruise

BY MAUREEN KATZ
mkatz@metroairportnews.com

My husband Jon and I decided to do something different at the beginning of the new year. We looked at several airline employee web-sites and found a Windstar cruise for 8 nights that started in Venice, Italy, and ended in Rome.

On New Year's Day, we flew to Milan, Italy. In the past, Jon and I visited Milan frequently before the pandemic, but we have not been there since January 2020. It was great to return, and we stayed at the Milan Marriott Hotel in a residential area of Milan.

On the evening of our arrival, we visited an area where we had never been before. The Navigli neighborhood in southwest Milan was well worth visiting. The area is filled with cool bars, hip restaurants, galleries, and shops. Two man-made canals cross the area named Naviglio Grande and Naviglio Pavese. It is possible to take a boat ride through the canals even in the winter. We ate at a delicious, typical Milanese restaurant we found by chance for dinner. Even though it was winter, many cafes and restaurants offered outdoor seating with heat lamps.

The next day, we planned to walk through the main area of Milan in the morning and then take a train to Venice in the afternoon. One of the highlights in Milan is the Duomo di Milano. Early in January, there was still a very nice holiday market around the Duomo area. It was a sunny but chilly day, perfect for walking through the center of the city. In the afternoon, our train trip to Venice took about two hours. We stayed at the Four Points Sheraton Venice Mestre, which is outside the main area of Venice. This was our plan: to be ready to board our ship for the cruise the next day.

Our ship was a 312-guest yacht named the Star Legend. It is all suites and can go to ports that big ships cannot enter. The food is gourmet, and the bath amenities are L'Occitane.

We spent two nights in Venice on the ship. As I wrote in a previous article, we had visited Venice many times. It is always a pleasure to walk around the city and then take a public transit boat called the Vaporetto, which we did before our departure on the ship.

The ports were Zadar and Dubrovnik in Croatia and Messina, Sicily. We were supposed to stop at Naples, Italy; however, due to high winds at the port, the stop was cancelled, and we had an additional day at sea.

Zadar, Croatia, is the oldest city in Croatia and is located on the Adriatic Sea in the northwestern part of the Ravni Kotari region. The day that we arrived was overcast with occasional drizzle, but it did not stop us from exploring the Old Town. Most of the attractions were closed for the winter and the Three Kings Holiday.





The most worthwhile attraction was the Sea Organ on the west side of the Old Town. It consists of several stairs that descend into the sea, extending about 70 meters along the coast. Set within the stone stairs is a system of pipes and whistles that creates a unique musical instrument. It works with the ebb and flow of the water as well as the wind blowing off the water. This area is also known for its beautiful sunsets. Alfred Hitchcock once said it had more beautiful sunsets than Key West.

The next port was Dubrovnik, Croatia, where we remained for two days. It is a city in southern Dalmatia and is a very popular tourist destination. Luckily, our timing was great because there were no crowds in January. The Old City of Dubrovnik is a World Heritage Site. Again, many tourist attractions and shops were closed due to the slow season.

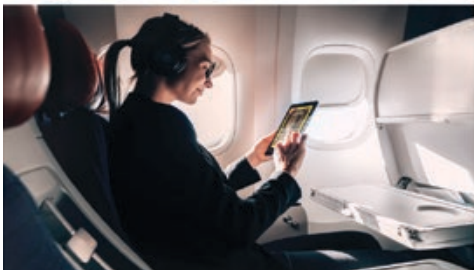
The historic city center is contained within the city walls. The Walls of Dubrovnik are a series of defensive stone walls surrounding the city. We walked the entire 1.2 miles around the perimeter, which offers a 360-degree view of the Old City. The day was perfectly sunny and cool. There are breathtaking views of the Adriatic and the city's rooftops. It took about two hours to complete the walk, but it can take longer due to all the photogenic sites and views along the way.

Our final port was Messina, Sicily, located near the northeast corner of Sicily at the Strait of Messina. It is a harbor city and the third largest city on the island of Sicily. The question asked repeatedly is: why can't a bridge be built from mainland Italy to Sicily? The answer is that it's due to volcanic activity, high winds, and unstable water currents, so, seemingly, a bridge is not possible.

