

METROPOLITAN Airport News™

MARCH 2024

The Journal of the Metropolitan New York Airport Community



2024

LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

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



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PUBLISHER

Kathryn Bliss
kbliss@metroairportnews.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Julia Lauria-Blum
jblum@metroairportnews.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Raymond F. Ringston
rringston@metroairportnews.com

PHOTOGRAPHER

Douglas Kears
photoandvideo2010@yahoo.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

Jerry Spampinato
jerry@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

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In honor of Women's History Month, we spoke with 14 local aviation and airport leaders and asked them about their contributions to the industry, which were related to important indicators like workforce, sustainability, personal journey to success, and role models. We chose these women based on their position, market expertise, and their standing in the community. Their responses are enthusiastic, informative, and highly optimistic. If there is one common theme, it is their love of this industry. The airport's sense of community is a big part of its attraction as a workplace, and if you've been to a networking event recently, you know what I mean: it feels more like a family gathering.



What I loved about reading their stories is that the common thread is that they feel that women are collaborative, thorough, inclusive, and creative. These qualities are what this industry, and every industry, needs more of to compete well into the future.

Although women remain underrepresented in the aviation industry, many have entered in the past two decades and ascended to leadership positions, especially at our local airports. Our ambitious redevelopment projects have introduced us to organizations we haven't seen before, such as companies and leaders in construction, project management, historians, compliance agencies, concessions, trades, and so many more. The women highlighted in this issue, and many more not in the spotlight, will forever be at the core of the most ambitious multi-airport redevelopment project the U.S. has ever witnessed.

The New York Metropolitan area is no stranger to women leaders at the airports. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) is always cutting edge; **Sue Baer** was the first person, man or woman, to have been the Manager of three PANYNJ airports: JFK, LGA, and EWR. Sue went on to be the first woman to hold the title of PANYNJ Director of Aviation. Sue never stopped mentoring and engaging women of all ages, letting them know anything is possible. She invested her time, talent, and passion into local students, ensuring our industry would be sustainable well into the future. Sue is no longer here with us; however, anyone looking to make a difference should take a cue from her legacy.

I don't believe in a 'Best Kept Secret'. If you need direction, ask for it. If you know the path, take someone along; we didn't get to where we are on our own. We need to keep the industry filled with smart, talented, and passionate people; mentoring is a wonderful way to do that.

Connect with *Metropolitan Airport News* for updates, local opportunities, jobs, and connections in this market. We will share what we know with you to keep this industry strong for generations to come.

Of course, I will see you around the airport, but if you see me first... say Hi!

Katie Bliss

Katie Bliss, Publisher
kbliss@metroairportnews.com



ON THE COVER

(L.-R): Alyssa Burke, Tanya Austin, Beverly Holder, Mayra Fazio, Shehla Iftexhar, Roberta Dunn, Jennifer Baxmeyer, Julia Lauria-Blum, Katie Bliss, and Nancy Vargas.

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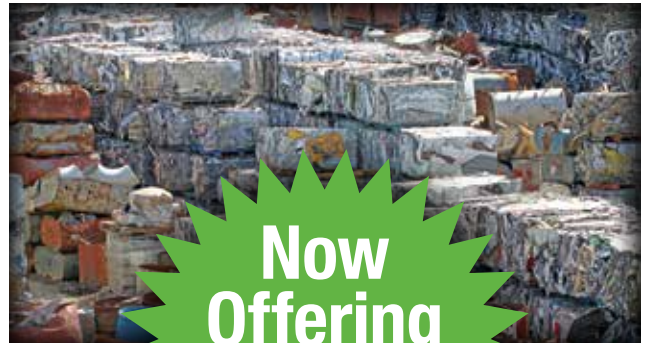
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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

An Extraordinary Day in March

On an extraordinary day in March of 2010, I stood before the steps of the U.S. Capitol admiring the majestic beauty of its immediately familiar white dome rising over 285 feet above the Capitol building's rotunda. Perhaps the nation's most recognizable and identifiable American landmark, the prominent dome that overlooks the city of Washington D.C. commands a westward view across the Capitol Reflecting Pool to the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial just two miles away.

The Capitol, with its impressive dome, is an icon of the American people. Built high on a hill as a symbol of democracy, it is visible from nearly every spot of the city. Its inspiring form soars and rises above the horizon, and the limitless sky is its backdrop.



What brought me to that extraordinary day was the (until then) not-so-visible yet soaring and inspirational legacy of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of WWII who on that day received the Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) nearly seven decades after their service to our country during World War II. I was there to accept the CGM on behalf of WASP, Lt. Col. Marjorie M. Gray, who had passed away in 2008.

The CGM is the oldest and highest civilian award in the United States, bestowed by the United States Congress. It is the highest expression of national appreciation awarded to individuals or groups that have significantly impacted American history and culture.

The WASP were the first women in history to fly American military aircraft during the Second World War. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 the United States entered into a war on two fronts in Europe and the Pacific Theater of Operations. In this time of national emergency, civilian women pilots volunteered and were recruited as a detachment of the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) to learn how to fly military aircraft 'the Army way' so that they could fill vital flying roles on the U.S. homefront, thus releasing male pilots who were desperately needed for overseas combat duty.

Between 1942 and 1944, 1,102 recruits from the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) and the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD) served as WASP. They were stationed at 120 Army air bases across the U.S.A. They flew in every type of military aircraft in the USAAF's arsenal and in every capacity except combat. Their assignments included ferrying, test and instructor piloting, towing targets for air-to-air and ground-to-air practice, transporting personnel and cargo, simulated strafing, smoke laying, night tracking, flying drones, and more.



Over the course of the program's existence the WASP flew over 60 million miles. Thirty-eight women lost their lives as trainees and on operational duty. As civilians, with the promise to militarize them at a later date, the 38 women who died while serving their country were not eligible for military benefits, their burials were at the expense of their families, and no gold stars were allowed in the windows of their family home, nor an American flag to drape over their coffins.

In 1944, the promised bill to militarize the WASP failed in Congress by 19 votes and in December of that year they were unceremoniously disbanded and sent home at their own expense. Their military records were sealed and stamped as classified and filed away in government archives, unavailable to historians and scholars who wrote the history of WWII.

In 1977, 33 years after disbandment, Congress finally voted to give the WASP the veteran status that they so richly deserved. The WASP maintained a close-knit community forged by their shared experiences serving their country during the war. As part of their desire to educate the American public about their untold history, WASP assisted 'Wings Across America', an organization dedicated to educating the public about the accomplishments of these WWII veterans. This led to a Bill to Award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Women Airforce Service Pilots, passed in 2009 by both chambers of Congress and signed into law S.614 by President Obama on July 1 of that year.

On March 10, 2010, surviving WASP and families of those deceased and the 38 women who died in the service were honored at the 111th Congress Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony in honor of the Women Airforce Service Pilots; each was presented with the Medal.

The story of how I arrived to that day to accept the late Lt. Col. Marjorie Gray's CGM posthumously is a multi-layered narrative, too lengthy to write here, but suffice it to say, it was an incredible honor to take part in helping to make that extraordinary day a reality. This one is for the WASP of WWII and their soaring and most inspirational legacy. Fair skies and happy landings.

Julia Lauria-Blum

Julia Lauria-Blum, *Editor-in-Chief*
jblum@metroairportnews.com

AOA REFLECTIONS

Sandy – The Super Storm

Major carriers canceled all flights into and out of JFK, LGA, and EWR airports until it was safe to fly. By 4 p.m. on October 30, more than 8,000 flights had been canceled.

Mother Nature never ceases to amaze. Several weeks before the events of October 29, 2012, weather reports indicated an impending storm heading our way. No one imagined the damage that Hurricane Sandy would deliver to the airport and NYC. Weeks of preparation with Federal agencies, including the National Weather Service, airlines, and the airport community, would not have spared the wrath brought on by Sandy. Adding to this was a full moon and high tides simultaneously; the perfect storm.

In advance of the storm, an Airport General Manager's Bulletin alerted the airport community of the impending storm. Flights were canceled, ramp equipment secured, and plans in place to assist stranded passengers. Port Authority Maintenance and Operations crews cleared all drains and pumps on Van Wyck and JFK Expressways to help with flooding. All airfield lighting systems were also shut down in advance of the storm.

When Hurricane Sandy made landfall, the 80-mile-per-hour winds and 14-foot-high storm surge from Jamaica Bay delivered a punch to JFK Airport's airside operations. The Bay Runways, also known as the 4's parallel runways, became unrecognizable. Wave heights hit 35-40 feet during the height of the storm. Sandy became known as the worst storm in over 200 years.

JFK Airport remained closed for a day and a half once the storm passed. More than 50,000 passengers were affected worldwide. Many international airlines, including European and Asian carriers, canceled all flights to the US. Debris, including boats, fish, truck tires, lumber, fencing, and seaweed, washed up onshore and covered the airside runways and taxiways. Port Authority Maintenance and Operations crews did an excellent job removing the debris once the water receded. The airside security fencing was destroyed, and flooding impacted the Lefferts Blvd. AirTrain Station for some time.

