



Ninety-Nines

Inspiring Women Pilots Since 1929

SOWING SEEDS OF AVIATION ASPIRATIONS

WITH AUTHOR, ILLUSTRATOR,
& PHOTOGRAPHER
SHEILA M. YOUNG



plus

CHARTER MEMBERS
HOLDING SHORT
GRASS ROOTS

Ninety-Nines Magazine

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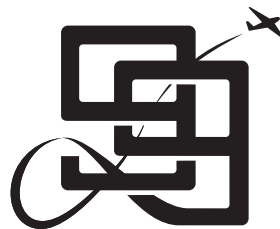
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promotes advancement of aviation through
education, scholarships, and mutual support
while honoring our unique history and sharing
our passion for flight.

Let's Get Social



ON THE COVER

Sheila Young with her book *I See an Airplane Up in the Sky* on display
at the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, Colorado.

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Thank You to Our Sponsors



2026

MAY

- 1-2 **South Central Section Spring Meeting**
Wichita, Kansas
Air Capital Chapter
✦ Patricia Burruss,
patriciaburrussjd@gmail.com
- 1-3 **Mid-Atlantic Section Spring Meeting**
Churchville, Maryland
✦ Naomi Koehler,
nlkoehler@outlook.com
- 1-3 **Southeast Section Spring Meeting**
Sarasota, Florida
✦ Holly DiLecce, hdilecce@myakka.com
- 2 **Queen Bess Centennial Aviation Film Festival**
Bult Field, Monee, Illinois
☐ BessFF.com
- 29-31 **East Canada Section Annual Meeting**
TBD, Canada
✦ Rani Tolton,
rgtolton@gmail.com

JUN

- 6 **50th Anniversary Celebration Honoring Emily Warner**
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.,
Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum
☐ grandcountyhistory.org/museums/
emily-warner-field-aviation-museum/
- 23-26 **49th Annual Air Race Classic**
East Alton, Illinois to
Mount Vernon, Illinois
☐ Airraceclassic.org/event-details.htm
- 26-28 **JHV German Section**
Annual General Meeting
Hildesheim (EDVM)
☐ https://ninety-nines.de/
✦ Sabina Jaeckel-Engler
scjaeckel@gmail.com

JUL

- 8-12 **Ninety-Nines International Conference**
San Diego, California
☐ ninety-nines.org
- 15 **Deadline for submitting Professional Pilot Leadership Initiative (PPLI) Application for Mentoring Autumn Session**
☐ ninety-nines.org/resourses.htm
- 20-26 **EAA AirVenture Oshkosh**
Oshkosh, Wisconsin
☐ www.eaa.org/airventure

AUG

- 27-30 **Northwest Section Fall Meeting**
Teton Valley, Idaho
✦ Beth Chapple,
bethchapple@gmail.com

SEP

- 12 **International Forest of Friendship 50th Anniversary**
"World Friendship through Flight"
Induction Ceremony
Atchison, Kansas
☐ www.ifof.org
- 24-27 **Southeast Section Fall Meeting**
Nashville, Tennessee
✦ Bree Leach
nashville99smeeting@gmail.com
- 24-27 **Southwest Section Fall Meeting**
Las Vegas, Nevada

OCT

- 1 **Deadline for Fall First Wings Awards Application**
☐ www.ninety-nines.org/amelia-earhart-scholarships-awards.htm
- 23-24 **South Central Section Fall Meeting**
Tyler, Texas
- 2-4 **North Central Section Fall Meeting**
Indianapolis, Indiana
Indiana Chapter
✦ Erin Hammer,
erin@hammergrip.tv

NOV

- 6-7 **International Board of Directors Meeting**
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
☐ HQ@ninety-nines.org

2027

SEP

- 8-12 **Ninety-Nines International Conference**
Sydney, Australia

MAGAZINE SUBMISSION DEADLINES

are one month prior to issue date.
JUL/AUG issue deadline: Jun 1.

Check the online calendar
for the latest information.
☐ ninety-nines.org/calendar.htm

IN SEARCH OF SERIOUS SLEUTHS

Help Us Continue Our Charter Member Project

The 99s Publications Committee has undertaken the very important project of featuring The 99s' charter members in the *Ninety-Nines* magazine. It is our intention to shine a light on all 99 of them in the issues leading up to The 99s' 100th anniversary. This project entails significant research since many charter members married several times – so they'll have several name changes – and often little is written about their aviation accomplishments. Once the research is complete, a 400-500-word write-up must be submitted to the Publications Committee, along with a high-resolution photo of the charter member. While this is a great way for a 99 member to contribute to The 99s, others outside the organization can contribute to the project and will be given credit for their assistance.

If you have a love of history and research, and are looking for a way to contribute to The 99s right now,

CONTACT Lori 99spubschair@gmail.com and join the team.



The President's Message



Robin Hadfield

President
The Ninety-Nines, Inc.
president@ninety-nines.org

From the President's Desk

There is a particular kind of evening that every pilot knows. The kind where the air goes smooth and golden just before sunset, where the horizon seems to stretch a little farther than usual, and the world below looks exactly like the reason you fell in love with flying in the first place. For me, that moment never gets ordinary. It still feels like a gift. And every time I experience it, I think about the remarkable fact that there are thousands of women around the world who know exactly what I mean.

That is what The Ninety-Nines are, at their heart. Not simply an organization, but a community

of women bound together by a shared experience that is genuinely difficult to explain to anyone who hasn't lived it. This spring, at Women in Aviation International in Dallas and at SUN 'n FUN in Lakeland, we met and introduced so many women pilots who chose to become Ninety-Nines – each one adding her voice to a legacy that stretches back to 1929. None of that happens without the members who show up, staff the booths, and make every new pilot feel welcome from the moment she walks in. To every volunteer who worked a shift, struck up a conversation with a curious student pilot, or simply wore our Ninety-Nines pin with pride: Thank you. The connections made at moments like these have a way of rippling forward in ways we can't always see.

I also want to thank every member who took the time to get to know our candidates and cast a ballot in the 2026 International election. Your engagement ensures that The Ninety-Nines remains exactly what it has always been – a membership that leads itself, with intention and care.

I hope you have seen the Mid-Month Lift, a new mid-month connection point designed with you in mind. While Straight & Level remains your source for organizational news, Mid-Month Lift is something a little different – member highlights, helpful tips, and ideas to stay engaged, arriving straight to your inbox or by text. Whether you're newly joined or a longtime Ninety-Nine, watch for it.

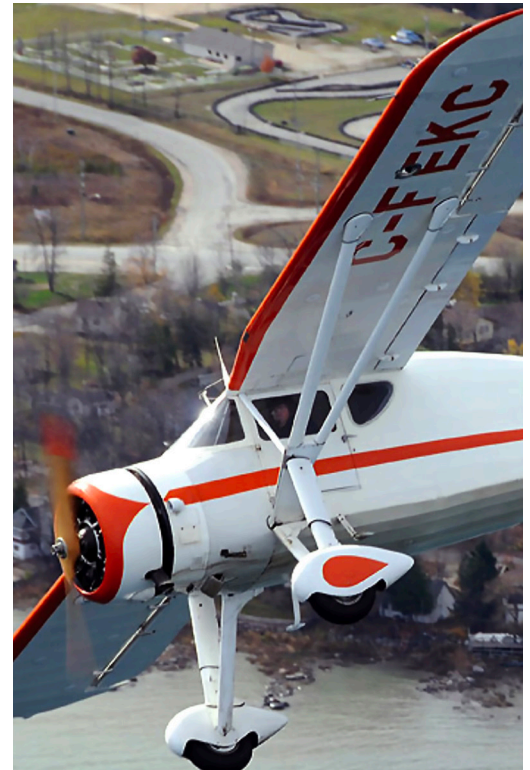
At Headquarters, Membership Coordinators Amy and Nautica want to hear from you on how to better assist our members. What could be better? What would you like to see added or changed to membership? How can they help your chapter in membership connections and retention? Please share your thoughts at members@ninety-nines.org. Your feedback directly shapes how we serve you.

