

## CARES SPOTLIGHT



# AISS CARES Newsletter

Building  
relationships.

Strengthening  
communities.

## CARES Spotlight on Sandra Merriweather

This month's Employee Spotlight is Sandra Merriweather. Currently a Special Education teacher and campus contact at Pease Elementary School, Ms. Merriweather has worked at Austin ISD for 10 years. During that time, she served as an ESL 4th grade and 3rd grade bilingual teacher.

Diversity. That's what Ms. Merriweather loves about teaching in Austin ISD. She loves teaching students from diverse backgrounds and helping them learn how to be successful.

Her personal philosophy on customer service is to treat others with respect, fairness, honesty, and kindness. Working with our special needs students, she reminds us that we all have abilities and disabilities because we are human. Ms. Merriweather accepts each of her students and

meets them where they are. She helps them to understand that it is okay to think and learn differently. Each student has gifts, talents and abilities and Sandra develops strong relationships with their parents to ensure that what she does in the classroom is reinforced at home. For her, communication is key.

Ms. Merriweather's best customer service experience involved a student who was experiencing low self-esteem because of something another student had said about her. Sandra asked the student if she believed what the student said was true. The student told her that she didn't.

Ms. Merriweather explained to the student that people will have various opinions but the most important thing for each of us to do is to hold on to what we know is true about

ourselves. She continued to tell the student that if she is kind and does her best to help others everything will work out. Sandra encouraged the student to feel the love of our families and friends and share that with others, we will be alright. A few weeks later, the student's mother approached her with words of appreciation because she had helped her daughter to see the beauty within herself. Being an educator is a public service and this experience reinvigorated her.

Ms. Merriweather draws her inspiration from her parents and retired Army Veteran husband. Knowing how to lead is important, but also knowing how to follow is just as important.

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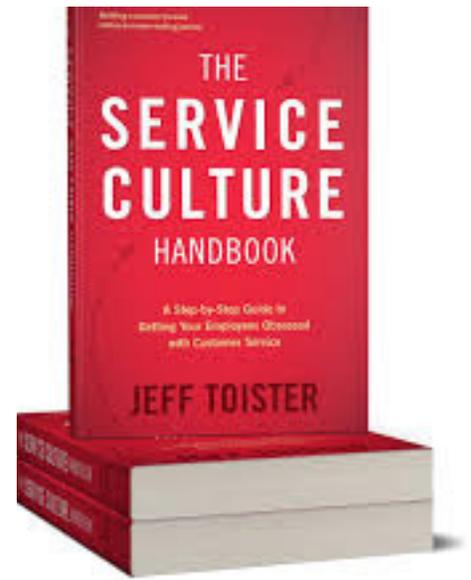
# AISS CARES Book of the Month

In *The Service Culture Handbook*, the author outlines a step-by-step blueprint for organizations to follow if they are serious about great customer service being the rule and not the exception. Building a culture of great customer service is hard work. The author says, "Culture isn't a side project. It's a way of doing business that should be integrated into everything you do, and it needs unmistakable executive sponsorship if it's going to work. Building a strong culture takes time and full commitment."

To get the most out of this book, be prepared to roll up your sleeves and get to work. You'll learn how to collaborate with your team to establish a clear customer service vision and a set of core values that will serve as a guide — constantly

reminding everyone of how you the organization treats customers. In addition, you'll learn how to effectively communicate the vision as well as hire, train, empower, and manage to it.

The book is packed with great examples of leading organizations that truly have engrained a culture of great service. Companies like REI, Safelite Auto Glass, Shake Shack, and others. You'll hear about stories of employees so committed to the service culture that they go to extraordinary measures to take care of their customers. You will learn of one company's employees that carried diesel fuel up to the 17th floor of a building in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy to keep a diesel generator running so customer websites wouldn't go down.



The *Service Culture Handbook* will make a great addition to anyone's library that is interested in making a positive impact in customer service at any organization.

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## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Customers don't expect you to be perfect. They do expect you to fix things when they go wrong."

Donald Porter, V.P. British Airways

## APPRECIATION DATES FOR MAY

May 6–10

Teacher and Substitute Teacher Appreciation Week  
School Health Team Appreciation Week

May 8

National Teacher Day

May 9

National School Nurse Day

May 13–17

Police Officer and Security Appreciation Week



As of April 30, Let's Talk! has received 992 dialogues! The top five interest areas make up 48% of all dialogues submitted. Staff continue to beat vendor experience with other school districts in average response time and average customer experience rating. We intend to add more departments in mid-May. Look for an update in the upcoming weeks. Visit Let's Talk! 24 hours a day, seven days a week at [austinisd.org/hr/customer-service/lets-talk](http://austinisd.org/hr/customer-service/lets-talk).



**TOP 5**  
INTEREST AREAS



**AVERAGE**  
CUSTOMER RATING  
AND **RESPONSE TIME**

# New HQ Open Office

## Five Etiquette Tips on How To Work in an Open Office Environment

As we move to the New HQ, the old ways of conducting business will fade away. One of the biggest changes will be the open office concept. Transitioning from offices and cubicles to an open floorplan encourages collaboration but it can also lead to distraction. Here are a few tips to guide us to an efficient and effective work environment.