As soon as the airport reopened, military flights were the first to arrive, bringing generators and supplies for those communities



Satellite image of Sandy at 4:15 p.m. EDT on October 29 as it was about to make landfall on the Jersey Shore.

surrounding JFK where electricity was lost for days. The community of Breezy Point lost over 100 homes to a fire caused by an electrical explosion that spread before it could be contained. Since no fuel deliveries were coming to the airport, we opened up a makeshift fueling station at Hangar 12 to assist the airlines and service companies in fueling their ground equipment needed for the clean-up and restoring operations.

The impact of Hurricane Sandy exceeded the cost of Hurricane Katrina, which was over \$128 billion. NYC and surrounding communities will always remember this event. The storm certainly lived up to its name of "Super" Storm Sandy. ■



JERRY SPAMPANATO was the General Manager at John F. Kennedy International Airport in the Aviation Department of the PANYNJ. He was responsible for daily operations, directing the activities of 500 staff members within an annual budget of \$300 million. An airline and Port Authority executive with extensive experience, Jerry assumed various roles, including operations, customer service, maintenance, security, cargo, facilities, and labor relations. Jerry continues to be an active airport community member donating his time to the JFK Chamber of Commerce, Our Lady of the Skies Catholic Guild, School Sisters of Notre Dame, and York College.



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COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

Alba Wheels Up

A leading provider of logistics services for trade-sensitive goods entering the U.S.

For seventy-five years, Alba Wheels Up has been an industry leader in the complex business of helping importers and exporters manage their global supply chains. Beginning with the company's headquarters in Valley Stream, Alba has expanded through organic growth and acquisition and today has offices in Jersey City, Houston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Alba's relentless focus has centered on its people, knowledge, and technology. The quality of Alba's staff ensures they succeed for customers. Alba boasts one of the highest ratios of licensed customs brokers in its industry. This means that regardless of the commodity, from the most straightforward to the most challenging, Alba smoothly helps customers navigate the regulatory maze of compliance and achieve a successful outcome: on-time delivery to the recipient.

The business of importing and exporting into the United States has grown more complex over the past several decades, and Alba's involvement and participation in local and national public-private partnerships with government regulators means its customers are among the first to hear and make preparations for potential changes to their supply chains. This insider advantage sets Alba at the top of the industry.

Data-driven decisions are necessary for companies to remain profitable and design resilient supply chains that can withstand natural disasters, geopolitical uncertainty, sudden regulatory burdens, and congestion, regardless of cause. Alba's mix of Business Intelligence (BI), analytics, reporting, and data interoperability come together in a powerful solution that informs sourcing, buying, and inventory placement decisions critical to today's global brands.

Alba's CEO, Damien Stile, speaks glowingly about the staff and his respect and reverence for their work.



"We wouldn't be the company we are without our people and culture. Alba has a high percentage of employees who have been with us not just for years but for decades. We invest in them personally and professionally, offering industry-leading health and wellness benefits, financial planning, and opportunities to learn and advance. We also allow time and space for people to volunteer, whether philanthropically or with industry associations."

Much of Alba's growth over the past several years can be attributed to bringing on a capital partner in 2021. Southfield Capital energized Alba's plan to grow the business into new verticals and markets. Most notable was the acquisition in 2022 of a forty-year-old firm in San Francisco specializing in the semiconductor industry and, at the beginning of this year, John A. Steer Co., a more than one-hundred-year-old logistics company specializing in trade-sensitive industries with five locations along the Eastern Seaboard, all in markets where Alba did not already have a presence.

"Steer has provided Alba the ability to expand both in staff and locations," Stile continued. "We believe in growing specialty verticals, core to our mission of being a leader in the transportation and clearance of trade-sensitive goods."

Two such areas Alba is seeing exponential growth are e-commerce and forced labor enforcement by Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

A change in the law in 2015, coupled with changes in consumer buying during the pandemic, means that goods are shipped directly to people's homes today, bypassing traditional multi-layered channels of distribution centers and brick-and-mortar stores. Alba is leading the way for e-commerce retailers and marketplaces as an early participant in one of the first pilots offered by CBP to help companies quickly clear these shipments moving directly between seller and buyer.

In late 2021, Congress passed a law prohibiting the import of goods containing forced labor from a region in China. CBP has stepped up its enforcement of goods, automatically detaining shipments that could potentially contain things grown, harvested, or manufactured there. Working with a technology partner, Alba is using data and intelligence gathering to ascertain the risk that a supply chain contains forced labor and working with CBP to allow these goods entry.

What is next for Alba Wheels Up? 2024 is shaping to be a global trade recovery year, and imports are trending upward. Coupled with continued strong e-commerce growth, infrastructure investments in the semiconductor industry, and a continued focus by the Administration on equitable trade with global partners, Alba continues looking to the future of growing the company organically and with strategic acquisitions where the culture and commodities make the most sense. ■

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The local airport community has always been extremely generous when donating time and money to worthy causes at our airports and within the surrounding communities. As a result, the Airport Community Golf Classic (ACGC) was founded to assist these local airport and aviation-related associations with fundraising efforts to continue the essential work they provide on our industry's behalf.

The proceeds from the 2nd Annual ACGC will be distributed among our four partner associations: **JFK Air Cargo**

Association, CALMM, Aviation High School Education Foundation, and KAAMCO Cargo. These organizations are proven advocates for airport and aviation education, workforce development, and the advancement of this industry, as well as shining examples of what makes our airports the best in the world.

The ACGC volunteer golf committee comprises airport leaders in various roles, aviation backgrounds, and, most importantly, a passion for our airports.

For additional information and, please contact:

MIKE FALACARA

The Ark at JFK
mfalacara@arkjfk.com

DAYNA HARAP

JFK Air Cargo Association
daynaharap@gmail.com

RAY RINGSTON

Airport Media, Inc.
rkingston@acgolfclassic.com

BOB KENNEDY

CALMM
flyrkennedy@yahoo.com

JFK AIR CARGO
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100% of the proceeds from the 2024 Airport Community Golf Classic will benefit our partner associations.

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



2024

LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

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

(L.-R): Tanya Austin, Red Tail Flight Academy; Alyssa Burke, The ARK at JFK; Jennifer Baxmeyer, Cradle of Aviation Museum; Shehla Iftekhar, York College; Mayra Fazio, Delta Air Lines; Nancy Vargas, DH2 Chauffeured Transportation. PHOTO BY: BEVERLY HOLDER

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 the terminals and even off-airport jobs like publishing.

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, work in their

respective areas of the industry, women in leadership, and sustainability, and here, we offer their one-on-one insight in their own words. Due to space restrictions, we have selected specific questions and answers from each contributor to share in print. You can find the unedited responses to all of the questions on our website.

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. ■

2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Tanya Austin

Operations Manager, Red Tail Flight Academy

For more than twelve years, Tanya Austin has worked in the aviation field as a first responder, brand ambassador, and customer service representative to travelers worldwide, as operations and safety manager, representing regional and global carriers such as Delta Airlines and United Express. Tanya has worked in charter, private, and commercial aviation. She has been passionate about her work with nonprofit groups such as Black Pilots of America and Tuskegee Airmen Inc., where she is a national board member and Eastern Region Representative. Tanya is an active member of Women in Aviation International, the Organization for Black Aerospace Professionals, Sisters of the Skies, and the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association.

Tanya contributes her spare time supporting those who need help in these and other organizations. Tanya is an aviation business owner and commercially rated pilot. She is a Certified Aviation Safety Manager. Tanya has over 25 years of sales, service, and management experience and has worked for both government and private sectors. Tanya attended Kaplan, where she completed studies in business and real estate. She also has an international mediator certification.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Tanya Austin: I started as a flight attendant for Delta Air Lines and worked at an FBO during my primary pilot training. I never thought or imagined doing anything in aviation. My interest started in aviation when I discovered I could travel the world as a profession.

Growing up, I couldn't afford to travel due to our economic situation. I started traveling when I was 18 and knew I wanted to travel more. I would travel so often that one day, an airport employee told me I should consider being the crew. I had no idea what that meant. Once I discovered who the various crew members were, I applied to become a flight attendant.

How has networking or involvement in the Airport Community benefited your career?

Tanya Austin: Networking has been vital and beneficial to my career. Aviation can be a closed industry, and employment and other opportunities may not be readily accessible to those who don't know where to look. Networking and making myself available have manifested several opportunities and increased my knowledge and territory.

What are the top skills a new airport worker should have to succeed?

Tanya Austin: Attention to detail, flexibility, willingness to learn, exceptional customer service, and extreme patience. I recommend going to a General Aviation airport and speaking with any professional you can immediately find. I recommend joining a civil aviation group, finding a mentor, and attending as many aviation events as possible. Reading and research are critical. When I didn't know where to start, I found a group of aviation professionals and started calling and writing them.