To every member who leads a chapter, organizes fly-outs, and keeps our community thriving – and to every volunteer who has stood at a booth, answered a student pilot's questions, or shared their story with a stranger: Thank you. You are the face of The Ninety-Nines to the world, and your commitment is felt by every new member who finds her place with us. This organization is what it is because of you.

Blue skies,

Robin Hadfield

President, The Ninety-Nines, Inc.



This 1936 Belgium Stampe (above) has been in the Hadfield family for over 50 years and was passed down from my father-in-law to my husband, Dave, and me. This adds to our Fairchild 24W46 (middle photo) and Van RV-6A (top photo).



Jill van Egmond

*Executive Director
The Ninety-Nines, Inc.*

My First Year with The Ninety-Nines: A Season of Gratitude

June feels both like a beginning and a full circle for me. On May 12, I officially mark one year as Executive Director of The Ninety-Nines, and this month – my first anniversary in the organization – has me reflecting on how much can change in a short time. A year ago, I stepped into this role with hope, curiosity, and a deep respect for the women who have carried this organization forward for generations. Today, I see that first year not just as a milestone for me, but as a reminder of the strength and spirit of our global community.

When I started, I admired The Ninety-Nines from the outside – the history, the legacy, the women who have lifted each other up for decades. But I would have been surprised if anyone had told me that, within a year, I would be wearing two hats: Executive Director and student pilot. Over this past year, I've seen our members support one another through new ratings, career shifts, and important leadership transitions. I've watched you cheer each other on through check rides, first solo flights, and new ratings. I've seen you share resources and quietly show up when someone needs a listening ear or a helping hand. Your generosity of time, wisdom, and heart has not only shaped our organization but also inspired my own journey.

It was hearing your stories and learning about your accomplishments in the left seat and beyond that made me realize I wanted to take my own place at the controls. So, this year, I began pursuing my Private Pilot Certificate. Every lesson, flight review, and moment of doubt has been a gift in its own way, reminding me of the courage and resilience it takes to start anything new. I'm only at the beginning of this path, but I'm already learning that the support of a community like ours can make all the difference.

This year of firsts also included a very special personal moment. During the Spring International Board of Directors meeting, I learned that my first grandchild had just been born. In that joyful, unexpected instant, I was sitting in a room with women who have become my mentors, colleagues, and friends. I was able to share the news with everyone present and their immediate warmth and celebration made that moment even more meaningful. It reminded me that The Ninety-Nines isn't only about aviation, it's about shared lives, shared milestones, and the way we show up for one another in both big and small ways.

I first experienced the magic of our community in person at The Ninety-Nines International Conference last July in Burlington, Vermont. The days that followed – as so many of us headed to EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh – reminded me how deeply connected women pilots are within the broader aviation community. Those weeks were a powerful blend of celebration, learning, and friendship that I'll always carry with me. I came away from them with a renewed sense of purpose: The Ninety-Nines isn't just preserving history; we are building the future of women in aviation – one connection, one chapter, one flight at a time.

This summer, I'm looking forward to The Ninety-Nines International Conference in San Diego, and again to the spirit of camaraderie that continues at EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh. Whether you're able to attend in person or follow along from afar, I hope you'll take this season as an invitation to stay connected, share your story, and lift up the women around you. Look for ways to mentor a newer pilot, welcome someone new to your chapter, or simply celebrate the next big step in another member's journey. Every small act of encouragement strengthens our organization in ways that outlast any single event.

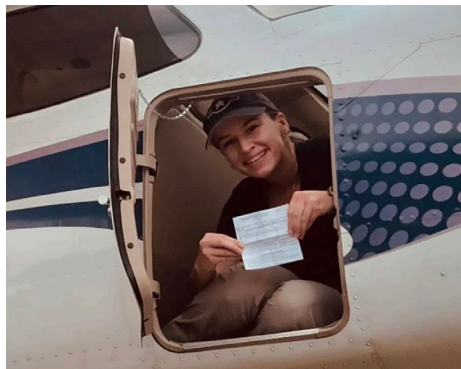
Thank you for welcoming me into your world so warmly. I'm inspired by what you do every day, and I'm honored to walk alongside you as Executive Director and now as a student pilot learning to fly. As we mark this first year together, I'm excited for all that's ahead – both in the sky and within our Ninety-Nines family.

Holding Short

REPORTING POINTS

Treasure Coast Member Success Story

– Cristina Gouin, *Chair, Treasure Coast Chapter*



Jenny Heyn has put herself on the fast track to a career in aviation. Since June of 2025, she has completed her IFR, Commercial, CFI, CFII, Flight Engineer TurboFlight written, and by the time this is published her Commercial Multi check ride! Inspired by her father, a now retired American Airlines pilot, she and her husband, John, are fully pursuing a love of aviation. In 2025, Jenny lived in two states and flew 93,000 miles to 13 countries and 13 states on 54 commercial flights. Yes, she has circumnavigated the globe. She flew 196 hours in 2025. Way to go Jenny! Recent highlights included being allowed to do a low pass over NASA's Shuttle Landing Facility and watching a rocket launch from the sky.

Members Making Pikes Peak Chapter Proud

– Sarah Nguyen, *Publicity Chair, Pikes Peak Chapter*



Left: Katie Palmer, Commercial ASEL; and Annika York, CFI.

Katie Palmer, Chair of the Pikes Peak Chapter, passed her Commercial check ride on March 5, 2026! Katie's flight instructor **Annika York**, Vice Chair of the Pikes Peak Chapter, accompanied her to Farmington, New Mexico, to support

the endeavor. Annika received her CFI in September 2025, and Katie was the first student she ever endorsed for a check ride and the first one who passed!



Martina Donato of the Pikes Peak Chapter received her Multi-Engine Commercial certification on February 28, 2026! At the end of the check ride her DPE told her, "I have no comment, excellent oral and excellent flight."

Stacy Pritts of the Pikes Peak Chapter received her certificates for Advanced Ground Instructor (AGI) and Instrument Ground Instructor (IGI) on March 12. This follows her achievement of scoring 100% across written tests for AGI, IGI, and Flight Instructor Airplane!



Jessica Meiris recently surpassed 2,500 helicopter hours and was a public speaker at VERTICON.

Jessica Meiris of the Pikes Peak Chapter recently surpassed 2,500 helicopter hours. She was also the featured presenter at educational webinars with Vertical Aviation International (VAI) on February 10 and FAA Saturday Morning Coffee & Wings on February 14. Using real-world scenarios pulled from the FAA's Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS),

Jessica explored with the audience the topics of risk mitigation methods and aeronautical decision making (ADM) in an engaging presentation called "What Would You Do?" She also presented a version of "What Would You Do?" at the VERTICON 2026 Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, March 10-12, in addition to another presentation on the dangers of helicopter wake turbulence. During the conference, Jessica helped launch the safety campaign "It's OK to Stay," in which she and VAI underscore that at times the best decision a pilot can make is deciding to stay – and that's OK! Jessica is a helicopter CFII, helicopter air ambulance (HAA) and utility pilot, FAA Safety Team representative, and U.S. Helicopter Safety Team volunteer. We are so proud of her!

Chicago Area Members' Milestones

– Diane Cozzi, *News Reporter, Chicago Area Chapter*

Maddie Schlecht reports, "I have some amazing news to share. On Christmas Eve, I passed my Private Pilot check ride. Best Christmas gift ever!" Since then, Maddie has started working on her Instrument Rating and comments, "This past month of weather definitely tested both motivation and morale. I was fortunate that it aligned with the start of my Instrument training. Because of that, I've been able to stay engaged by splitting my time between ground school, simulator lessons, and studying."

