

## The Heart of ALPA

By Capt. Jeff Kilmer (FedEx),  
Executive Chairman, ALPA Pilot  
Assistance Committee

**Being a line pilot in this day** and age is beyond challenging. We face the challenge of delivering our passengers, cargo, and crew safely to their destinations every day under intense and continual economic pressures. Mergers, bankruptcies, skyrocketing fuel prices, and a slowing economy—all add up, quickly, and it all takes its toll on ALPA members. In a time when many pilots are having trouble dealing with today's harsh reality, it's comforting to know that there is hope.

ALPA recently hosted the second annual Pilots Assistance Forum, and I must say I came away from it inspired.

takes special pilots—ones who are not afraid to talk about their feelings, for starters—to help their brothers and sisters get back on track.

The Pilot Assistance Committee members, volunteers, and advocates are the heart that drives that conscience, the compass that reminds all pilots, even those who might have veered from the path, how to find their way back.

They are not lawyers, doctors, or psychologists; they are trained peers who shed light on pilots in need, helping them recognize their problems and providing a link to the professional resources it takes to bring pilots in need back from darkness.

We have countless examples of pilots who are back on track to recovery,

being said. Each one transforms into a best friend who has known the troubled pilot for that pilot's entire life—accepting who that pilot is and, more importantly, who that pilot is not.

They help ALPA members become better pilots *and* better people. And for that, they deserve our respect and

praise. The work they do for our union is so sensitive in nature, it's not often showcased. You likely won't read a newspaper article about the people who support our members behind the scenes after the trauma of an accident or incident, and you certainly won't read about how a pilot successfully returned to the line after an intense HIMS intervention.

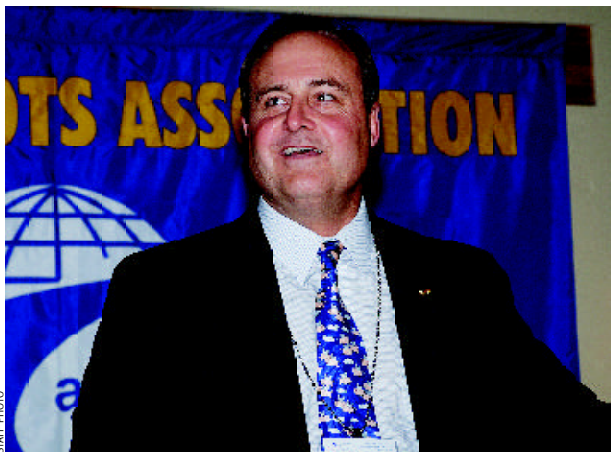
But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't celebrate who they are and what they do. It doesn't mean that we should bury the success stories and stifle those who want to share their experiences to help others in the same position—and we don't!

I'll leave you with this sentiment: steady-ing the heartbeat for your union, and your fellow pilots, provides more than just support or even a safer flying environment. It provides the compass and the conscience that we all strive to achieve, every flight of every day. I want to personally thank all of the pilot volunteers for supporting their fellow pilots and taking the time to listen for what others are saying between the lines.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to invite other pilots who are interested in learning more about the Pilot Assistance Committee to contact me at [Jeff.Kilmer@alpa.org](mailto:Jeff.Kilmer@alpa.org) about how they can begin helping other pilots. 🌐

ALPA's Pilot Assistance Committee is made up of the following committees:

- Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP)
- Professional Standards
- HIMS (anti-alcohol and substance abuse) program
- Canadian Pilot Assistance
- Aeromedical 🌐



Capt. Kilmer addresses attendees at the recent second Annual Pilots Assistance Forum, held in Phoenix.

Three jam-packed days of witnessing the overwhelming support of pilots who simply want to help other pilots in their time of need. It was indeed humbling.

We all suffer from the stresses and pressures of day-to-day activities, but more than 300 pilots responded to the call, willing to give more of themselves and become informed about effectively helping their fellow brothers and sisters.

To me, that is above and beyond the call of duty. As professionals, we all put our heart and soul into our jobs. But it

who have saved not only their careers, but also their families, their marriages, their lives, their hope for a better day.

From resolving unprofessional behavior in the workplace and confronting substance abuse head-on to walking a pilot through difficult medical situations or the emotional and physical stress one suffers after an accident or incident, these selfless pilot volunteers know how to handle situations that leave others speechless.

By listening closely to problems, the volunteers are able to hear what is not