Take a discovery flight if you are interested in flying. Go on a field trip to an airport and tour an air traffic control center. With the

aviation high schools and one of the top aviation colleges in the nation located in New York, your access to these and other aviation-related careers is endless. Colleges and universities nationwide offer aviation-focused training programs; take the time to visit these schools. Lastly, remember that aviation has so many possibilities; explore all the options because aviation is an industry that includes every profession you can imagine.

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

Tanya Austin: Insights from women in leadership roles are critical. Women can think about every detail. We can prioritize and manage and yet find significance in many ways. This rings true in every phase of our lives. We can pivot when necessary and do so without compromising any mission at hand. It is simply good business to seek insight from women.

What makes the New York metropolitan area unique to other aviation and airport markets?

Tanya Austin: The diversity of the New York area alone makes it unique. It's one of the top five most diverse cities in the country. The infrastructure also makes it unique, and New York is the most visited city in the U.S., and in the top 10 worldwide. With the looming shortage of qualified aviation talent, New York must capitalize on its population's diversity and use it to reach groups that only see a small part of aviation. Everyone will benefit once those groups get the chance to develop in the aviation industry. ■



RedTail Flight Academy
1032 First Street, Building 118
New Windsor, NY 12553
www.redtailflightacademy.org



Jennifer Baxmeyer

Executive Director, Cradle of Aviation Museum

Jennifer Baxmeyer is a dynamic and accomplished museum executive passionate about cultural education, community engagement, and organizational leadership. With over a decade of experience in the museum sector, Jennifer has a proven track record of driving strategic initiatives, fostering inclusive environments, and building impactful educational programs. Jennifer has held various leadership roles throughout her career, including Executive Director, Deputy Director, and Director of Education at the Cradle of Aviation Museum in Garden City, NY. In these positions, she has successfully managed all aspects of museum operations, including budgeting, staff management, and strategic planning. Jennifer's collaborative approach and innovative thinking have led to the implementation of transformative projects, such as installing a Digital Planetarium and modernizing museum infrastructure. Jennifer's dedication to educational excellence and community outreach is evident in her work to expand educational programs, increase school visits, and establish partnerships with local schools and organizations.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Jennifer Baxmeyer: I got my start working in the aviation industry through my passion for education, science, and art. After completing my Bachelor's in Art Education at Dowling College, I sought opportunities to combine my love for the cultural arts with my interest in science and aviation. This led me to pursue a role as the Education Coordinator at the Cradle of Aviation Museum, where I collaborated on various programs related to aviation and space exploration. I also pursued a Master's in Communications at the New York Institute of Technology to complete my teaching requirements. This advanced degree equipped me with the communication and technical expertise necessary to excel at the museum.

I have immersed myself in aviation education, collaborating with organizations like the STEM Hub to bridge the gap between education and industry. My experience developing and implementing educational programs solidified my commitment to the aviation field and paved the way for my continued involvement in the industry.

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

Jennifer Baxmeyer: In the aviation industry and museums, the insights of women in leadership play a crucial role in fostering innovation and promoting a commitment to sustainability and inclusivity. Women bring unique perspectives and experiences to leadership positions, which can lead to the development of innovative solutions to industry challenges. Their diverse viewpoints often result in more comprehensive decision-making processes considering all stakeholders' needs and perspectives, contributing to more sustainable practices and fostering a culture of inclusivity.

Women leaders serve as role models and mentors, inspiring the next generation of aviation professionals and encouraging diversity and gender equality within the industry. By championing

sustainability initiatives and promoting inclusivity, women in leadership roles contribute to the long-term success and resilience of the industry, ensuring their impact for future generations.

How has networking or involvement in the Airport Community benefited your career?

Jennifer Baxmeyer: Networking and involvement in the Airport Community have greatly benefited my career and the museum. Organizations such as the JFK Chamber of Commerce and JFK Rotary Club have served as invaluable resources for the museum, facilitating connections between industry professionals and the broader public. Through these networking opportunities, the museum has forged relationships with key figures in the airport community, gained insights into industry trends, and explored collaborative opportunities that have enhanced and contributed to the success of the museum's initiatives.

Has the airport worker shortage in our area affected your company or business?

Jennifer Baxmeyer: The worker shortage has indeed affected our museum. We are witnessing the industry's urgent need for a talented workforce. As a result, we are actively working to address this issue by raising awareness among students and families through various programming initiatives. One such program is our "Career Conversations," where we host days for industry leaders to engage directly with families and students, providing insights into career opportunities within the aviation sector. Through these efforts, we aim to inspire and educate the next generation of workers to consider careers in aviation and aerospace. ■



Cradle of Aviation Museum

Charles Lindbergh Blvd.

Garden City, NY 11530

www.cradleofaviation.org

2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Alyssa Burke

Director of Operations and Logistics, The ARK at JFK

Alyssa Burke joined the ARK at JFK team in January 2019 to expand her knowledge and expertise in the aviation industry. Alyssa is responsible for daily operations, including oversight of the daily equine import and export operations, coordination of all ground movements, management of the human resource department, and building security. Alyssa comes to The ARK with several years of Human Resource experience from one of JFK's largest ground handling companies. She specializes in billing, payroll, employer-employee relations, labor law compliance, employee training and development. Alyssa has a passion for helping others and emphasizes team building. She always looks for new ways to develop and maintain administrative systems, policies, and procedures. Alyssa is a vital member of the team at The ARK at JFK. With all that she has accomplished thus far, she still aims to continue learning and developing her knowledge of the aviation industry to continue her upward trajectory in her career.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Alyssa Burke: I began my career in the aviation industry in 2012 as a passenger service agent and gradually advanced into the role of business administration and Director of Operations. I saw many avenues the aviation industry offered and was eager to get my foot in the door.

What is the most memorable moment during your career at the airport?

Alyssa Burke: The ARK at JFK was an integral part of the import of approximately 80 international horses competing in the 2022 Longines Global Champions Tour. I coordinated the operation's staffing, ground handling, vetting, and ground handling. It was exciting to be associated with such a significant movement; these magnificent horses traveled worldwide to compete in New York.

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

Alyssa Burke: While I believe that women provide a uniquely collaborative style and emphasize teamwork, the interaction among male and female leaders yields the optimum results in an organization. This approach fosters an environment where diverse voices are heard and valued. Women hold five out of seven senior managers at The ARK. However, we believe these women were the most qualified for their positions regardless of gender.

Did you have a mentor at the beginning of your career?

Alyssa Burke: I witnessed the opportunities the aviation industry offered firsthand; I am surrounded by successful, motivated individuals who began their aviation careers at a young age. At the very start, many mentors and peers offered guidance, advice, and support as I navigated my career path.

Elizabeth Schuette, The ARK at JFK's President and CEO, has significantly impacted my professional success. She provided me with guidance and advice based on her own experiences and expertise, and I can now confidently navigate through the many challenges I face today. Her insights and encouragement allow me to realize my full potential.

How has networking or involvement in the Airport Community benefited your career?

Alyssa Burke: Networking and involvement in the airport community have given me opportunities and helped me establish connections. Building relationships with industry professionals allows me to gain valuable insights and advance my career.

Can you want to tell us about any sustainability initiatives your company has implemented?

Alyssa Burke: The ARK at JFK continually seeks opportunities to uphold environmental stewardship, aiming to decrease operational expenses and appeal to eco-conscious clientele and collaborators.

■ **Sustainable Materials:** For construction, renovation, and maintenance projects, we use environmentally friendly and recycled materials whenever possible.

■ **Green Procurement:** We source products and supplies from vendors that use sustainable practices and prioritize items with minimal packaging or recycled materials.

We are also evaluating the introduction of electric equipment into ground operations. Our long-term plan includes replacing 80% of our fossil fuel equipment with electric units within the next 4-6 years. ■



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



Denise Erickson

Vice President, Airport Division, Duty Free Americas

Denise Erickson is the Vice President of the Airport Division at Duty Free Americas (DFA) North America. She oversees Miami International Airport, Terminal 7 at JFK International Airport, Dulles International Airport, and Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. Denise is responsible for the day-to-day Duty Free operations of four airports and 40 stores to include: airport relationships, business development, staffing, marketing, customer service, brand assortment and distribution. She works with local agencies to ensure compliance with all federal and state regulations pertaining to DFA business.

Denise has been in the travel retail industry for 28 years. While attending the Fashion Institute of Technology, she began her career with Fenton Hill International/Duty Free International. She started at DFA in 1995 as a supervisor in JFK Terminal 7 while finishing her bachelor's degree in Marketing and Merchandise management. Her career accelerated soon after, and she was promoted to the General Manager position at Terminal 7. In 2001, Duty Free Americas acquired DFI, and Denise's role expanded to Regional Manager overseeing LGA, Boston, Cincinnati, BWI, and JFK. In July of 2020, Denise was promoted to Vice President of the Airport Division.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Denise Erickson: I started with Fenton Hill American in 1995 as a supervisor while attending the Fashion Institute of Technology, studying Buying and Merchandising. The airport was my backyard growing up in Howard Beach and Ozone Park; it truly was a local opportunity for me.