Marly Serrano says, "I am excited to share that I passed my Private Pilot check ride! Looking back on my very first flight lesson, I remember thinking there was absolutely no way I would ever be able to fly a plane on my own. Everything was so new, and I knew that pursuing this meant working two jobs while also going to college and graduate school for something completely unrelated to aviation. But something in me wanted to accomplish this more than anything as a personal goal and a hobby, so I committed. I'm so glad I made that decision. Even if it took me a while, I got it done, and the version of me from that first lesson would be so proud that I earned my Private Pilot Certificate!"

Megan McArthur is now a working CFI on the schedule at Blue Skies Flying Service, Lake in the Hills Airport (3CK). She is also working on her CFII. Congratulations Megan!

Holding Short

Bailey Reiners earned her Commercial Multi-Engine Rating in St. Louis, Ohio. She reports, “I had a female DPE for my check ride, which felt pretty special, and did it all in the Beechcraft Duchess – lots of lady power in that cockpit. The Duchess has been used for multi training for decades, so she’s kind of a legend. Cool to add my name to the list of people who’ve trained with her.”

Michigan Members on the Move

– Barb Vukits, *Michigan Chapter*

Madison Barch passed her CFII check ride. Madison works as a CFI/CFII at Crosswinds Aviation at Oakland County International Airport (KPTK) in Pontiac, Michigan.

Samantha Inguanzo passed her CFI check ride in Michigan. Samantha is a member of the Florida Goldcoast Chapter and is also active in the Michigan Chapter when she’s not in Florida.



Grace Eger and her first Private Pilot student after he passed this check ride.

Grace Eger had her student pass his Private Pilot check ride. He was the first ever student when she started instructing after becoming a CFI, and the first one she instructed from start to finish.

Marissa (Riedstra) Marshall received a grant from the Michigan Aviation Education Foundation.

Clarie Dunnigan passed her Instrument written exam with a score of 98%.

Suzette Biela received her SIC (Second in Command) in a CJ3.

Audrey Cook, retired Delta Airlines Captain, accepted a position at the FAA located at Will Run Airport (KYIP)



Above: RACNSW Flight Training Camp, Summer 2026, Camden Airport, New South Wales, Australia.

in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and received her certification as an Aviation Safety Inspector, Air Carrier.

Megan Gorak passed her Private Pilot check ride after attending an accelerated program in Natchez, Mississippi.

Dallas Chapter Member Career Change

– Shelby King, *Chair, Dallas Chapter*

The Dallas Chapter is proud to congratulate **Jisun Choi** on her solo flight! Jisun is currently making an inspiring career transition – from pastry chef at a Michelin-starred restaurant to taking to the skies as a pilot. As a new member of The 99s, she’s already showing great enthusiasm for getting involved with the local chapter. We’re excited to support her journey!

New Lake Tahoe CFI

– Lynn Meadows, *Chair*



Raj Karwa recently passed her CFI check ride! Lake Tahoe Chapter is very proud of her. She and her husband own the PC-12 Pilatus that she recently flew to Canada.

RACNSW Flight Training Camp, January 3-11, 2026

– Dominique Estival, *Governor, Australian Section*

In January 2026, I had the pleasure of instructing again during the annual summer flight training camp of the Royal Aero Club of New South Wales (RACNSW) at Camden Airport (YSCN), New South Wales, Australia. While the number of women pilots was slightly down from last year, we still had six female students – which was 24% of the student pilots – and three female instructors (Rebecca Earls, Jessie Georg, and myself).

The camp this year was again a great success. Lachlan Hyde, President of RCNSW, says, “Across the nine days we had 25 student pilots, 24 volunteer flight instructors, and 19 ground/operational volunteers. This allowed us to fly 217.9 flying hours – our largest flight training camp total ever – with 604 landings and over 6,000 litres of fuel used. With the six aircraft in daily operation, including four C152s, which made us the largest operator in New South Wales for the week.” For my own part, I flew with five different students, for a total of 9.1 hours, mostly in a C152. One of the pleasures of instructing is sending a student solo and I did spend a few more hours at the side of the runway watching three of those students do their solo circuits.

Camden Airport is one of the airports in the Sydney basin, close to the 2027 Conference venue, where you too can come enjoy our beautiful flying weather and take to the skies.

See you in Sydney, September 9-12, 2027!

SPOTLIGHT: MEMBER IN THE MOVIES

Eileen Collins Documentary *Spacewoman* Shows the Human Side of Being an Astronaut

– Bev Weintraub,
Greater New York Chapter

What makes a hero?

In the early days of America's space program, heroes were men with crew cuts and "the right stuff." But for Eileen Collins, the first woman to pilot the space shuttle and command a shuttle mission, the answer is much more nuanced. For her, it took determination, inner strength, talent, grit, emotional calm, and the ability to hope for the best while expecting the worst.

In the new documentary film *Spacewoman*, Collins — a retired Air Force colonel and Life member of The Ninety-Nines — traces her trajectory from the wrong side of the tracks in Elmira, New York, to the stars. Members of the New York-New Jersey Section were treated to a screening at the Quad Cinema in Manhattan and had the opportunity to ask questions of Collins during a Q&A session after the film.

There are, of course, stunning images of Earth as seen from space; deafening footage of rocket launches; video of Collins, her hair a halo around her head as she floats in zero gravity; and touching family photos. But the movie also poignantly describes her impoverished childhood; the chaos and violence she endured growing up with an alcoholic father; the responsibility she bore in caring for her younger siblings when their mother could not; the four jobs she worked as a teenager to scrape together \$1,000 for flying lessons; and the challenges of gaining acceptance to the Air Force, test pilot school, and the space program in the face of disapproval, hostility, and resistance from men in positions of power.

The goal of the film, Collins told director Hannah Berryman during the discussion afterward, was to show the human side of being an astronaut. Nowhere are the tangled emotions of pride and fear more evident than in interviews with Collins' daughter, Bridget Youngs, who was in elementary school at the height of her mother's career. While male astronauts also had to leave home for extended



Top: *Spacewoman* director Hannah Berryman with Eileen Collins, retired Air Force colonel and Life member of *The 99s*, after screening of the film at the Quad Cinema in Manhattan on March 20. (Photo by Bev Weintraub)

Bottom: Marina Sajina, New Jersey (NJ) Chapter; Shayna Skillings, Greater New York (GNY) Chapter; Kelly Donovan, GNY Chapter; Laura Seth, NJ Chapter; Bev Weintraub, GNY Chapter; Jacqui Sturgess, GNY Chapter; and Shirley Onacilla, NJ Chapter; not shown: Rosemary Albrecht, NJ Chapter. (Photo by Gliced Irizarry)

periods of time before a mission, it was different with a mom, Collins acknowledged. Being cared for by a nanny and her dad, and missing her mother, took a toll on Youngs over the years. And when Collins was named commander of the first shuttle mission after the 2003 Columbia disaster — and it became clear that the deadly flaw that had caused Columbia to explode upon reentry had not been entirely fixed, despite NASA's assurances to the world and Collins' assurances to her daughter — the break in trust caused a rift that took the family years to repair.

After the screening, in response to a question from Central New York Chapter member Denise Waters, Collins described

how shuttle pilots had to hand-fly the world's heaviest glider from Mach 1 to touchdown at 195 to 205 knots, 2,500 feet down the runway. With no engines, there was no chance for a go-around.

And answering a question from New Jersey Chapter member Laura Seth about whether flying, say, a 172 is a comedown after four space shuttle missions, Collins said simply, "You have to respect every airplane you fly." Though she isn't flying right now, she does have a current medical.

Her next aviation goal? Getting her CFI.

