



Meet Our Members: Tonya Otter

As PASS's organizing drive within the Federal Aviation Administrations (FAA)'s Air Traffic Services from 2021–2023 marched toward completion, moving district by district, employees began joining PASS—district by district.

One of those employees was Tonya Otter, a management and program assistant at the Detroit Metro air traffic control tower. “I’ve been in PASS since our district voted to take part,” she said. Detroit falls under the FAA’s Cleveland District and in January 2023, employees voted overwhelmingly for PASS. As a matter of fact, Otter submitted her 1187 before she and her colleagues were officially moved into the PASS bargaining unit by the FAA!

Otter is still learning about PASS and the union’s efforts to protect employees in the workplace and how PASS enforces its two collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) with the FAA. “But I never had a question in my mind about joining and supporting PASS,” she said.



Otter was excited to share her experience with the FAA’s Elevate Mentorship Program (EMP). In July, the EMP celebrated the graduation of its inaugural class, or ‘cohort’—Otter was one of the 75 graduates!

Overseen by the FAA’s Office of Civil Rights, the EMP is a career development and mentorship program. Its goal is to empower and educate current FAA employees with the tools necessary to help them throughout their career.

“I applied to be a part of the program for the opportunity of career growth and developing a skill set to help me succeed in the agency,” said Otter, who has been with the FAA just over three years. She began her federal service at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Otter explained that the program lasted nine months, with a mixture of online learning content, live virtual sessions and working with an assigned mentor at least monthly. With such a vast network, Otter was able to



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learn in detail about other organizations outside of Air Traffic Services and see how varied the career opportunities are within the FAA.

“Just meeting and speaking with other FAA employees across the country and just about every line of business made the experience worth it,” Otter continued. She said it was a thorough course that prepares employees to advance to the next steps in their career. “We learned how to communicate effectively and to create a personal brand. I can’t recommend this program enough for any employee at any career level to join. It’s an empowering experience!” And these are skills that Otter can bring to her experience with PASS.

When asked why she joined PASS, Otter explained that it is in her blood. “I come from a long line of union workers in my family: with the United Auto Workers and Pipefitters locals in Detroit. I’ve seen firsthand the power of unions and their benefits directly through my family.” This is the same power PASS brings to Otter and all the employees it represents in Air Traffic and beyond.