Was working in the aviation industry or at airports your first choice for your career path?

Denise Erickson: I dreamed of working in the Fashion district until I started at the airport. The opportunities were endless, and I swiftly grew my career with Duty Free before making the decision to stay in Travel retail. I fell in love with meeting new people, helping charity organizations, and building a second family, my airport family.

How has networking or involvement in the Airport Community benefited your career?

Denise Erickson: Being part of the JFK Rotary Club and JFK Chamber of Commerce enables me to give back to our community. My relationships with my peers are strong; together, we can successfully support our local community. The JFK community has faced many challenges, such as 9/11, Hurricane Sandy, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

What are the top skills a new airport worker should have to succeed?

Denise Erickson: Travel retail is different from traditional retail, and the skills needed are somewhat different. To succeed, you need to be outgoing and engaging, be able to work as part of a team and have a strong work ethic. We represent the JFK Airport community and need to be able to leave a lasting impression on our passengers.

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

Denise Erickson: I have many, but two would be The JFK Rotary Club annual holiday party for local children with special needs—this is my favorite! Nothing is more fulfilling than being with 400 children and providing a moment in their lives where they dance, play, meet Santa, and smile.

The second is being honored in 2023 as “Woman of the Year” during the Bishop Wright Aviation Industry Awards Luncheon and again in August by the JFK Rotary Club.

Did you have a mentor at the beginning of your career?

Denise Erickson: Throughout my professional career, I have had several mentors, and I have learned the value of making and maintaining relationships for yourself and your company.

What is the most significant barrier to finding an airport job in our area?

Denise Erickson: There are few barriers to finding work at the local airport. Jobs are available in every segment of the airport market. When I started in 1995, I had no idea what the airport had to offer regarding opportunities.

Our challenge is spreading the word within the surrounding airport communities. Duty Free Americas is doing this by participating in local community outreach programs and attending local employment and career fairs. ■



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2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Mayra Fazio

General Manager Facilities & IT, Delta Air Lines

Mayra Fazio is the General Manager of Facilities and IT for Delta Air Lines Terminal C at LaGuardia Airport. She manages the network used to support the organization's critical systems and customer phasing systems, the terminal's security and surveillance system, creates departmental processes and procedures, and works closely in coordination with the Port Authority, the TSA, and other stakeholders in the security system. Ms. Fazio previously served as the Systems Support Project Manager at JFK International Airport Terminal (JFKIAT); Special, Technical Senior Project Manager at NACO - Aruba Airport Authority; Program manager for Oxford Airport Technical Services, and has over 27 years experience in airport operations, focusing on relationships with owners, contractors, operations, and all project associates.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Mayra Fazio: My first airport job was in Ground Transportation at various terminals in JFK, which exposed me to the aviation industry. However, my aviation career really started in 1997 with JFK International Air Terminal. At the time, JFKIAT was a new company, and it was one of the first large airport third-party Terminal Operator projects in the U.S.

What are the top skills a new airport worker should have to succeed?

Mayra Fazio: To succeed in the aviation industry, a new worker should be able to work as part of a team, have strong customer service skills, follow strict safety and security protocols and regulations, and adapt to the ever-changing environment.

Did you have a mentor at the beginning of your career? Can you tell us about them?

Mayra Fazio: I did have a mentor who allowed me to grow in my role by encouraging me to gain knowledge, providing me with advice and guidance, helping me overcome challenges, and allowing me to make career decisions.

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

Mayra Fazio: The increased participation of women in leadership roles has brought diverse experiences, valuable skills, and different perspectives in the aviation industry, thus allowing for new ways of thinking about innovation and encouraging inclusivity.

Is there an airport redevelopment project that you are most interested in seeing completed?

Mayra Fazio: The new construction projects are at JFK Airport and the Delta Air Lines terminal at LGA.

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

Mayra Fazio: I was working at JFK, and in 2010, the eruption of a volcano in Iceland created an ash cloud that affected the European IFR airspace for about five days. With cancellations of flights, we had many people camping at the terminal; many were on vacation and didn't have the resources to stay in hotels.

The airport community mobilized to provide an area for the passengers to wait and provided cots, blankets, food, and even mobile shower trailers to help the stranded passengers feel comfortable. It was a community effort.

Do you want to tell us about any sustainability initiatives your company has implemented?

Mayra Fazio: Sustainability is part of the day-to-day operations at LaGuardia Airport. Delta Air Lines has a plethora of sustainability initiatives, but one that interests me is the new Information Broker.

The Information Broker serves as a unified platform for collecting data from any and all airport systems. It collects data that can be used to improve passenger experience, maximize operational efficiency, and reduce energy costs.

Have you noticed any lasting changes in the workplace since the Pandemic?

Mayra Fazio: One of the lasting changes in the aviation industry since the Pandemic has been the changes in digital platforms, in which more and more critical touchpoints of the passenger's journey are done without much interaction, from check-in to bag drop to screening points and even inflight services. ■



Delta Air Lines
LaGuardia Airport
Terminal C
www.delta.com

2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Teresa Ferraro

President & CEO, East/West Industries, Inc.

Teresa Ferraro is the President & CEO of East/West Industries, an SBA-certified Woman-Owned Small Business/Women's Business Enterprise (WOSB/WBE) company in Ronkonkoma, NY. East/West has over 55 years of dedicated service in the design, development, and manufacturing of aircraft seating systems and other critical components for military aircraft crew safety in both fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft. Ms. Ferraro has a 40-year track record of success providing fiscal, strategic, and operational leadership at the rapidly growing company her parents founded in 1968.

She is known for her exceptional interpersonal skills and ability to resolve multiple and complex challenges while motivating staff to peak performance. Over the last eight years, she led the most significant business expansion in East/West's history, including the move to a new facility and a recent expansion, which increased the company's footprint by 50% and led to almost doubling its workforce. Ms. Ferraro has utilized her skills to create successful business relationships with major aerospace and defense contractors, including Boeing, Lockheed, Sikorsky, and Northrop Grumman. Ms. Ferraro led East/West's success as the 2018 Boeing Supplier of the Year.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Teresa Ferraro: I have been in this industry for 40 years, and I entered our family business after I graduated from Adelphi University. Throughout my college career, my main focus was business administration and finance. I did not think I would enter military and commercial aviation. East /West is an engineering manufacturing company that produces life-support and ground-support equipment for military and commercial aircraft. Equipment such as helicopters, seating systems, and oxygen systems provide the highest level of safety in both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft.

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

Teresa Ferraro: Throughout my career, I have seen the advancement of women in aviation, not only on the manufacturing side but also from the OEM side (such as Lockheed, Sikorsky, Boeing). The commercial aviation field is expanding, which is the pathway for young women to show the available opportunities.

I have also worked closely with the Cradle of Aviation to expose young women to female astronauts who have been able to shatter the glass ceiling. These female astronauts have been able to explain to young women that their goals, dreams, and paths are not boundaries.

How has networking or involvement in the Airport Community benefited your career?

Teresa Ferraro: Networking and mentoring are critical skills for any leader. I work closely with the Cradle of Aviation Museum in Garden City to foster STEM and mentoring to the next generation. I also work closely with Long Island MacArthur Airport and the Cradle of Aviation to bring hands-on experience and knowledge

to local high school students. Both these opportunities provide local manufacturing companies focused on the aviation field exposure to students, whether college-bound or not, to the opportunities within aviation.

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

Teresa Ferraro: I was recently honored with the *Harriet Quimby Award* at the Cradle of Aviation's 20th Annual Air & Space Gala. This award celebrates the exceptional contributions of women in aviation. I shared the honor with Colonel Eileen Collins, a U.S.A.F. pilot and astronaut who was the first female pilot on a shuttle mission.

This award and the *Leroy R. Grumman Award* for leadership in the aviation community were two highlights of my career. Leroy Grumman was truly inspirational, and at the forefront of aviation on Long Island. I was incredibly proud and honored to have East/West highlighted on our contributions to the aviation community.

Is there an airport redevelopment project that you are most interested in seeing completed?

Teresa Ferraro: I am most interested in the Airport development project for Long Island at Long Island MacArthur Airport. This airport will provide excellent opportunities for aviation growth here on Long Island. It will also provide a path to many destinations and offer a career path for those in aircraft maintenance, general aviation, and management positions. ■



East/West Industries, Inc.

2002 Orville Drive North
Ronkonkoma, NY 11779

www.eastwestindustries.com



Klaudia FitzGerald

Chief Operating Officer, LaGuardia Gateway Partners

LaGuardia Gateway Partners (LGP), the manager and developer of LaGuardia Airport's new Terminal B, appointed Klaudia FitzGerald as Chief Operating Officer in November 2023. FitzGerald joins LGP's now majority-women-led executive leadership team from AvAirPros Inc., where she most recently served as the JFK Terminal One operator's Senior Director of Operations.

