

July 9, 2021

ACI-NA 2021 Concessions Awards Judges  
 Airport Council International—North America  
 1615 L Street, NW, Suite 300  
 Washington, DC 20036

Dear Concession Awards Judges:

With 73 million annual passengers flying to 193 domestic and 67 international destinations, Dallas/Ft. Worth International Airport (DFW) has steadily transformed itself into one of the world’s most illustrious hubs garnering a wealth of accolades including ACI-NA’s 2019 award for Best Large Airport in North America for Customer Service and Airport Transport World’s 2019 Global Airport of the Year Award.

The ACI-NA Customer Service Award is particularly relevant as I write to nominate Carolyn (Suzie) Grider, affectionally called, Suzie-Q by the entire DFW airport, for ACI-NA’s aptly named Heroes Award. I want to commend ACI-NA for creating this award in light of Suzie’s contribution to the DFW community which have been particularly heroic during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With SSP America since 2008 Suzie has worked at DFW for a total of almost 30 years and works almost every day—7 days a week. Suzie is a host and is responsible for greeting each passenger that visits our stores. She has worked at a variety of restaurants over the years including Tigin’s, Pizza Vino and Flying Saucer and since the pandemic has worked as a host, busser, food runner, and sandwich-maker extraordinaire. By way of background Suzie hails from the great state of Texas. She is a family woman and treats her SSP America family like they are her own.

SSP America utilizes a set of principles, called The PASSION Principles, which align our company around one set of service ideals. Suzie perfectly embodies the SSP America ethos established by these highly valued Principles.



## The PASSION Principles

**Passion** for every detail  
**Authentic** experiences  
**Service** from the heart  
**Sincerity** every step of the way  
**Innovation** every day  
**Open** to new ideas  
**Noble** at all times

Suzie’s nomination is first and foremost an exercise in recognizing her longevity in an industry which experiences extraordinarily high, system-wide levels of turnover. We estimate Suzie interacts with hundreds of passengers each day she works and over the span of her DFW career, her passenger interactions would be in the tens of thousands. Her longevity to this industry is, in and of itself, worthy of recognition.

Yet, her longevity is not our primary motivation for her nomination even though Suzie’s years of service are inspiring, it is the quality of each and every one of Suzie’s interactions which leave us awe struck. Our management team has seen Suzie interact with countless passengers who, for any number of reasons, are experiencing stress. The stress might be from a cancelled flight, the sheer pressure of travel or even stress in their personal lives. These passengers can sometimes be in tears. Our managers have seen Suzie gingerly approach these passengers experiencing a difficult time and end up literally having a good cry with the passengers because she has so much empathy. The passengers walk away from their time with Suzie a bit more hopeful, and always inspired, by the plain-spoken woman who treats each passenger as they are the most important person in the world.

DFW is well known for its efforts to build a community of employees and Suzie is considered a key member of the DFW community. She is known by literally everyone from the Airport staff, leadership, SSP employees and other employees in the facility. Suzie is well known for playing

*I’m a food travel expert from SSP America. We’re passionate about bringing cool, authentic restaurants to airports that reflect a taste of place.*

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a key leadership role in taking new employees and is considered a go-to resource, but also as a friend who always has a sympathetic ear.

The impact of COVID-19 has been disastrous at a macro level and certainly companies like SSP have felt the loss of passenger traffic in a particularly acute manner. The human toll on our employees has been particularly devastating as closed restaurants don't offer work hours necessary to support families. And, while our nomination of Suzie is not driven by her performance during the pandemic, it is important to note that during the restaurant closures, Suzie experienced hardship finding it difficult to feed her family, pay bills and make ends meet.

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*"Suzie stands out amongst the thousands of employees I've met throughout my career as one of the friendliest, most caring employees I've had the pleasure to work with. Everybody knows Suzie at DFW—she's quite the celebrity! I hope she's recognized for her incredible contribution to the Airport."*

*Michael Uremovich*  
*Director of Operations*

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Yet, despite her personal financial hardship due to the loss of passenger volume and subsequent restaurant closures, Suzie's professionalism, so evident for so many years, never wavered. Even in the grimmest months of the pandemic, she arrived to work each day with a smile on her face, ready to embrace the day with the same dedication she's brought to work for 13 years.

During COVID-19 our employees were asked to step up in extraordinary ways, as we all did what we could to keep the business going. The sacrifices made by our team are hard to fathom as the hours have been extremely long and employees have been asked to perform tasks they'd never performed previously. Suzie is a great example of our employee dedication as she has taken on any role we've asked. She has hosted, bused tables and run food, but she's also run entire dining rooms and assisted with management reports. We've taken to calling her 'The Sandwich Lady' as she's currently preparing more than 100 sandwiches a day for our locations in addition to lots of other tasks.

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*"Suzie takes care of guests. She consults with them. She even makes sure they get to their flight on time. She's a huge part of the DFW family and a job to be around."*

*Oscar Hernandez*  
*Regional Vice President*

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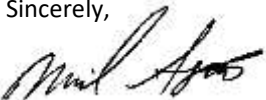
Suzie's dedication to DFW's passengers is legendary. In fact, DFW is such a strong proponent of Suzie's, the Airport nominated Suzie for the Moodie Davitt Report's 2018 Team Member of the Year Award which celebrates employees from around the world and their commitment to passenger service. Suzie was an award finalist and traveled to Geneva, Switzerland for the awards ceremony. In DFW's award application they wrote, "Suzie Q works seven days a week

because she wants to. She arrives at 5:00 am and writes down the flight schedule so she personally knows when passengers will arrive. She advises passengers food choices, side selections and puts a smile on their face with her quick wit and sweet laugh. She puts everyone at ease and delights passengers who aren't expecting her humor and caring way. She always scores 100% on the Mystery Shopper scores."

We asked Suzie what she likes about her job and she explained, "It keeps me busy and keeps me going. I love people. I'm a people person. If you've got early flights people are sleepy and tired. You've got to help them have a good trip."

I am honored to submit this award application and hope you will view Suzie's nomination favorably. She is one of the greatest heroes of our industry and is truly in honor of this award.

Sincerely,



Michael Svagdis  
Chief Executive Officer