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Southwest Airlines Employees Show Their LUV for President Colleen Barrett With a Song, Gift, Video Tribute, and the Sound of Cowbells

The Most Influential Woman in Aviation Steps Back from Management Role - Company Throws a Good Old Fashioned Surprise Party!

DALLAS, July 15 /PRNewswire/ -- The clamoring of cowbells and a rendition of a Willie Nelson song is not what you would expect to hear in the lobby of a Fortune 500 company; but then again, Southwest Airlines is famous for doing the unexpected! Southwest Executive Colleen Barrett, who leaves her role as President effective today, was honored by Employees in Dallas with a surprise tribute to show appreciation for her years of Servant Leadership. (Colleen will remain a fulltime Southwest Employee through July 2013.) The monumental event was centered on hundreds of Southwest Employees cheering for a woman the Company LUV built affectionately calls its "Queen of Hearts."

"Well, we all know that Colleen doesn't like surprises! But, we also know that Colleen can't be totally surprised that her Southwest Family wanted to make this day a little extra special for her," said Southwest CEO Gary Kelly. "The transition from an extremely hardworking President to an extremely hardworking Southwest Employee is a huge milestone. From the 34,000 Southwest Family Members -- job well done, Colleen Barrett -- we'll see you tomorrow!"

As Colleen's Southwest Family gathered at Corporate Headquarters to mark her last official day as President, the Employees celebrated the milestone exactly the way Colleen's mother would have wanted -- with the ringing of cowbells. The ringing of cowbells is a tradition that dates back to Colleen's childhood in Bellows Falls, Vermont. Her mother used to ring "that darn cowbell," as Colleen would say, every time she or her brothers would accomplish a significant goal or celebrate a colossal moment in their lives. In fact, the distinctive sound of "that darn cowbell" marked many historic milestones for Colleen, and today was no exception.

Video footage/photos of the celebration and Colleen Barrett can be found at the following links:

- Online celebration video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BZw_TDCfek
- Additional video footage: <http://gallery.swamedia.com/videos/value=open/type=video>
- Photos: <http://gallery.swamedia.com/photos/kw=SWApeopleOfficers>

About Colleen Barrett:

Prior to joining Southwest (in 1978), Colleen Barrett worked for several years as an Executive Assistant to Herb Kelleher (Southwest's Founder and former Executive Chairman) at his law firm. For Southwest Airlines, she has served as Secretary of the Corporation since March 1978; and served as Vice President Administration from 1986 to 1990; Executive Vice President Customers from 1990 to 2001; and President from 2001 to present.

Colleen has been named one of the "World's 100 Most Powerful Women," by Forbes.com (2005, 2004); one of the "50 Most Powerful Women in Business," by Fortune (2003, 2002); and one of the "100 Most Influential Women in Aviation," by Women in Aviation International (WAI) (2003); in addition, Colleen has been presented the Horatio Alger Award (2005); Texas Trailblazer Award (2005); Tony Jannus Award (2007); IWF Woman Who Makes A Difference Award (2004); and she was inducted into the International Pioneer Hall of Fame as a Woman in Aviation, (2005).

<http://www.southwest.com>

SOURCE Southwest Airlines