A seasoned operations leader in the airport industry, Klaudia oversees LaGuardia Airport Terminal B's commitment to safety, security, and operational performance. Her career stretches across two decades.

Most recently, she concluded a 12-year tenure with JFK's Terminal One operator AvAirPros in various operations roles leading up to Senior Director of Operations. Additional aviation industry experience includes roles with a registered travel program, Clear, covering product launch and management, employee relations, regulatory compliance, and marketing and sales.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Klaudia FitzGerald: While studying at Hofstra University, I worked for two international carriers, Lufthansa and Singapore Airlines, which sparked my fascination with airport and terminal operations. During my time at Singapore Airlines, I learned the foundation of airline operations, including delivering exceptional passenger experiences, managing catering services, load control, and ramp operations. Upon graduation, I was hired full-time at JFK Terminal One as a Duty Manager, where I gained hands-on experience in the day-to-day management of a busy international terminal.

Was working in the aviation industry or at airports your first choice for your career path?

Klaudia FitzGerald: Absolutely! My interest in airports began when I arrived from Poland at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport as a teenager with my family to start our new life in the U.S. My first field trip with my new junior high school class was a visit to JFK's International Arrivals Building, where we toured a Boeing 747-400. This quickly jump-started my interest and passion for aviation. My fascination with aviation propelled me during my studies at Hofstra University to work with various airlines and at JFK's Terminal One, which started my aviation career.

Is there an airport redevelopment project that you are most interested in seeing completed?

Klaudia FitzGerald: First, even before joining LaGuardia Gateway Partners, I was impressed by the recent and incredible redevelopment of LGA Terminal B, which Skytrax has since awarded its highest global 5-star rating and named the world's best new airport terminal. It's now my honor to be part of the executive leadership team that will continue to elevate our amazing Terminal B experience. As Vantage Airport Group led LaGuardia Gateway Partners' Terminal B redevelopment, I'm now most excited to see what they do at JFK T6 as part of JFK Millenium Partners. It is sure to be another spectacular gateway to NYC!

Do you want to tell us about any sustainability initiatives your company has implemented?

Klaudia FitzGerald: We're proud that Terminal B has earned a LEED Gold certification for the design and construction of the new terminal, and we continue to conceptualize ways to implement operations as sustainably as possible. At first glance, we've eliminated the use of single plastic straws terminal-wide. Our energy-efficient baggage handling system transitions to sleep mode when not in use, conserving more than 35% of energy compared to airports using older technology. In 2023, we completed our first terminal waste audit to help identify points to maximize further the reduction of waste and greenhouse gas emissions from the terminal. Sustainability is a critical focus for LaGuardia Gateway Partners, and we strive to be a key driver of these crucial initiatives for the airport industry.

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

Klaudia FitzGerald: LaGuardia Gateway Partners has an Aviation Internship program with Vaughn College, and we invite one student per semester interested in pursuing an aviation career. The program offers a 15-to-18-week hands-on opportunity to learn the fundamentals of an airport terminal facility across day-to-day operations and relations with terminal guests, administration, and business partners. Interns rotate through each department at LGP to gain first-hand aviation experience that equips them with knowledge and skillsets critical to leading a successful career in the industry. We're thrilled that, to this date, each intern welcomed through the program has been offered and accepted full-time roles within our organization. ■



LaGuardia Gateway Partners

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LeSher Harvey

Commercial & Compliance Manager, JFK Millennium Partners

During the day, LeSher Harvey is a Commercial & Compliance Manager for JFK Millennium Partners (JMP) at Terminal 7, a role she has held for over a year. In her free time, she's the founder and leader of JMP's "People of Passion" (PoP) community outreach group, a 17-member strong team of JMP staff that volunteers their time to support initiatives in the local Queens community.

At T7, LeSher manages and optimizes the Terminal's commercial operations and ensures compliance with standards and regulations. She oversees the development and management of concession spaces within the Terminal, fostering partnerships with vendors and ensuring adherence to contractual obligations and regulatory requirements, all while ensuring a great passenger experience. Prior to joining JMP, which is part of Vantage Airport Group – LeSher worked for over a decade in the retail industry, most recently in senior positions at Gap, Inc. and Primark. LeSher has always been passionate about helping others and giving back to the community. Over the last six months, the JMP PoP team has worked closely with the Saratoga Family Residence at Jamaica-based Homes for the Homeless. They've organized terminal-wide toy and school supplies drives and a resume-writing workshop for the Shelter's 255 families, with plans to collaborate further this year.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

LeSher Harvey: I began my career in the aviation industry through a unique opportunity presented by Vantage Airport Group in January 2023. Upon researching the company, I discovered that their values resonated strongly with me, and their innovative contributions to the industry inspired me.

My professional background spans over 15 years in retail management, encompassing various roles such as Operations, Compliance, and Merchandising. Given my passion for travel and fondness for airports, the transition to the aviation sector was particularly exciting for me. This new role at Terminal 7 allowed me to merge my retail expertise with the intricacies of airport operations.

While I lacked a direct background in aviation, I viewed this as an advantage in my current role. It enables me to approach challenges from our customers' perspective, ensuring that their needs remain at the forefront of our operations. In hindsight, transitioning from retail to aviation has proven to be one of the best decisions of my career, and I am grateful for the opportunities it has afforded me.

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

LeSher Harvey: As Ruth Bader Ginsburg famously stated, 'Women belong in all places where decisions are being made.' This sentiment underscores the importance of women's voices in shaping progressive policies and practices within the aviation sector. Women leaders advocate for inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring that the needs of all travelers are prioritized in decision-making processes.

With a focus on collaboration and empathy, women aviation leaders champion initiatives that facilitate smoother travel experiences for families, such as dedicated family lanes at security checkpoints, designated nursing and baby care facilities, and family-friendly

amenities throughout airport terminals. By embracing diversity of thought and prioritizing the well-being of passengers, women leaders drive innovation and progress in our sector, ultimately enriching the travel experience for families and individuals alike.

How has networking or involvement in the Airport Community benefited your career?

LeSher Harvey: Networking and active participation in the airport community, particularly through the establishment of our JMP People of Passion team, has been transformative for my career. When our former COO (now interim CEO, Steve Thody) tasked me with spearheading a team dedicated to fostering engagement within our JMP team and the wider T7 and Queens community, I embraced the opportunity wholeheartedly.

JMP PoP has allowed us to make meaningful contributions to both our local community and the Terminal 7 environment. From organizing events such as Easter Bunny sightings and school supply and feminine care drives to volunteering at community events like Senator Leroy Comrie's Turkey and Fixings Giveaway Event, we've been able to give back in impactful ways.

One of our notable initiatives was the Valentine's Day Candy Gram drive, which raised funds for Homes for the Homeless, and fostered a sense of community spirit among Terminal 7 employees.

Through JMP PoP, I've created a tight-knit community among my peers and the broader T7 community. This experience has not only enriched my professional network but has also instilled a deep sense of fulfillment by contributing positively to the lives of others. ■



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Jamaica, NY 11430
www.anewjfk.com

2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Shehla Iftkhar, MEd., CRC, LMHC

Academic & Career Advisor, Aviation Management, York College

Shehla Iftkhar advocates for the rights of people with financial hardships, mental health issues, and physical disabilities in New York State. She is at the forefront of advocacy to shape the public image of people with physical or mental health disabilities. She is a staunch supporter of “No one is 100% disabled.” Shehla has advocated for the mentioned groups at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City during the G20 Millennium Development Goal Summit and at the House of Minorities in Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. Based on her research and twelve years of experience at various counseling agencies, she effectively advocates on behalf of people with and without disabilities for increasing happiness, realizing the meaning of life, and being gainfully employed, resulting in their becoming productive members of society.

Her work has earned several distinguished human rights advocacy awards. Shehla has earned dual Master’s degrees with distinction in Mental Health Counseling and Vocational Rehab Counseling from Hofstra University. She is the CEO of Shift Vision Inc., a New York-based consulting firm that trains people in the technology sector with the social goal of converging human potential, success, and happiness through gainful employment. Shehla is also a TedX speaker fluent in five different languages.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Shehla Iftkhar: I applied for the Academic and Career Advisor position at CUNY. With my Graduate degree in Vocational Counseling, I thought this would be a great match. I have traveled to 67 countries, and being an avid traveler, I could not have asked for a better job than in Aviation. I luckily got selected to become an Academic and career Advisor for Aviation Management at York College, CUNY, the one and only Aviation Program at CUNY.

I am a seasoned counselor and find it gratifying to mentor and guide young aviation students in the ever-robust world of aviation. It is certainly more than being a pilot.

What steps has York College taken to help attract qualified workers?

Shehla Iftkhar: Founded in 1847 as the nation’s first free public institution of higher education, CUNY today has 25 colleges spread across New York City’s five boroughs. These serve more than 225,000 degree-seeking students of all ages and award 50,000 degrees each year. The Aviation program at York College is committed to delivering the highest quality aviation-oriented education, research, and service to our students, college, and university.

