



Team Member Spotlight: Senior SIM Instructor Tandy Middleton



The month of March is Women's History Month, and we would like to take the opportunity to share the incredible stories of just a few of the standout members of our diverse team. This week we're featuring Senior SIM Instructor, Tandy Middleton – a certified 121 pilot, lifelong aviation fan and Membership Chair for the Women in Aviation Houston Chapter. Read on to hear some of Tandy's story!



What was it that first interested you in aviation?

I was born and raised in Southern California. Twice a year my family would take a trip to visit our grandparents in New York. On these flights - I was always fascinated by the cockpit and I was only five when I decided I was going to become a pilot.

I have so many friends that have said, "You're the only person that I've known in my life who knew what they wanted to do when they were little and then did it!" It kind of blows my mind to think back then I didn't really know anything about what aviation life was like or what it would take. I just knew that I wanted to fly!

My family was very supportive of my early passion, and when I was in the 6th grade I got an assignment to interview a professional person in a career that interested me. My parents took me to the local airport in Oxnard, CA to interview a female flight instructor. As a surprise, they had also scheduled a discovery flight! From the moment I held that yoke I had officially caught the "aviation bug."

What's it like being a Senior SIM Instructor – how did you get here?

Knowing that I wanted to be a pilot, I went to flight school in college immediately following my high school graduation and earned a bachelor's degree in aviation management. I was a flight instructor for two years and really loved it because it showed me the importance of teaching and mentoring and the influence that you can have on someone's career. It's much more than the instruction and passing the check on that day – it's helping folks incorporate those lessons into meaningful experiences that will support them in the future.



I began flying at the regional level after my time as an instructor...but like many pilots I was strongly affected by the downturn of the pandemic. During that time my life really changed, and our family grew (I have two adorable sons!) so I was looking to transition into a different role with a more flexible schedule. Being a SIM instructor is great because I get to exercise my passion for



instructing and have a schedule that works well for my family! I absolutely love my job as a SIM instructor and am so thankful to be a part of the CommuteAir Family.

What's been your experience being a woman in aviation?

I have been so lucky to have amazing instructors, mentors, and friends. People always pushing me to be my best, helping find answers to questions I have, never making me feel any different than my peers. That being said...there have been a few occasions where someone I am working with says something inappropriate or unprofessional that made me feel uncomfortable in some way. It took a lot of courage to speak up in those moments and say I wasn't okay with it. Most of the time the person immediately apologized and the rest of the time working together was enjoyable. Sometimes people do or say things they think are funny or complimentary, the intent is not malice and when confronted they correct their actions.

What advice would you give to future female aviators?

When you meet good people, make the effort to keep them in your life. Take the time to maintain your friendships, check in with them when they are going through something new, professionally or personally, either good or bad. Get involved and volunteer in aviation organizations like Women in Aviation! The positive differences you make in our industry today will help you personally throughout your career and set the stage for the future. Remember - If someone says something or does something that makes you uncomfortable, speak up right in that moment no matter who you are!



Tandy with the Women in Aviation Houston Chapter