We took a tour of Taormina, which was a 45-minute drive from the Port of Messina. The tour included a walk through the main area, with the charming old streets of this hilltop town. It has magnificent views of the Mediterranean Sea and historic landmarks. We visited the Theatre of Taormina, which is an ancient Greek theater built in the third century BC. There is Corso Umberto, the shopping street, which is closed to traffic. It runs through the whole city and has boutiques, jewelry shops, craft shops, and antique stores.

On our final sea day en route to Rome, we passed very close to the island of Stromboli. It lies in the Tyrrhenian Sea off the coast of Sicily. It includes Mount Stromboli, one of Italy's four active volcanoes.

The final day of our cruise ended at the Rome Port of Civitavecchia. We spent the day in Rome walking to the many sites we have visited on other trips. We stayed at the Rome Marriott Park Hotel, not far from the airport, and we flew back to JFK Airport the next day. ■



Turn Waiting Time into Engaging Moments Enhance Customer Experience with Premium Print and Digital Content

Make waiting enjoyable with fast and convenient access to over 1,600 national and international newspapers and magazines in 40 languages, available on any device. No subscriptions or apps needed – just seamless integration with your IT infrastructure in your respective corporate design. Elevate your customer service effortlessly.

Contact us to learn more.

Gabrielle Sarmiento
The Traveling Press, LLC
Queens, NY 11355
Phone: 718-353-5416
Email: gabrielle.s@thetravelingpress.com
www.thetravelingpress.com
www.media-carrier.com



UPCOMING EVENTS



The most comprehensive listing of New York & New Jersey airport and aviation events available anywhere online. metroairportnews.com/ny-airport-events

📅 March 2

JFK Airport Committee (JFKAC) Quarterly Meeting
Virtual Event
aircraftnoise.panynj.gov/nycar

📅 March 5

LAAMCO Member Meeting
LaGuardia Airport-(LGA)
Terminal B at LGA
East Elmhurst, New York 11371
www.laamco.com

📅 March 10

ADDAPT Dinner Group
Heritage Club at
Bethpage State Park
Farmingdale, New York 1173
www.addaptny.org

📅 March 11

KAAMCO Members Meeting
John F. Kennedy International Airport
Port Authority Building 14
Queens, New York 11430
www.kaamco.org

📅 March 12

Queens Chamber of Commerce St. Patrick's Day Annual Luncheon
Antun's Restaurant
Queens Village, NY 11429
www.queenschamber.org

📅 March 17

Semantics Irish Night
Trotters Bar & Grill
Franklin Square, New York 11010
www.thesemantics.org

📅 March 18

Operation Babylift: The Making of the Documentary
Cradle of Aviation Museum
Garden City, New York 11530
www.thepanammuseum.org

📅 March 18

JFK Airport Customs Brokers & Freight Forwarders Association Meeting
Russo's On the Bay
Howard Beach, New York 11414
www.jfkbrokers.com

📅 March 19

WINGS at JFK Launch Brunch
The Rockaway Hotel
Rockaway Park, New York 11694
www.wingsatjfk.org

📅 March 19

JFK Air Cargo Expo
Russo's On the Bay
Howard Beach, New York 11414
www.jfkaircargo.aero

📅 March 19-21

37th Annual Women in Aviation International Conference
Gaylord Texan Convention Center
Grapevine, Texas 76051
www.wai.org

📅 March 24

QCP's 30th Annual Evening of Fine Food
Terrace on the Park
52-11 111th Street
Corona, NY 11368
www.queenscp.org

📅 March 25

LaGuardia Airport Committee (LGAAC) Meeting
Virtual Event
aircraftnoise.panynj.gov

📅 March 26

The Wings Club Luncheon
Guest Speak: Michael Steen, Atlas Air
The Yale Club
50 Vanderbilt Avenue
New York, NY 10017
www.wingsclub.org

📅 April 14

Republic Airport Commission Meeting
Republic Airport-(FRG)
East Farmingdale, New York 11735
www.republicairport.net