The Aviation Management program, part of the Department of Business and Economics of the School of Business and Information Systems, strives to provide students with a top-rated business education that instills strong functional and industry knowledge needed for outstanding practice in Aviation. York Aviation graduates have earned a high reputation in the industry, with many occupying management positions at the three major airports of the greater New York area and airlines based in the US and abroad.

Aviation Management at York is located right underneath the Air train. Our students can reach any tri-state airport in a matter of

minutes. We offer various internships to suit the aviation student’s interests, schedule, and career path. Students have gone as far as Athens Airport in Greece for a Summer Internship. Our convenient location has attracted young moms, career professionals, and the underserved who rely on public transportation.

What is the most significant barrier to finding an airport job in our area?

Shehla Iftkhar: The most significant barrier to finding an airport job is the need for more experience in this field. Networking is critical in the aviation world. Since the Pandemic ended, students have been slow to return to class in person.

As a result, the tendency to attend classes remotely has become a barrier to employment and job retention. Huge potential and demand in the aviation field continue to attract aviation students to York Aviation Management.

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

Shehla Iftkhar: In the world of Aviation, there are still some pockets where it’s rare to find a female. However, at York Aviation Management, the department chair, several faculty members, the college president, and my colleague, the industry specialist, are all women. To foster inclusivity and innovation, there is no match for a woman’s insight. Women are now NYPD helicopter pilots, Terminal Directors, astronauts, and Aviation engineers. ■



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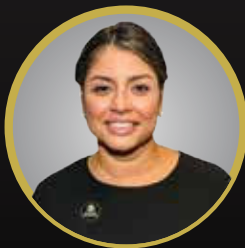
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Chief Executive Officer
nancy@dh2limo.com



MIKE VARGAS
Chief Operating Officer & Founder
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2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Stacey Lora

Vice President Safety & Security, JFKIAT

Stacey Lora, Vice President Safety and Security, manages Terminal 4's safety and security program. She ensures that T4 is focused on achieving a zero-accident culture and adhering to all security-focused regulations while working closely with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police, the Transportation Security Administration, and US Customs and Border Protection, among others.

Ms. Lora previously served as a security manager for American Airlines and has more than 20 years of experience in aviation operations.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Stacey Lora: I started working at JFK just out of high school. I had the choice to work for TWA or American Airlines, so I went with American. I worked part-time while going through college. The airport is an environment like no other. I went in the direction of Aviation Security, so I pursued a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice at Adelphi and later earned a Master of Business Administration focusing on Strategic Management. In my experience, being a woman in this field was and is challenging. You must always continue improving your skills. Aviation is a dynamic and ever-changing environment. My experience and education have helped me tremendously in my current role as Vice President, Safety and Security at JFKIAT, T4. Take the opportunities presented to you; they will serve you well.

What makes the New York metropolitan area unique to other aviation and airport markets?

Stacey Lora: The New York Aviation market is unique because there is a taste of everything available. New York is a bustling business market, but JFK has a lot of pleasure travel; it is a melting pot. You can meet people from various continents walking through Terminal 4. It is such a diverse environment, and it is very rewarding to get to know visitors and listen to their stories of travels.

Tell us about any sustainability initiatives your company has implemented?

Stacey Lora: At JFKIAT, we have a comprehensive sustainability program whose mission is to continuously advance sustainability initiatives by capitalizing on opportunities in the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) sectors to create an eco-friendly terminal for the benefit of all stakeholders. In doing so, we developed a strategy focusing on environmental stewardship, social responsibility, accessibility & inclusion, and community engagement. Our sustainability focus areas include energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste management, water conservation, climate resilience, indoor environmental quality, sustainable transportation, biodiversity, community impact, innovation, and food & beverage sustainability.



In 2022, Terminal 4 at John F. Kennedy International Airport was awarded Platinum certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). Terminal 4, operated by JFKIAT, is the first airline terminal in the United States to receive Platinum recognition for pre-existing airline terminals.

Does your company have internships or other programs to attract young employees, particularly women?

Stacey Lora: Yes, JFKIAT actively recruits female interns from local colleges and universities. Currently, 85% of our interns are female. Additionally, JFKIAT is a co-sponsor of Girls In Aviation Day each year at JFK Airport. ■



JFKIAT / T4

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2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Dr. Maxine Lubner

Professor & Chair of the Management, and formerly Aviation Departments, Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology

Dr. Maxine Lubner is a Professor and Chair of the Management and, formerly, Aviation, Departments at Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology, New York City. Previously, Dr. Lubner was appointed Executive Director of the City University of New York (CUNY) Aviation Institute at York College and a faculty member at New York University's Graduate School of Social Work. She has conducted research in the areas of aviation safety, human factors, and aviation education. She holds an FAA Private Pilot Certificate. She obtained an undergraduate B.A. and a graduate B.A. (Hons) in Counseling Psychology from the University of Cape Town, South Africa. She earned her M. Phil. and Ph.D. degrees in Sociomedical Sciences from Columbia University, New York.

Was working in the aviation industry or at airports your first choice for your career path?

Maxine Lubner: My first choice for my career path was in public health and mental health. Obtaining my FAA Private Pilot Certificate while in graduate school helped me to realize that the social science and public health fields had a great deal to contribute to advancing aviation safety and aviation education. I also found that the rapid development of aviation, the allure of its global reach, and the fascinating people in the field were bound to keep me enthusiastic about this field for many years.

I wrote a dissertation on "Rates and Risks for Accidents, Incidents, and Violations Among U.S. Pilots" while also working for the FAA researching and evaluating pilot decision-making programs. Vaughn College hired me because of these qualifications.

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

Maxine Lubner: Having role models who have forged new paths in aviation, friendships, and the support of other women in similar circumstances is always a source of camaraderie and instruction. I am grateful for their willingness to share their experiences. It has also been exciting to me to notice the change from being one of very few at an aviation conference to one of many.

Did you have a mentor at the beginning of your career? Can you tell us about them and how they impacted your career?

Maxine Lubner: I have been fortunate to have more than one mentor, but Dr. Al Diehl, then at FAA, was instrumental in getting my early start in aviation safety research and education. Dr. Diehl was willing to sponsor me while I was finishing my doctoral degree by having me work on developing and evaluating decision-making training programs for pilots for the FAA. The results of some of this work were ultimately included in the current preparation and testing of candidates for the FAA Private Pilot Certificate.

What are the top skills a new airport worker should have to succeed?

Maxine Lubner: We teach aviation students to develop transferable and soft skills as well as technical knowledge related to aviation and airport management.

The transferable and general skills include communication, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning. The interest and ability to learn and have the integrity to be responsible members of society could help advance careers in the technologically sophisticated and ever-evolving aviation industry. Knowledge of aviation-specific content helps improve students' motivation and desire to follow a career path and contribute to aviation.

Have you noticed any lasting changes in the workplace since the Pandemic?

Maxine Lubner: Students, faculty, and staff have learned to work remotely and continue to do so at the same or better level of productivity than it was pre-pandemic.

I have been involved in a research group that has tracked student progress from the pre-pandemic (2016) through the disruption to the current new normal phase. We have found that objectively evaluated student performance has steadily improved since the pre-pandemic phase.

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

Maxine Lubner: My most memorable moment during my career was my first solo flight as a student pilot to secure my FAA Private Pilot Certificate. I came face to face with the realization that I was fully dependent on my own skills to survive. ■

VaughnCollege
of aeronautics and technology

Vaughn College
86-01 23rd Ave.,
New York, NY, 11369
www.vaughn.edu

2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Julia Moris

Senior Manager of Customer Experience, JFKIAT

Few names resonate as profoundly as Julia's in customer experience management. With a career spanning over a decade, Julia has championed the cause of enhancing customer satisfaction, leaving an indelible mark across industries and continents. Since 2021, she has served as the senior manager of Customer Experience at JFK International Air Terminal. JFKIAT has steered the terminal towards new heights, ensuring every passenger's journey is marked by efficiency and satisfaction, aiming to create incredible journeys for all coming through. Before her tenure at JFKIAT, Julia honed her expertise at Hospital Corporation of America, Deloitte & Touche, Highgate Holdings, and Marriot & Preferred Hotels. Spearheading transformative initiatives and advisory in the U.S., South America, Europe & Asia. Beyond career, Julia channels her passion towards philanthropic endeavors.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Julia Moris: My journey into the aviation industry was unexpected. With a background primarily rooted in customer experience and service across various industries, such as healthcare and hospitality, I found my way into the aviation sector following my tenure in healthcare. What intrigued me initially was the operational similarity between healthcare and airports, which is surprising to many people. One of the beautiful things about the aviation industry is the array of career opportunities beyond the conventional roles often associated with aviation, from food & beverage, asset management, and marketing to art and communications; the list is pretty extensive, and the opportunities are endless. Despite not having formal aviation education, my proficiency in understanding human connection and centricity proved highly transferrable and invaluable in navigating airport operations' complexities.