NOTES AND ADVICE FROM MEMBERS

From Maddie Schlecht, Chicago Area Chapter: I believe every pilot should experience one real spin during their Private Pilot training. While spins are no longer a requirement for your Private Pilot Certificate, I think experiencing the sensation of one could be a lifesaving choice. One of my CFIs actually failed his first Private Pilot check ride because he accidentally got into a spin while performing his power-on stall. He'd never been in a fully developed spin before, completely froze on the controls, and the DPE had to take over. Despite knowing the recovery procedure, there is nothing that can quite prepare you like the real thing.

From Gina Santori, Chicago Area Chapter: I have been diligently studying the Socata TBM 700A manual in advance, preparing for my SIMCOM training in Orlando, Florida, next year. I purchased TBM 442DS this past July. I have always liked the TBM and hoped to one day find one. Well, that day has come. I also purchased a ranch this year in Brenham, Texas, so I could train on my horses and race year-round. With such a busy life — competing in professional and nonprofessional rodeos and barrel races in Wisconsin, Michigan, and, now for the winter, in Texas — I have had challenges finding the time and focus to learn this aircraft well. I have been flying the TBM back and forth from Aurora Municipal Airport (KARR) to Brenham Municipal Airport (KR11) on a monthly basis. Reading the manual and then getting in the plane for longer rides lets me have the practical experience I will need for my training. No matter how busy you get, never skimp on the training!

Holding Short

MEETING MEMBERS

Chicago Area Chapter Members

– Submitted by Diane Cozzi



Kadijah Hall: I have been helping my instructor change the instrument panel in his glider, a Rolladen-Schneider LS8. The first day of the year started with a glider flight at the Chicago Glider Club in 20-degree weather. It was cold, but it was a lot of fun.

Marta Luiza Merchut: I'm currently working on my Instrument Rating. I'd love to be able to finish it by spring! It was my first time attending the Aviation Safety Seminar & Expo this year and my first time volunteering. Even though I wasn't able to listen to the actual seminars, I really enjoyed being there. We received a lot of great comments about the presentations ("the best one yet," "the IFR seminar was great!"). I just joined The 99s a few weeks ago. I'm really fortunate to be part of this chapter! Everyone I've met so far has been very welcoming and friendly, and I love being part of this group of women!

Becca Richey: Hi everyone! My name is Becca Richey, and I'm so excited to be joining the Chicago Area Chapter and getting to meet everyone. It was awesome connecting with a few of you in person at the Aviation Safety Seminar & Expo 2026, and I'm really looking forward to getting more involved. A little about me: I graduated from Purdue's flight program in December 2024 and earned my CFI this past summer. I moved to the Chicago suburbs in July and started working in ground operations at a Part 135 company

at Chicago Executive Airport (KPWK). I've been learning a ton from the business aviation side, and it's been a really fun change of pace. Right now, I'm also on the hunt for a flight instructing position that I can do alongside my ground operations job. I'm definitely eager to get back in the air and put my "CFI hat" back on – it's been a few months since I've flown, and I'm really missing it!

Eriel Sexton: This is officially my last letter as a student pilot. As of Monday, I passed my Private Pilot check ride and I graduated in December. I'm looking forward to finally being at home and having the chance to attend meetings. I think the most unexpected part of this is how supportive it has been from every side. Everyone you tell is always rooting for you, and it's just so different from my mom and her experience in IT, where women were often discouraged as she was entering the field. For me, I haven't encountered anyone who actively told me not to keep going. At my first lesson, I was feeling nervous, but once I hit those controls again and we were cruising along the Chicago skyline, it was just amazing.

Reports

One Member One Vote – Credentialing Process All Online

By Lois E. Horne, *Credential Committee Chair*

At the 2021 Annual Meeting, the members voted to amend bylaws Article VII: Annual Meeting, Section 2: Voting, to move forward with "One Member, One Vote," versus the delegate process. Additionally, Standing Rules VII – Annual Meeting requires all members, who wish to attend the Annual Meeting to complete the credentials process. The credentials process establishes current membership in The Ninety-Nines.

The 2026 Annual Meeting is employing a hybrid (in-person, online) approach. Therefore in order to attend – either in person or virtually via Zoom – every member must complete the credentials process. The good news is the credentials process is done all online using the same platform we employed from 2021-2025.

THE SOFTWARE APPLICATION:

1. Confirms you are a member of The Ninety-Nines using the e-mail address on file at International Headquarters.
2. Once confirmed your e-mail address matches the Headquarters database, the application will assign you an Election Buddy password.

Your e-mail address and application-issued password will be forwarded to Head Teller for setup in Election Buddy. Election Buddy will once again be used as the voting platform in San

Diego, which also is used to establish a quorum to conduct The Ninety-Nines business meeting where voting is needed. Being a credentialed member grants you voting privileges and Election Buddy will forward to you any motions up for vote and especially if a vote is too close to count during the meeting.

On June 8, 2026, Headquarters will send out an e-mail or SMS notification that The Ninety-Nines' Annual Meeting credentials website is open and outline the process for each member to attend The Ninety-Nines Annual Meeting, whether it be in person or via ZOOM.

Chapter Chairs, check your membership rosters and encourage members to sign up for electronic voting as well as obtaining an e-mail address if none is currently listed in the directory. Members without an e-mail address on file at Headquarters may establish a free e-mail account using Gmail or Yahoo and forward to HQ. Members can even request for their e-mail address to be omitted from the online directory if anyone is worried about unwanted solicitation.

KEY DATES:

June 8, 2026 – An e-mail or SMS notification from HQ announcing credentials desk online is open along with instructions on completing the online application

July 8, 2026 – Online credentials desk will close at midnight

July 11, 2026 – Check your e-mail one hour before the Annual Meeting for an Election Buddy e-mail confirming your credentials process was a success. Election Buddy will be used to establish a quorum and for voting during the Annual Meeting.



Indistractable

By Donna Miller, Colorado Chapter

Think about what it takes to become a pilot. Whether you realize it or not, you signed up to be a lifelong learner for the rest of your career. Even as a recreational pilot, you have to continue to learn to be a safe pilot. In this tech-heavy environment that craves your attention, how do you stay focused on the task at hand while being bombarded with so many distractions?


Author Nir Eyal knows a lot about this subject and has some excellent advice in his latest book *Indistractable: How to Control Your Attention and Choose Your Life*. He explains that every action we take reflects traction, which moves us in the direction of our goals, or distraction, which moves us away from them. He has developed a four-part model to become indistractable. They seem pretty solid, so I've been putting them to the test.

Part 1: Control your internal triggers. We will do a lot to escape discomfort, and scrolling has become too easy. How can we reframe our tasks so we don't feel the need to avoid them? Learning to control your internal triggers isn't about trying not to think about them; it's about learning to change how you think about them. This takes time. Identify the triggers that make you want to switch to a distracting activity. Become aware of distracting patterns. Examine how you feel about the triggers and be aware of distractions, especially when shifting from one activity to another.

Part 2: Build your schedule around your values. Eyal explains that any behavior that happens at a time it is not scheduled is a distraction, even if it feels productive. How many times have we felt it necessary to clean our workspace before sitting down to study? (And toss in a load of laundry while we're at it?)

Part 3: Reduce your external triggers. This alone could be an entire book. Think about conversations that don't just interrupt you for a moment, they can totally derail your workflow. Eyal cites an example of nurses making serious errors while doing their rounds administering medication. One hospital issued bright vests that say "Do not disturb" for nurses to wear during this time, which helped them be indistractable. In the back of his book, Eyal created a "Do not disturb" sign that can be attached to the top of a keyboard, in lieu of the indistractable vest. Silence notifications and delete distracting apps on your phone. A study he cites showed that even receiving a notification is just as distracting as responding to a message or call.

Part 4: Create Precommitments. This is designed to lock you into traction, rather than keeping distractions out. Think about the choices you make when you are not distracted that will guide your behavior when you are tempted by distraction in the future. For example, committing to studying with a group regularly will keep you on track when you don't really feel like getting out the books.

