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C.R. Smith Museum Hosts Educational Program for Girls

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POSTED BY: BRIANNA RONEY MARCH 28, 2019

The American Airlines CR Smith Museum hosted its Girls Soar! Aviation Day event for girls in 3rd-7th grade on Saturday, March 23. The event featured aviation and STEM information booths



Memorial Service

Jeff Youngblood went to be with his Lord on Monday, April 15th. Services will be held in the Chapel at Donnelly's Colonial Funeral Home on Saturday, April 20th at 10 a.m.



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and activities as well as meet and greets and presentations by aviation professionals.

"This is [Girls Soar's!] third year," Marie Eve Poirier, coordinator of STEM education programs, said. "This year, we're looking at almost 400 [participants]. We're having a second [Girls Soar!] in the fall for older girls, 8th-12th grade. We have more than doubled our reach in three years.

"We want to expose girls to different careers related to the aviation industry. We want girls to dream big and not let the fact they are girls stop any of their dreams. We are exposing them to female pilots, female engineers, female mechanics; we're showing them all of the different possibilities for their lives, and we want them to be excited and inspired.

"The airline industry is a growing industry. There are lots of opportunities for them and we want them to seize those opportunities and be the leaders of tomorrow."

First Officer Beth Powell, a pilot and duty officer for American Airlines, graduated from high school at the age of 16, which was the same age she took her first solo flight. She has been a first officer on the B737 since 2014.

"I fly the Boeing 737 internationally and domestically," Powell said. "I also serve as a pilot manager in the IOC, the operations center, doing flight ops, planning, and being an advocate for our pilots.

"I had the realization I could become a pilot at 15 years old. In high school, I loved everything pertaining to math. My teacher was fascinated by my brain and how I processed information. He said I was a technical learner, that I liked working with procedures, numbers, and formulas. He said I could become a pilot.

"I went to my parents and told them what my teacher said. My mom was very supportive of our dreams. She said we were going to research this. We went to Wings Jamaica Limited. I remember going up with my instructor in a small, two-seater airplane," she said. "After we did our landing, I had this big smile on my face and I said, 'That's it. I'm going to be a pilot.' I got my job as a pilot at American Eagle at 21 years old.

"Hearing me talk, it sounds easy. But, along the way, you're going to have challenges. It was an expensive career, so my parents said

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we had to put it on hold for a while and get some more money. Then I could finish my flight instructor's license and build those hours to go to an airline.

"I remember my dad working three jobs to take care of his family, so I decided that I too would get three jobs to pay for my flight instructor's certificate. I tutored math in the afternoons, I assisted a broker with selling car insurance, and on the weekends, I helped promote Jamaican parties. I did that for about two and a half years to build my hours, and then I got on with American Eagle."

Lisa Oxentine, managing director of global and key accounts for the Cargo Sales Team, joined American Airlines in 1987 as a frontline customer service agent.

"I started 32 years ago as a ticket agent at American Airlines. One thing I knew is that I didn't want to do that for the rest of my career," Oxentine said. "I asked a lot of questions and learned everything about every piece of the job that I could. I took the initiative. I was also a gate agent, and I learned about weight and balance. I later became a lead agent, and I worked at four different airports.

"About five years into my career, I knew I wanted to lead a team. I began to lead a team in the airport, and eventually I got into management. Currently, I lead a team of about 14 account managers who are located all over the world from Asia to Europe. We work with customers throughout the entire world to ship their products.

"Ultimately, my team's goal is to build and make more money for American Airlines, so we can be the largest and greatest airline in the world. We do that by traveling all over the world to meet with our customers face to face," she said. "We look for new opportunities and find creative ways to do business with them better and continue to maintain the business they give us every year.

"It wasn't easy to get promoted over the years. I built long lasting relationships in every job that I had. Knowing other people in other departments really helps you know your job better. A lot of people don't know what the cargo division is, but it's the most fascinating job I've ever had. Cancer treatments are shipped through us. We are saving children's lives every day. It is truly amazing what we can do when we work together."



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Uli Das, executive director of the American Airlines CR Smith Museum, celebrated her third year in the position on the same day as the Girls Soar! Aviation Day event.



“This is a really important date in our educational calendar,” Das said. “It’s an event that targets girls and aims to inspire them to have courage and consider STEM careers, so careers having to do with science, technology, engineering and math, especially in aviation. Since the rates of girls taking on those careers is still significantly lower than boys, we feel like we have an important role to play to educate girls and let them know that they can have those careers as well.

“We have lots of relationships within American Airlines with all kinds of different departments for when we design exhibits or when we develop programs. We have a pool of contacts, so we reached out to many of those different departments when we were in the planning stages of this event and asked for people who would like to contribute.

“We are very lucky because there are so many women at American Airlines who are in leadership positions and have really inspiring stories to tell. They are aware of the leadership role they can play in the community by passing on their stories to girls and the impact that they can have by sharing their journeys.”

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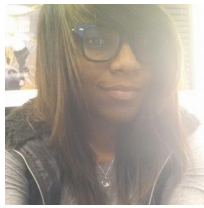
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