Was working in the aviation industry or at airports your first choice for your career path?

Julia Moris: Truthfully, my post-college professional journey centered around journalism, followed by people management. From the moment I experienced the world of service and creating truly remarkable experiences, my world changed. There's something truly rewarding in seeing seamless journeys and memorable guest interactions. It's interesting how we can touch someone's life and change their day. With that said, once I got a taste of the aviation world, I was captivated. The diversity of opportunities beyond the traditional roles fascinated me. Leveraging my customer service background to enhance airport passenger experience solidified my commitment to this dynamic and fulfilling industry.

Did you have a mentor at the beginning of your career? Can you tell us about them?

Julia Moris: In the early stages of my career, I had the privilege of being mentored by an amazing Chief Operating Officer, which significantly transformed the experience landscape. Her background

is a truly inspiring story: a nurse turned into a COO. She taught me so much about the importance of human connection and balancing operational demands. The guidance shaped my career and my approach to leadership and customer engagement. I often find that we don't emphasize enough the importance of soft skills, especially when navigating the many intricacies of politics and diverse backgrounds of people.

How has networking or involvement in the Airport Community benefited your career?

Julia Moris: It's been invaluable! The airport community's revolving door naturally underscores the importance of networking; it has allowed me to meet so many incredible people, foster collaborations, stay abreast of industry trends and opportunities, and navigate the intricacies of airport operations effectively.

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

Julia Moris: Women bring such a unique and distinctive perspective to leadership. Our diverse backgrounds bring varied viewpoints, experiences, and cognitive styles to the table, which inspires creative thinking and innovation from various angles. As leaders, we serve as role models and mentors, particularly for aspiring leaders, other women, and underrepresented groups. Balancing assertiveness with strong empathy skills, we ensure inclusivity by ensuring that all voices are heard. It's interesting; I was reading about how research suggests that women leaders prioritize long-term thinking and sustainable practices, tending to consider the environmental and social impacts during decision-making. It seems as if there's a natural inclination to it. ■



JFKIAT / T4

Terminal 4

Jamaica, NY 11430

www.jfkt4.nyc

2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Nancy Vargas

Chief Executive Officer, DH2 Chauffeured Transportation

Nancy Vargas has provided ground transportation service throughout the entire New York metropolitan area since 1995. Thanks to Nancy's innovative business strategies, DH2 Chauffeured Transportation has enjoyed continued growth despite regional and national economic downturns. Starting with the diversification into corporate transportation in 2016, Nancy expanded the business into new market segments such as government contracts, airline flight crew, construction mobility, hotel shuttle service, employee shuttle service, and corporate events.

Nancy was a candidate for the Leukemia Lymphoma Society Man and Woman of the Year, and in 2023 became involved in the LLS Leadership Team. Nancy has received five *Chamber Alliance Awards*, *Business Woman of the Year*, *Power Women in Business*, *CEO of the Year*, and *Transportation Woman of the Year*.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Nancy Vargas: Our company, DH2 Chauffeured Transportation, has provided ground transportation services for the past 29 years, and JFK Airport has been in our backyard since the start of our business. The company initially started providing corporate services to transport corporate travelers to and from local airports.

Did you have a mentor at the beginning of your career? If so, can you tell us about them and how they impacted your career?

Nancy Vargas: Not at the beginning of my career; however, I now have several in my market as I have navigated throughout the years. One piece of advice I would give is that having a mentor at the beginning of your career is a great resource to help you navigate triumphs and challenges.

As a Latina woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry such as this, I am committed to supporting and mentoring other women entrepreneurs.

How has networking or involvement in the Airport Community benefited your career?

Nancy Vargas: I'm the Immediate Past President of The JFK Airport Rotary Club and a member of the JFK Chamber of Commerce, KAAMCO, and LAAMCO. I'm also an active member of the Kiwanis Club of LaGuardia Airport and serve the Catholic Guild at JFK. Networking within the airport community allows you to build new relationships and share your services with the community.

Is there an airport redevelopment project that you are most interested in seeing completed?

Nancy Vargas: The various JFK projects are monumental and right in our backyard. Operating from Building 79 and being part of the JFK community, we are most excited to see it transform into the state-of-the-art, world-class airport it deserves to be.

Tell us about any sustainability initiatives your company has implemented?

Nancy Vargas: As an industry, we understand that we must evolve and that sustainability initiatives are essential to our environment. We plan to evolve and diversify our fleet to include EV vehicles and shuttle buses by 2027.

DH2 is adapting and evolving into the future, and everyone, including all stakeholders, partners, and vendors, are doing their part to adapt to the sustainability initiatives.

Have you noticed any lasting changes in the workplace since the Pandemic?

Nancy Vargas: Yes, absolutely. We've seen a shift, particularly in the remote space. While we do have a few positions in this space, most of our job opportunities are in person. This has been a big challenge for us.

Has the airport worker shortage in our area affected your company or business?

Nancy Vargas: We hire CDL-licensed drivers throughout the year and have felt the pinch of labor shortages like other companies operating at the airport. Not having enough qualified candidates in the labor pool does affect our business; however, we've been able to get by and even grow with the valuable employees we currently have.

Our company culture is a big part of why they stay; we have raised the bar when it comes to salary and benefits to ensure that we attract the best talent available. ■



DH2 Chauffeured Transportation

Building 79 JFK Airport
79 North Boundary Road
Jamaica, NY 11430

www.dh2limo.com

2024 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS



Diana Santiago

*Aviation Program Manager & FAA Liaison,
BOCES Western Suffolk – Wilson Tech Aviation Facility*

Diana Santiago started her career at Aviation High School, obtaining her Airframe and Powerplant certifications from the Federal Aviation Administration. She then pursued a Bachelor of Science in Aviation Transportation Planning from Dowling College. She also holds concurrent Master's degrees in Business Administration and Education from Dowling College. Diana is in the process of completing her postgraduate degree in Leadership from Stony Brook University. In addition to her FAA certifications, Diana holds her FCC & EPA license and NYS teachers' certifications in Aviation Maintenance and Occupational Coordination.

Additional career endeavors include working at the Department of Energy at Brookhaven National Labs in their transportation division and Vaughn College as their Manager of Aviation Partnerships and Alumni Coordinator. For the past 20 years, Diana has taught Aviation Maintenance Technology to high school students at the Wilson Technological Facility. Throughout her career, Ms. Santiago has received numerous commendations, citations, and awards for her contributions to education and the aviation industry.

How did you get your start working in the aviation industry?

Diana Santiago: I began my career in the aviation field at Aviation High School, where I completed my Airframe and Powerplant Certification. While attending college, I worked at the Department of Energy in their transportation division. Prior to working at Wilson Technology, I worked at Vaughn College as their Aviation Partnership Manager and Alumni Coordinator. I later worked at SUNY Aerospace as an Aircraft Maintenance Technician.

My passion and interest in aviation started with my educational experience at Aviation High School. From the very onset, it was my first and only career choice. Now, decades later, it still is; my love and dedication for this industry have only grown with time!

Did you have a mentor at the beginning of your career? Can you tell us about them?

Diana Santiago: Access to female mentors and leaders is instrumental for young women. I've received immeasurable support and guidance from my male counterparts throughout my career. However, due to the scarcity of women in the field when I started my career, I have never had the benefit of this experience.

As a result, it has become my mission to foster the growth and development of up-and-coming professionals in the industry, especially young women.

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

Diana Santiago: For decades, women have been breaking into male-dominated industries. The aviation and education industries should be no exception.

Having Women in leadership roles helps attract other women into a workforce starving for diverse talent and skilled laborers. In

my experience, young people benefit from seeing others who look like them in these roles. It expands their horizons and makes them consider new possibilities for their future.

How has networking or involvement in the Airport Community benefited your career?

Diana Santiago: Running a successful high school and adult training program requires tremendous industry input. Wilson Technology is very proud to have been chosen as a Delta Partner School. Additionally, through our Technical Advisory Board, we partner with local FBOs and aircraft/military defense manufacturers throughout Long Island.

They provide us with content for curriculum enhancement and support regarding training equipment and aircraft upgrades.

What makes the New York metropolitan area unique to other aviation and airport markets?

Diana Santiago: What makes the New York metropolitan area unique is that we have some of the busiest airspace in the country. We are a port city surrounded by three major metropolitan airports and countless regional and private airports.

The aviation industry is a highly sustainable market; it contributes to nearly 5% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. New York State airports generate almost 500,000 jobs and nearly \$80 Billion in economic activity. This translates to ample job opportunities for an industry that produces approximately \$28 billion in payroll and benefits for its residents. ■



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UPCOMING 2024 MWBE 101 SESSIONS

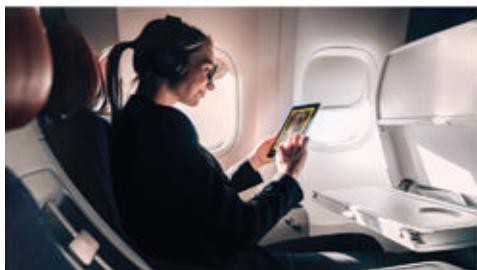


A Very NYC Themed Double Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony at Terminal 5 at JFK

Located in T5 at JFK Airport, the newly opened **Bryant Park Market by Hudson and Herschel Supply Co.** offers airport travelers an authentic New York shopping experience. Whether shopping for last-minute travel essentials or indulging in a bit of luxury, these new retail spaces will surely delight.