My trial has been challenging to say the least, but as pilots, it's important that we become more indistractable. Let's do this together. 

Margaret “Tommy” Thomas Warren

March 9, 1912 – August 22, 2004



Margaret “Tommy” Thomas Warren was only 17 when she joined her sky sisters in the founding. Tommy was not present at the first gathering of women aviators on Curtiss Field on Long Island in fall 1929. However, she did go into New York with Frances Harrell for the second meeting on December 14, 1929, held at the home of Opal Kunz. Tommy was appointed to represent Texas.

According to Dr. Jacque Boyd, of the Rio Grande Norte Chapter, writing in November/December 2004 about the flight west of the last two charter members:

“Rationally, each one of us has known that this day would eventually come. The year that marks our organization’s 75th anniversary also marks the first year we have no living charter members. Margaret “Tommy” Thomas Warren and Josephine “Jody” Wood were both born in March 1912. They were each 17 years old that day in October 1929 and the youngest pilots to join the newly formed Ninety-Nines. At 92 years young, on August 22 and September 11, 2004, the two youngest Charter Members of The Ninety-Nines flew to new horizons and joined their sisters in flight.”

Dr. Boyd continued:

“Margaret Thomas was born in Anson, Texas, in March 1912. Soon after her birth, her parents moved to Glen Rose, Texas, and then, when she was seven, to Fort Worth. It was in Fort Worth that she would learn to fly. Her biography, *Taking Off*, begins this way:

“The chalk squeaked on, but there was another sound now, a little like mother’s sewing machine, only louder. I looked out and saw something in the air, something with wings like an enormous dragonfly. I jumped up and ran out of the schoolhouse and followed the thing flying through the air until it sank from sight toward the earth. Sharp pains stabbed my heart, but I ran on until I found it, sitting in a field. I stopped, out of breath, gasping. It was one of those moments as in an old tale: the magic lantern is rubbed, the right word is spoken, doors open, and secrets are known. I didn’t know the object I stared at was an aeroplane, but I did know that, someday, I too would fly through the air.”

“And fly she would. She received her pilot’s license (No. 6180) in early 1929 in an OX-5 Travel Air. She worked for Curtiss-Wright as a demonstration pilot. In early 1930, she joined the Curtiss-Wright Exhibition Company as part of their stunt team...After an early divorce, she married Bayard Warren, also a pilot, in 1932. Tommy continued to fly until the beginning of World War II but then was unable to pass her physical to renew her license. She and her husband then moved to Texas and eventually to Maine. She had two children, Mary and Michael. She later got the urge to fly again, passed her medical examination, arranged for some instruction and, as she says in her biography, consulted the I Ching, Book of Changes. The coins were tossed, and the message was: ‘A bird should not try to surpass itself and fly into the sun, It should descend to the earth where its nest is.’ She cancelled her flight instruction and never flew as a pilot again. After her husband’s death, she moved to West Cork, Ireland, where she lived until her death.”

– By Penny Rafferty Hamilton, Ph.D., *Idaho Chapter*

Photo: Published in 1993, Taking Off tells the story of early aviation through the experiences of one of the youngest Texas-born women pilots, Margaret “Tommy” Thomas.

Alberta B. Worley (Homan) Dixon

February 4, 1897 – August 1984

(no date on gravestone nor obituary)



In 1897, Marysville in northeast Kansas was considered a progressive and prosperous community. Their new courthouse cost \$40,000, which in 2026 would be around \$1.75 million. They had a strong school system. Alberta B. Homan was adventurous and inquisitive. The

family relocated to the much larger Oklahoma City. In 1914, 17-year-old Alberta married Ray Worley as announced in the local newspaper. The union was short-lived.

In 1917, Alberta was back home with her parents and three sisters. In the 1920s, Oklahoma was a hot bed of aviation. Alberta saw the opportunity for female pilots to gain celebrity and cash with their flying skills. Alberta became a noted aviatrix in Oklahoma. In 1929, she was invited to join the new women’s pilot organization, The Ninety-Nines, which she eagerly joined.

A 1931 Oklahoma City news article mentioned that Alberta was the only female Oklahoman with a transport pilot license. Alberta was a featured performer at the Air Circus in Ada, Oklahoma. Aviation expositions were popular in the 1930s, featuring barnstorming aerobatics. Alberta was a notable female pilot. To headline an event brought significant celebrity to women. Spectators were still dubious about flying, and curious about these brave and daring women of the air age.

Alberta, a key figure in the Ada show, held a transport pilot license, which allowed her to fly high-powered commercial and stunt aircraft that were typically off-limits to less-experienced pilots. Earlier, she had earned her pilot’s license (No. 9286). The following planes dominated the 1931 Oklahoma air show circuit:

- **Curtiss-Wright Junior:** A unique “bathtub”-style, light aircraft that first flew in 1931 and gained nationwide attention at exhibition events.
- **Ford Tri-Motor:** Known as the “Tin Goose,” this all-metal aircraft often appeared at larger municipal events like Ada’s to demonstrate the safety and future of commercial flight.
- **Stearman C3MB:** A high-performance biplane often used for mail delivery and aerobatic displays by professional touring pilots.

Alberta, as the featured air show performer, promoted aviation safety. The shows typically took place at the Ada Municipal Airport, which had been established just two years prior in 1929. The 1931 show occurred during a golden age for Oklahoma aviation, marked by the world-record flights of Oklahoma native Wiley Post and visits from celebrities like Amelia Earhart and Will Rogers to nearby towns. Despite the onset of the Great Depression, which eventually halted many large-scale tours, individual air circuses continued to draw large crowds eager to see aerobatic maneuvers and parachute jumps. Alberta wowed the crowds with loop and barrel rolls, especially in the Stearman.

In later years, with her penchant for precision and detail, Alberta became the eighth American to graduate from the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu cooking school in Paris. In 1946, Alberta married a Texas builder, W.J. Dixon. Her obituary notes that Alberta and her husband were Dallas home builders for many years. She left no children. They are buried together in Texas.

– By Penny Rafferty Hamilton, Ph.D., *Idaho Chapter*

Photo: Alberta was a featured air star in the 1931 Air Circus in Ada, Oklahoma. For aerobatic maneuvers, the Stearman C3B was popular with pilots. Alberta held a transport pilot license, allowing her to fly more complex airplanes.

Josephine "Jodie" Wood Wallingford

March 28, 1912 – September 11, 2004



In 1912, Altus, Oklahoma was considered a regional agricultural center, with "cotton as king" because of the railroad connection. Altus means "high" in Latin so maybe Jodie Wood was destined to be a high flyer. During the 1920s, considered the "Golden Age" of flying, Jodie ventured to California to become a pilot. She was taught to fly at the Pacific School of Aviation, founded by James Granger at Clover Field in Santa Monica.

Her flight instructor was Burdette Fuller. Jodie flew surplus Curtiss Jennies at first. Then, the school transitioned to Swallows with the historic OX-5 engine. As a newly minted pilot with license No. 9129, Jodie joined The Ninety-Nines as a charter member. Not long afterward, Jodie married pilot Fred Wallingford. By 1937, a son was born. But, strains of the Depression years and other factors ended that union in divorce. As a now single divorced mother, Jodie moved back to Altus to care for her mother. Lack

of money and the responsibilities of caring for a child and her mother, grounded Jodie.

In a telephone discussion with The Ninety-Nines' Headquarters staff after Jodie's death, Jodie's son, Bill Wallingford, said his mother rarely mentioned her flying years. But, Bill fondly related a story about what he referred to as her Private Pilot check ride: Her check pilot strapped her into her parachute and sent her off for her solo flight. She taxied out but found that with the parachute she couldn't reach the rudder pedals, so she took the chute off and continued her flight without it. When she came back in and landed, she took some extra time at the end of the runway to put her chute back on before she met with her instructor. When she taxied back to her instructor, he asked why she had taken so long at the end of the runway. Her reply was that she was just overcome with the moment. He simply looked at her and said that must just happen with women!