📅 April 15

Teterboro Aircraft Noise Abatement Advisory Committee Meeting
Virtual Event
www.aircraftnoise.panynj.gov/tanaac

📅 April 15

The Bishop Wright Aviation Industry Awards Luncheon
Russo's On the Bay
Howard Beach, New York 11414
www.christfortheworldchapel.org

📅 April 21

SSNND Shuffle Into Spring 2026
Recognizing Katherine Mooney and Raymond Ringston and The Semantics
Russo's On the Bay
162-45 Cross Bay Blvd.
Howard Beach, New York 11414
www.ssndecwomens.org

📅 April 22

New York Community Aviation Roundtable (NYCAR) Meeting
Virtual Meeting
aircraftnoise.panynj.gov

📅 April 23

The Wings Club Luncheon
Guest Speak: Richard Smith, FedEx
The Yale Club
50 Vanderbilt Avenue
New York, NY 10017
www.wingsclub.org

📅 May 9

ACF-Cup Soccer Tournament
St. John's University ▪ Belson Stadium
8000 Utopia Pkwy, Jamaica, NY 11439
www.acf-cup.org

📅 May 26

Aviation High School 90th Anniversary Celebration
Russo's On the Bay
Howard Beach, New York 11414
www.aviationhsef.org

📅 June 29

4th Annual Airport Community Foundation Golf Classic
The Seawane Club
& Inwood Country Club
www.acfgolfclassic.com

Don't Miss the 4th Annual ACF Golf Classic

Join the Airport Community for a fun day of golf and/or relaxing by the pool, both followed by an evening of great food and airport networking.

June 29, 2026



Two Great Courses – One Great Cause



SEAWANE COUNTRY CLUB

Host to the 2025 U.S. Amateur Championship Qualifier

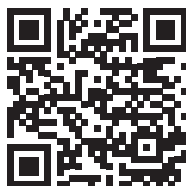
In a spectacular setting, 20-minutes from JFK Airport, The Seawane Club holds a picturesque waterfront location offering an 18-hole championship golf course designed by Devereux Emmet, and a full-service Racquet Center including Pickleball, pool, and so much more.



INWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

One of the Oldest Golf Courses on Long Island.

Established in 1901 and host to the 1923 U.S. Open, Inwood Country Club offers an authentic, classic, old-world golf experience. With twelve holes bordering the wetlands, players enjoy water views from every hole. Designed as a true member's course, Inwood is rich in nuance and subtlety.



Register Online at www.ACFGolfClassic.com

All Sponsorship packages are available for purchase online.

Call or email for additional information rington@acfhelps.org • (718) 750-4441

Call (718) 750-4441 or contact an ACF Member:

Katie Bliss

kbliss@acfhelps.org

Brian Cooley

Brian.Cooley@aa.com

Mike Falacara

mfalacara@acfhelps.org

Raymond Ringston

rington@acfhelps.org

Proceeds from the 2026 Airport Community Foundation Golf Classic will benefit local airport & aviation-related organizations and institutions.



www.ACFGolfClassic.com



**Airport Community
Foundation**

Inspiring Ideas, Igniting Action, Impacting Locally.

The Airport Community Golf Classic & ACF Cup are hosted and managed by a volunteer committee of airport leaders raising funds to assist airport associations in promoting workforce development, educational opportunities, and advancing business growth while creating connections within the local communities that our airports service.

For additional information about the ACF and its partners, visit www.ACFHelps.org

Airport Community Foundation, Inc. is a qualified 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization registered in the U.S. under Federal Tax ID: 33-1522353.

Are you a woman working for the Port Authority and seeking professional development and leadership opportunities in the aviation industry?

Come join Women in Aviation Empowered (WAVE)!

WAVE is a chapter of the Port Authority Women's Council (PAWC) that offers the chance to participate in a wide range of enriching events — including community volunteering, clothing drives, airport tours and a speaker series — all while fostering a strong community of women.

Scan the QR code or email debrown@panynj.gov to learn more.