### Respect Privacy

In an open office environment, employees work close to each other where you can see your colleague's computer screen and overhear their phone conversations. This may be a cause of concern for some. For confidential conversations, please use one of the phone rooms. Quiet rooms and huddle spaces are also available.

### Keep it Clean

Since we won't have doors or cubicles, your space is a shared space and mess is a shared mess. Be sure to wipe down your area on a regular basis, remove food or drinks, and keep your area organized.

### Shhh...Quiet Please

Inside voices, please. Noise travels far in an open office. Even if you are not distracted by music or talking, it may distract others near you.



Remember to be aware of the volume of the ringer on your phone, the cute ringtone of your cell phone, the audible "ding" of your new email message, and the music playing on your computer.

Consider using headphones to listen to music, silencing your cell, turning your ringer down to a low tone and turning off your audible computer notifications.

### Be Scentsible

Remember that some people are sensitive to certain scents. Go easy on the cologne and perfume. To assist in keeping work areas clean and food smells at a minimum, please eat in the break area and not at your desk.

### Be Considerate

Put yourself in your colleague's shoes and think about how you would like to be treated or how you would like them to conduct themselves. Consideration and respect go a long way, especially in an open office environment.

Adapted from *Open Office: 5 Etiquette Tips for Workers*, by Sammi Caramela. [businessnewsdaily.com/10913-open-office-etiquette.html](http://businessnewsdaily.com/10913-open-office-etiquette.html)





# CONGRATULATIONS!!!

February, March and April 2019

RAVE Winners

The following employees were nominated for providing outstanding customer service by ensuring an exceptional customer experience is had by those with whom they came into contact. If you would like to recognize a colleague who exemplifies the highest level of customer service in all interactions, please complete a nomination form at <https://www.austinisd.org/hr/customer-service/rave>.

Alejandra Gonzalez, Teacher, Brentwood ES

Amber Laroche, Principal, Brentwood ES

Anthony Bromberg, Asst. Principal, Murchison MS

Bradley Lancaster, Academy Director, Akins HS

Cathy Heath, Temporary Administrator, Learning Support

Cecilia Gutierrez, Teacher, Akins HS

Chaitra McGrew, Asst. Principal, Houston ES

Courtney Jackson, Teacher, LBJ ECHS

Crystal Martinez, Facilitator, ALC

Cynthia Diaz, Counselor, Small MS

David Reinhart, Asst. Director, TAD

Dru McGovern-Robinett, Executive Director, TAD

Eliza Saenz, Asst. Principal, Blazier ES

Gareth Horwood, Counselor, Anderson HS

Guillermo De Leon, Help Desk Specialist IV, Customer Support

Henry Tang, Programmer/Analyst, MIS

Hugh Johnson, Bus Driver, Saegert Transportation Center

Irma Lira, Payroll Specialist II, Finance

Janie Garza, Bus Driver, Nelson Field/Utility

Jordan Benson, Academy Director, Crockett HS

Justin Slocum, Network Architect, Network Support Services

Kara Schultz, Asst. Principal, Ridgetop ES

Kaysie Fernandez, Multi-Tiered Coach, Learning Support

Lillian Fortiscue, Admin. Asst. II, Brentwood ES

Linda Vann, Teacher Asst., Bowie HS

Lisa Bush, Admin. Supervisor, Middle School Office

Marta Johnson, Asst. Principal, Padron ES

Matthew Tiffée, Admin. Supervisor, Legal Services

Randy Campbell, Maint. Apprentice II, Service Center

Raul Vallejo, Parent Support Specialist, Pillow ES

Ricardo Tovar, Building Operator III, Service Center

Rick Botello, Building Operator III, Service Center

Rosa Peña, Director, Talent Acquisition and Development

Rudolph Matheny, Teacher, Austin HS

Sandino Nunez, Plumbing Specialist, Service Center

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.

Sara Brennan, Teacher, Murchison MS

Travis Brunner, Asst. Principal, O. Henry MS

Serena McMillon, Curriculum Specialist, Crockett HS

Vanesa Estrada, Data Processing Asst. II, Austin HS

Steven Monfrini, Electrician III, Service Center

Virginia Rodriguez, Security Guard, Murchison MS

Teri Wood, TBRI Coordinator, Learning Support Services

Wess Raney, Plumbing Specialist, Service Center



## AISD CARES TEAM

*Beverly Reeves, Administrative Supervisor  
James Alexander, Customer Service Specialist  
Leti Benavides, Administrative Assistant*

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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(512) 414-2473*

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Sandra believes that customer service is critical to the success of Austin ISD because it's our identity and how we are perceived by the public.

We selected Sandra because of an email received from a foster parent. He was so appreciative of the assistance provided by Ms.

Merriweather that helped him get his foster child enrolled in the right school and the right program. The parent stated that Ms. Merriweather "went above and beyond and was extremely professional, helpful, and sympathetic to my needs." She is the definition of exceptional customer service.