During the Depression, Jodie made the extremely difficult decision to stop flying. She returned home with her young son and cared for her aging mother and ill sister. Her son said she never complained but did what it was she knew she had to do. Eventually her mother and sister passed away. But, by that time, she was at a stage in life where she just didn't feel that flying again was an option for her. Bill said, "She squared her shoulders and went down the road." She didn't torture herself about the decision or her past, and as Bill put it, "Sometimes hard times make a good person."

– By Penny Rafferty Hamilton, Ph.D., Idaho Chapter

Photo: This 1931 Altus, Oklahoma newspaper clipping of Josephine "Jodie" Wood in her leather flying suit and riding boots while earning her limited Commercial Pilot Rating. (Altus Times Democrat)

Thelma R. Burleigh Johnston

1907-1982

Thelma R. Burleigh Johnston was born in 1907 and died in 1982 at the age of 74 or 75. Thelma's license was No. 6761 and while little is known about Thelma's time as a pilot, she was also a gifted quilt maker. She entered a quilt into the Sears National Quilt Contest in 1933 along with 24,000 other applicants. Her quilt made it into the thirty finalists that were judged at the Sears Pavilion at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. She won a green merit ribbon in the competition. Her design, along with the other finalists, became a traveling exhibition after being displayed at the World's Fair. The exhibition traveled to many cities all over the U.S. including to Palm Beach, Florida, Los Angeles, California, and Knoxville, Tennessee.

Thelma's quilt was titled, "Scenes from Early America," and was 68 inches wide and 82 inches long. It was completed between January and May of 1933 and at its center shows Fort Dearborn, built in 1803 in what is now Chicago, Illinois, to commemorate the location of the World's Fair.

During this period in 1933, Thelma and her husband rented The Perry Cottage, a small cottage in Long Lake, Minnesota. She was pregnant with her first daughter, Leigh. Her husband was known as a hard worker that kept up a small farm and worked all different odd jobs in their community.

Thelma died of Lou Gehrig's disease in 1982. At this time her husband was suffering from Alzheimer's and to ensure his care continued, she left her inheritance to her youngest child who lived with them. Leigh, the eldest daughter, received nothing from her parents, and in order to have a memento of her mother she paid one hundred dollars for Thelma's award-winning quilt. Thelma is buried in Bougainvillea Cemetery in Avon Park, Florida.

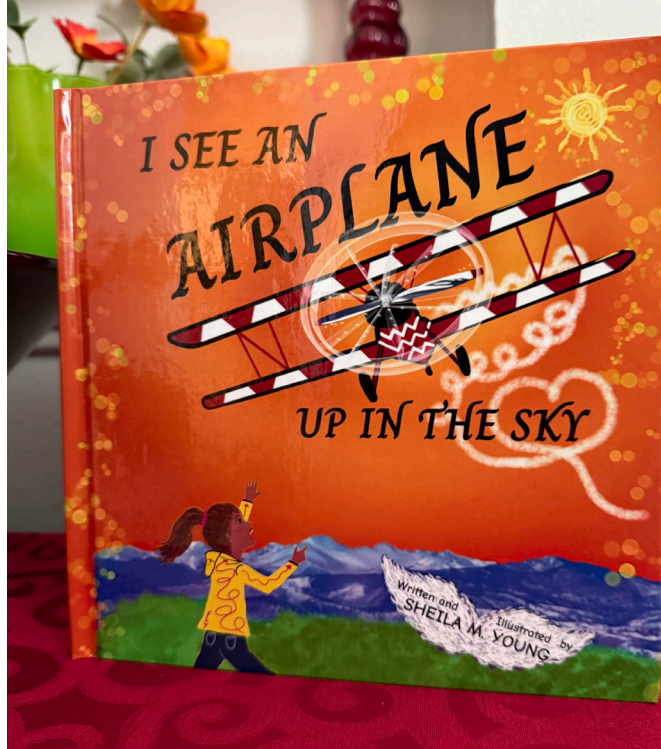
– By Carsey Eliason, NOLA Chapter



SOWING SEEDS OF AVIATION ASPIRATIONS

with author, illustrator,
& photographer Sheila M. Young

By Sheila M. Young, *Finger Lakes Chapter*



Sheila M. Young is on a mission to change the future of aviation for girls and women. The statistic that women make up less than 7% of all pilots has disturbed her since she first heard it. But Sheila is trying to change this statistic for the better and “get more chicks in the sky.” The aviation and nature photographer now turned motivational speaker, author, and illustrator invites her fellow Ninety-Nines to join her in “sowing seeds of aviation aspirations for young and old.”

Early Influences When No Mentors or Role Models Existed

From the age of five, Sheila wanted to fly. She credits watching jets take off at the local airport while on family outings for ice cream as the seed that produced her initial fascination with flight. Sheila remembers, “It was always such a thrill to see and feel jets taking off. As the sun set and the blue taxi lights illuminated the ground, something magical seemed to happen.” While attending air shows as a kid with her family, she found herself mesmerized by the performances of the Blue Angels and Thunderbirds. She fell in love with aviation and hoped to become a fighter pilot, although she had never flown yet. Not knowing any pilots, Amelia Earhart and the military performance teams were her inspiration. As a child, she couldn’t find books or stories about women who flew or girls who wanted to fly, except for Amelia. As a tween, Sheila chased crop dusters behind her house. She chuckles, sharing that she hoped the pilots would see her, land, and take her flying. Clearly, that never happened.

What Prevents Females From Flying?

In middle school, Sheila told her guidance counselor she wanted to become a pilot. She expected encouragement but heard, “Perhaps you should think about becoming a flight attendant.” Seeds of doubt were planted. Upon graduating from college, after studying and travelling abroad, Sheila wanted to serve in the military, yet the recruiter said, “As a female, you should find another way to fly.” Not as sassy as she is now, she didn’t ask, “Really? Why? Don’t I have the proper plumbing to fly a plane?”

Author visit and animated book reading for K-5 students at Byron-Bergen Elementary, Bergen, New York. (Photo by Gretchen Spittler)

Sheila explains, “I’d like to think that times are different now, however, I hear similar stories of discouragement from females of all ages. Sadly, all it takes is one negative voice to squelch a dream.” Whether they’re counselors, teachers, friends, or family, people are still discouraging girls and women from flying, as well as discouraging youth from chasing their big dreams. Sheila claims, “Without visible aviation role models, whether in real life, books or movies, it’s hard for girls or women to imagine themselves as pilots.” If females are fortunate enough to start flight training, Sheila says, “Without mentors or others to help support and encourage them along the way, they can easily get discouraged when faced with obstacles and give up before making it to their check rides.” Sheila has witnessed this too often.

During her presentations to school children, pilots, adult organizations, or communities, Sheila warns audiences about “dream thieves.” “These are the people you’ll encounter (often those closest to you) who’ll tell you that your dreams are impossible, unlikely, or dangerous, instilling doubt and fear in you.” Sheila insists we must ignore them and find mentors who support our big dreams instead. Her message is clear: “We all have big dreams but fear, doubt, and adversity can prevent us from chasing them.” She emphasizes the importance of finding mentors, becoming mentors, persistence, perseverance, and “never, never, never giving up!”



Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover

Based on her own story of chasing crop dusters, Sheila says, "Unlike the protagonist in my book, it took me a lifetime to achieve my dream, so my goal is to also inspire adults who've not chased their dreams. If I can earn my wings, write and illustrate a book at this stage of life, they can chase their big dreams too." It may appear to be a children's book by the cover, but Sheila suggests readers look beneath the surface. Every illustration has a backstory and if you're fortunate enough to attend a speaking engagement of hers, you may hear some of those fascinating stories. Sheila hopes to be the aviation role model and mentor to others that she never had as a kid, empowering them to do great things.