Bryant Park Market is operated by Hudson in partnership with ACDBE partners Kellee Communications, The Nourish Spot, and Sullivan Hernandez Group. This new location is the first time New York-based Bryant Park Corporation has worked with an airport concessionaire to broaden its marketing and merchandising footprint to the public. The store is inspired by Bryant Park's Winter Village, providing travelers with a shopping experience reminiscent of the iconic Manhattan Town Square millions visit each year.

Bryant Park Market offers a vast assortment of global and local brands, including locally sourced products made right here in the five boroughs. The assortment comprises products from local- and minority-owned businesses, such as Fine & Raw Chocolate, Honey-Gramz, Eleni's, Baked Cravings, Wonderen Stroopwafels, and many more. Bryant Park Market also has an extensive souvenir and sports collection and is proud to offer products supporting the Jackie Robinson Foundation, which supports education, scholarships, and inclusion. The assortments will continue to evolve and change with the seasons. ■



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ON DUTY

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



Warren Christie

■ **JetBlue Airways** announced the promotion of **Warren Christie** to chief operating officer effective February 12, 2024, concurrent with the previously announced transition of current president and chief operating officer **Joanna Geraghty** to the role of chief executive officer. Christie will report to Geraghty. Christie currently serves as head of safety, security, fleet operations, airports, and JetBlue University. In his newly expanded role, Christie will lead the airline's day-to-day operational performance, assuming responsibility for the airline's safe and reliable operations, overseeing JetBlue's airports, flight ops, inflight experience, safety, security, system operations, and technical operations functions, as well as JetBlue University's training academy.

■ Chief Financial Officer **Markus Binkert** is to leave **Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS)** after more than 19 years. He will take on new duties as CEO of the SV Group, which is active in various areas of the gastronomy and hotel management fields. Binkert will leave SWISS at the end of May. The search for his successor is underway.



Markus Binkert



Jennifer Aument

■ **The New Terminal One** at JFK Airport announced **Jennifer Aument** as its incoming CEO, who is set to assume the role on April 1, 2024. The New Terminal One is currently under construction, with its first gates scheduled to open in 2026, in partnership with the PANYNJ, as part of the agency's \$19 billion transformation of JFK Airport. Aument brings over 25 years of experience in developing major infrastructure across the highway, rail, airport, and port sectors. Her career includes executive roles in public-private partnerships and megaprojects.



Rosalind Brewer

■ **United Airlines Holdings, Inc.** has announced that **Rosalind Brewer** is joining its Board of Directors. Brewer is an influential leader with CEO experience, repeatedly recognized by Fortune and Forbes. Brewer most recently served as President and CEO of Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc., a global leader in retail pharmacy and healthcare, where she shaped the company's strategic direction and navigated the complexities of the healthcare landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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NON-REV TRAVELER

A One-Day Visit to Porto, Portugal



BY JONATHAN KATZ
jkatz@metroairportnews.com

Portugal is a beautiful country, and we have visited Lisbon many times in the past. This time, after hearing so many terrific comments about the northern city of Porto and how different it is from Lisbon, we decided a visit was in order.

Beginning at our wonderful and very modern, 5-Star Sheraton Porto Hotel (\$127.00 per night), we took the Metro Do Porto to the Sao Bento Station. It was here that we began our one-day trip to Porto.

Our first stop was Rua Das Flores, a pedestrian walking and shopping street that brought us down to the Rio Douro that separates both sides of Porto.

Upon arriving at the river, we found ourselves in Porto's Cais Da Ribeira section. This riverfront area has many terrific restaurants; we stopped for lunch and a couple of beers.

After lunch, we walked up to the side of the river and across the Ponte De Luis I Bridge. Walking across this bridge to the other side is very popular, where several port wine producers and sellers exist. We

were lucky enough to sample several types of port wine on this side of the river. After sampling some port wine, we decided to take a river cruise that went under six of Porto's marvelous bridges, which highlighted the views of the city and the nearby mountains.

Just a note: After the cruise, we were on the river level and needed a way to get to the top of the bridge, which was not easy and a long way up, to take in the fabulous views of Porto. We were advised to go into the car park, take the elevator to the 8th floor, and then walk up to an excellent spot for pictures called Jardim Do Murro. The Gaia Cable Car transverses this side of the river in this area. We were so impressed with the views of the city and mountains from the top of the bridge that we walked over the bridge several times to enjoy the sites. There is plenty of room for pedestrian traffic, but you must be careful because trains also run on this bridge level. The Funicular Dos Guindais will also take you from the river level to the top of the bridge, but it is closed in the off-season.

At the end of the day, we walked over the bridge's upper level back to the Sao Bento Station and took the metro to our hotel.

To be different, we flew Tap Air Portugal from Lisbon to Porto (ZED fare), but on the return, we took a very convenient three-hour train ride from Porto back to Lisbon. Both forms of travel were virtually the same price at \$40 per person each way. We flew Delta Air Lines from JFK to Lisbon round-trip for this vacation.

We were very impressed with Porto and highly recommend this city, and we will definitely return. ■





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UPCOMING EVENTS

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

March 7 – 10:00am

LAAMCO Monthly Meeting
LaGuardia Airport-Terminal B
East Elmhurst, New York 11371
www.laamco.com

March 9

**2024 Women's
Adventure Film Tour**
Cradle of Aviation Museum
Charles Lindbergh Blvd.
Garden City, NY 11530
www.cradleofaviation.org

March 11 – 7:00pm

**Civil Air Patrol
Falcon Squadron Meeting**
JFK International Airport, Building 14
Jamaica, New York 11430
www.falconsquadron.cap.gov

March 12

ADDAPT Dinner Group
Heritage Club at Bethpage State Park
99 Quaker Meeting House Rd
Farmingdale, New York 1173
www.addaptny.org

March 13

KAAMCO Members Meeting
JFK International Airport
14 S Service Road
Building 14
Jamaica, New York 11430
www.kaamco.org

March 14

PANYNJ ACDBE Certification
Virtual Event
www.anewjfk.com

March 14 – 12:00pm

**LGA Kiwanis Club
Monthly Meeting**
LaGuardia Airport Marriott Hotel
East Elmhurst, New York 11369
www.lgakiwanis.org

March 19

MWBE Certification Webinar
Virtual Event
www.anewjfk.com

March 21 – 11:30am

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

March 25 – 7:00pm

**Civil Air Patrol
Falcon Squadron Meeting**
JFK International Airport, Building 14
Jamaica, New York 11430
www.falconsquadron.cap.gov

March 26 – 11:30am

**FDU Master of
Public Administration
Information Session**
Virtual Event
www.fdu.edu

March 27 – 7:00pm

**JFK Chamber of Commerce
Cocktail Networking**
Aldo's Restaurant
137-01 Cross Bay Blvd.
Ozone Park, New York 11417
jfkairportchamberofcommerce.org

March 27 – 7:00pm

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

March 28

**Wings Club
March 2024 Luncheon**
Speaker: Larry Culp, CEO,
GE Aerospace
The Yale Club
New York, New York 10017
www.wingsclub.org

March 28 – 12:00pm

**LGA Kiwanis Club
Monthly Meeting**
LaGuardia Airport Marriott Hotel
East Elmhurst, New York 11369
www.lgakiwanis.org

April 3

**JFK Rotary Club
Monthly Dinner Meeting**
Vetro Restaurant & Lounge
Howard Beach, New York 11414
www.jfkrotaryclub.org

April 10

**2024 Bishop Wright Aviation
Industry Awards Luncheon**
Honoring: Rinzing Wangyal, Folasade
Olanipekun-Lewis, Rev. Les Mullings
Russo's On the Bay
Howard Beach, New York 11414
www.jfkchapel.org

April 16

**School Sisters of Notre Dame
Shuffle into Spring**
Honoring: Steve Carbone
and Sheila Lewandowski
Russo's On the Bay
Howard Beach, New York 11414
www.ssndecwomens.com

May 4

**LaGuardia Airport
Kiwanis Club Kids Day**
LaGuardia Airport-(LGA)
East Elmhurst, New York 11369
www.lgakiwanis.org

May 5

JFK Rotary Club 5K Runway Run
JFK International Airport
Jamaica, New York 11430
www.jfk5k.com

May 5

**38th Annual Scholarship
Golf Classic**
Teterboro Airport-(TEB)
Basking Ridge Country Club
Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920
www.teb.com

July 18

**2024 Airport Community
Golf Classic**
Lawrence Yacht & Country Club
Lawrence, New York 11559
www.acgolfclassic.com



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