

## *Celebrating our guiding principle's tenth anniversary*

# Wanda Herndon leaves Starbucks with an invaluable gift

MY STARBUCKS—Some people study history. Others make it. Eleven years ago, Wanda Herndon, senior vice president (svp), Global Communications, made history when she authored Starbucks guiding principle: “Embrace diversity as an essential component in the way we do business.”

Thinking back to 1995, Wanda recalls, “Starbucks was already living its commitment to diversity by hiring a workforce that included people of all ethnicities, ages, genders, lifestyles and physical abilities. We just didn’t have a guiding principle for it yet.” So, when Sharon Elliott, Human Resources svp at the time, asked her to write the principle for diversity, she embraced the challenge with enthusiasm.

But if Starbucks was already demonstrating a commitment to diversity, what value did the guiding principle add? Wanda answers, “Putting the principle in writing reinforces the fact that Starbucks considers diversity to be an important part of our culture. It reminds us that this is something to aspire to every day.”

As for how the company “walks the talk” beyond the written word, Wanda says, “We prove our commitment to diversity through our actions. The male-female ratio at our company, especially when you look at our senior leadership, is like no other company I’ve seen before. Whether you are old or young or have one blue eye and one brown eye,



Wanda Herndon, svp, Global Communications, retires after eleven years at Starbucks but not without a legacy that includes penning our guiding principle: Embrace diversity as an essential component in the way we do business.

Starbucks will give you a chance to prove yourself.”

The company demonstrates its commitment to diversity both in the workplace and in the community, Wanda adds. “Our partnership with Urban Coffee Opportunities (UCO), a joint venture with Earvin “Magic” Johnson’s Johnson Development Corporation and Starbucks, helps introduce Starbucks to ethnically diverse communities throughout the country.”

Wanda, a member of the team who brought the first Starbucks stores to Japan, believes the company’s fast growth internationally can be attributed to the strength of our brand and diversity. “It’s vitally important for our workforce to reflect our diverse customer population—that’s been a key to our success as we’ve grown in Japan, China and in other countries. Also, when we discuss global business opportunities and new product ideas, our different perspectives and experiences can make sparks fly from which great ideas germinate. Diversity is strength.”

Wanda joined Starbucks in 1995 as vice president of communication and public affairs and will retire on August 1 of this year. Looking back, she says, “My career at Starbucks was truly a gift to me.” In reality, it’s Wanda who has given many gifts to Starbucks, not the least of which is our principle on embracing diversity that guides us every day, in everything we do.