Aviation Attire Matters, So Wear It

Many decades later, after earning a master's degree, working in Japan and having a career in higher education, Sheila still longed to fly. An aviation baseball hat, worn by an octogenarian friend named Alan, prompted her to ask him about flying. She discovered that he had earned his Private Pilot Certificate in his late 50s. That aviation ballcap was the start of everything and led to Sheila's obsession with always wearing something aviation-related, whether it's a ballcap, t-shirt, hoodie, jewelry, or high tops. They're conversation starters that have welcomed many strangers to confide in her that they've always wanted to learn to fly. Her family and friends joke that Sheila is a walking billboard for aviation.

During her presentations with pilot organizations, she challenges other aviators to find something aviation-themed to wear every day, to share their love of flight and invite others to ask them about aviation. She also encourages them to become mentors to others. "If you have a plane, invite others to fly with you! No plane, no problem! Invite others to attend a fly-in, or visit a hangar, airshow, or aviation museum together." To her sister Ninety-Nines, Sheila challenges them to talk about aviation and The Ninety-Nines to others on a daily basis. "It's amazing how many people I talk with, from the owner of the local pizza shop to female captains flying the airline jets I'm travelling in, who haven't heard of The Ninety-Nines and thank me for telling them about our organization. To get more chicks in the sky, we all need to promote aviation by sharing our stories with everyone," says Sheila.

Alan was the first to encourage Sheila and tell her he believed she could become a pilot, although she thought the opportunity had passed her by. Not wanting to hear another negative voice, she secretly took a discovery flight and was hooked on takeoff. Soon she told her family and friends about her flying lessons and Alan was thrilled, encouraging her with flying magazines, stories, and aviation gifts to inspire her – including a handheld ATC radio. Sheila admits, "I recall listening to it for the first time and thinking, Wow! I've no idea what they're saying but it sounds exciting." Sadly, 2025 brought the loss of Sheila's mentor, Alan, at the age of 89. The impact he had on her life and helping her achieve her big dream to fly was profound and the reason why she stresses the importance of mentorship and claims, "Without Alan, I doubt I would've ever started flying."



Sheila with one of her favorite vintage WWII planes, Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, Loveland, Colorado.

Gratitude To Her First Female Mentor and Sister Ninety-Nines

Sheila would next meet an aviatrix named Sue, who'd become her first female mentor.

Sue introduced Sheila to her first fly-in, the Civil Air Patrol, the Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) Young Eagles program, and the joys of flying a Bonanza. Sheila was thrilled to volunteer with Young Eagles and loved seeing the excitement of the kids. Through the many challenges of flight training, Sheila could always turn to Sue for advice and support. "Without her, I'm not sure I would've completed my training," Sheila admits.

Sheila also has members of The Ninety-Nines and the EAA to thank for encouraging and inspiring her. Ninety-Nines' President Jan McKenzie's first phone call welcoming Sheila to the organization and inviting her to an aviation event was the start to her involvement with The Ninety-Nines. With no female students at her initial flight school, the camaraderie amongst The Ninety-Nines was invaluable and unexpected. "These amazing women all wanted to inspire, learn from, and encourage one another, not compete with one another, which was so refreshing," Sheila explains. Gretchen Jahn of the Colorado Chapter was a source of inspiration and a wealth of aviation knowledge, sharing exciting tales about competing in numerous Air Race Classics that sounded like something that should be in the movies. Many unforeseen obstacles would arise, holding up the completion of flight training, yet Sheila persevered even through a global pandemic. She was determined to finish, even if it took her until she was 100 years old. With the encouragement of her mentors, great flight instructors Don and Austin, and numerous Ninety-Nines, Sheila finally fulfilled her lifelong dream and earned her Private Pilot Certificate.



New York-New Jersey Section 99s at EAA Airventure, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 2025. Front Row: Sheila, Kate, Kelly; middle row: Marina, Natacha, Erin; back row: Mira, Lisa.

After moving to a new state, Sheila was fortunate to meet a Ninety-Nine, Frances Englund, who warmly welcomed her into the local chapter of The Ninety-Nines and the EAA. Being a part of these aviation communities has been a real blessing for Sheila in Colorado and New York. One of her illustrations in *I See An Airplane Up In the Sky* includes The Ninety-Nines' compass rose. It's her shout-out to The Ninety-Nines and thanks to them for their wonderful support. In a more obvious attempt to draw awareness to the organization, Sheila listed The Ninety-Nines' compass rose as one of the scavenger hunt items in the back of her book for readers to search for.

New Goals and New Mentors in Publishing

Never having written nor illustrated a book before, meeting author Jeanmarie at a book fair was providential. Jeanmarie invited Sheila to attend a meeting for children's writers and illustrators where she'd meet Tricia, Eva, and later, Sadie, and Megan, who all provided Sheila with the support, coaching, and mentorship to help her navigate illustrating and self-publishing her first book. "Honestly, learning to fly was easier for me than illustrating and publishing this book," she says. Author and illustrator Eva suggested Sheila use her photography to illustrate her book, which seemed impossible. With Eva's encouragement, Sheila hired consultants and spent endless hours and long nights studying digital art and illustrating. While some thought she was crazy investing too much time, effort, and finances into the book, Sheila knew she was called to publish this book. It took a year and a half of full-time work to complete the illustrations and format the book's layout. "Trust me, there were many tears with all the setbacks and challenges, yet my publishing coach and mentor, Tricia, always had my back and encouraged me," Sheila states. She admits, "Without these great women and their guidance, I would not have achieved this big dream!" The illustrations in *I See An Airplane Up In the Sky* layer Sheila's aviation and nature photography with artwork while introducing educational components such as WWI and WWII warbirds, aerobatic planes, military aircraft, geography, and more. The book's cover holds a lot of significance for Sheila, with an underlying photograph taken from the airport where she earned her wings and the Colorado Rockies in the background. While illustrating her book, Sheila's mentor Sue tragically passed away while flying a Civil Air Patrol mission. Honoring her memory, Sheila created a girl in the likeness of Sue in her illustrations. A big fan of aerobatic performers Patty Wagstaff and Rob Holland, Sheila illustrated aerobatic stunt planes in her book. Sheila was deeply moved watching Rob's performances and skywriting a heart in the sky

in honor of our veterans. She included a heart in the sky on the book's cover as a shout-out to Rob and as a thank you to our veterans and service members. Tragically, Rob passed in a plane crash the night before Sheila's book launch, making for a bittersweet launch, yet his legacy lives on.

Once the book was completed, Sheila's goals expanded beyond the book with building a website full of aviation resources, starting an inspirational social media presence, accepting speaking engagements, sharing her aviation photography, and collaborating with aviation museums and organizations. She shared, "Although not planned this way, all of the reviews on the back cover are from sister Ninety-Nines who are inspirational leaders: world aerobatic champion, aviation hall of famer, and Ninety-Nine Patty Wagstaff; Ninety-Nines' President Robin Hadfield; and Frances Englund (who has too many titles in The Ninety-Nines and the EAA to list here). I'm honored to have such amazing support from The Ninety-Nines."

The first introduction of *I See An Airplane Up In The Sky* took place at a Ninety-Nines section meeting held at the National Soaring Museum, in Elmira, New York. The support of the museum (which also sells the book) and from fellow Ninety-Nines was spectacular. Sheila met Western New York Chapter 99 and EAA member Lisa Hotung there, whose invitation allowed her to achieve another big dream: attending EAA's AirVenture in Oshkosh. A few highlights were the Meet and Greet with Patty Wagstaff, watching the night air show, meeting 100-year-old WWII veteran Joe Petersburg and hearing his story, and making new friends. Sheila also received an invitation from EAA44 President Mark Sheda to share her presentation about her journey of becoming a pilot and author with chapter members. Sheila was honored and grateful for the full house, warm welcome, positive feedback, and long line of people waiting for signed copies of her book. These opportunities just opened the door to many more.

What's Next?

Sheila hopes to inspire as many people as she can to dream big and dare to fly. She would love to get her book in the hands of as many children as possible and hopes that pilots (male and female) own her book as a means to inspire both kids and adults in their spheres of influence. Visit her at SheilaMYoung.com for aviation resources and to purchase her book. Follow her on Instagram at @Sheila.M.Young for inspiration and keep an eye out for her aviation photography that can be found in pilot lounges, airports, homes, and even in an FBO's restroom where Sheila says with a smile, "A framed B-17 prop can really bring sophistication to a men's room...as can a firefighting Air Tractor and Ryan P-22 Recruit."



Sheila, Lisa and Natacha, at the Ninety-Nines' booth at EAA's Airventure, Oshkosh, 2025.

Flying Fit: Why Preventive Care Matters for Women in Aviation

By Dr. Rachael Ferraro, Senior AME, Aviate Medical, Intermountain Chapter



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Each May, Women's Health Month serves as a reminder that wellness is essential – not only for quality of life but for professional performance. For female pilots, health is directly tied to safety, certification, and longevity in the cockpit.

Aviation demands focus, stamina, and sound decision-making – capabilities built on a strong foundation of physical and mental well-being. For members of The Ninety-Nines and the broader

aviation community, preventive care is more than personal – it's part of being a responsible aviator.

Understanding the Demands on Female Pilots

Pilots operate in an environment that places unique demands on the body. Irregular schedules, long duty days, time zone changes, and extended periods of sitting can all take a toll. For women, additional considerations – such as hormonal health, bone density, and different life stages – add complexity to maintaining optimal wellness. Balancing aviation careers with responsibilities outside the cockpit can also increase fatigue and stress, reinforcing the importance of a proactive approach to health.

Key Health Focus Areas

Preventive Screenings

Routine screenings are essential for early detection and long-term health. These include well-woman exams, Pap smears and mammograms, along with bone density testing for those at risk of osteoporosis. Early detection can identify cancers such as breast and colorectal cancer at more treatable stages – and in some cases, when caught early, these conditions may be evaluated and certified by your AME without requiring a deferral.

Mental Health

Women experience higher rates of depression and anxiety, and aviation environments can amplify stress. Recognizing early warning signs and seeking support are critical for maintaining focus and resilience in flight.

Chronic Disease Prevention

Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in women. Monitoring blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose helps reduce risks associated with heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.

Reproductive and Hormonal Health

Hormonal changes – from menstrual cycles to menopause – can affect energy, sleep, and overall well-being. Understanding and managing these transitions supports consistent performance and readiness.

Preventive Care as a Professional Standard

In aviation, preflight inspections are routine. Preventive healthcare should be approached with the same discipline. FAA medical certification sets a baseline, but it should not be the ceiling. Scheduling recommended screenings helps identify potential issues before they impact daily life or flight status – and may reduce the likelihood of certification delays.

Fatigue management is also critical. Chronic fatigue can impair reaction time, judgment, and situational awareness. Prioritizing sleep and understanding circadian rhythms are essential for maintaining readiness.

Nutrition, hydration, and mental wellness directly influence cognitive and physical performance. Small, consistent habits can significantly improve long-term outcomes.

How to Prioritize Your Health

Women's Health Month is about action. Female pilots can take practical steps to support their well-being:

- Schedule annual physicals and gynecological exams
- Stay current on cervical, breast, and colorectal screenings
- Maintain balanced nutrition, regular exercise, and adequate sleep
- Limit alcohol and avoid smoking
- Use healthy strategies to manage stress, such as exercise or mindfulness

These habits support both personal health and professional reliability.

Why It Matters

Preventive care supports three key pillars of a pilot's career:

Safety: Healthy pilots are better equipped to manage workload and respond effectively in dynamic environments.

Medical Certification: Early detection and management of conditions can reduce complications and in some cases allow certification without deferral when issues are identified early.

Career Longevity: Consistent care enables pilots to remain active and engaged in aviation over the long term.

Taking Action This May

Women's Health Month offers an opportunity to reset and refocus. By prioritizing preventive care, female pilots reinforce a core aviation principle: anticipate risk and act early.

Because maintaining airworthiness isn't just about the aircraft – it's about the pilot in command. 

Disclaimer: This is general information and not medical advice. Always consult your AME or medical provider for personalized guidance.



Left: PMHC volunteers gathered on the steps of Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. for Advocacy Day 2026. | Top right: Paige Kuhn posing with Chair of the NTSB Jennifer Homendy. | Bottom right: Legislative Assistant Brigid Ueland stands with a group of PMHC volunteers outside Senator Pete Ricketts' office (left to right: Brigid Ueland, Stephanie Seefried, Krista Simmons, Carlos Diaz, Paige Kuhn, David Block).

Culture of Silence: A Spotlight on Pilot Mental Health

By Paige Kuhn, Wisconsin Chapter

Pilot mental health is a subject often ignored, shrouded in stigma, and layered with regulatory complexities. Let's change the narrative. The Pilot Mental Health Campaign (PMHC) is a volunteer-based grassroots advocacy group dedicated to modernizing the current aeromedical system. Presently, controllers and pilots are disincentivized from seeking help and live in fear of reporting treatable medical conditions. This has already created an unsafe culture of silence in aviation; from chest pains to grief counseling, pilots are withholding information, deferring or denying treatment, and seeking informal medical care.

The culture of silence and avoidance affects the aviation community from the airlines all the way to general aviation and even aspiring pilots. When I began my pilot journey in 2022, I had no idea it would take me over two years and \$10,000 to get a Special Issuance FAA Medical Certificate. Prior to that, I was becoming acquainted with the possibility that I would never fly an airplane solo or progress in my flight training. One day while searching the internet for guidance, I stumbled across PMHC and learned that thousands of others are also experiencing the effects of our broken aeromedical system.

I started volunteering with PMHC in 2025. Since then, I have contributed to social media efforts, worked at our booth at AirVenture, been featured in an interview with MzeroA, and spoken to staffers on Capitol Hill. Each year since its founding in 2023, PMHC has coordinated an Advocacy Day in Washington DC, where volunteers come together and speak with representatives and senators about the need for legislative change to improve our aeromedical system.

Our focus this Advocacy Day was to garner more co-sponsors and support for the bipartisan Mental Health in Aviation Act (which passed unanimously under suspension in the House), as well as the Aviation Medication Transparency Act (introduced in the House). Please refer to the links below to read about the bills:

[H.R.2591 - Mental Health in Aviation Act of 2025](#)

[H.R.2592 - Aviation Medication Transparency Act of 2025](#)

Both of these bills aim to increase transparency, efficiency, and safety, while reducing costs, wait times, and stress. These bills will not lower the standards airmen and controllers adhere to; rather, they will break down barriers that have for too long fostered a culture of silence in our vulnerable community. Each member of the flying public will be safer if we address these known issues within our aeromedical system.

So, you're thinking: What can I do to help effect change? Consider these options:

- Contact your local representatives and senators.
- Talk about it! Bring it up at your next pancake breakfast, visit to the local FBO, EAA Chapter and Ninety-Nines meeting, the list goes on.
- Familiarize yourself with current proposed legislation.
- Post about pilot mental health on social media.
- Join our advocacy efforts by signing up through our website.

Please check out our website pmhc.org to learn more, find us on social media, volunteer for and donate to our organization.

Let's work together to break the culture of silence and keep the blue side up! 🇺🇸



A Continuum in Mindfulness: Support for Women Pilots in Africa and Beyond

By Captain Diane Pencil, *Africa Section*

Africa’s population is approximately 1.5 billion, and women pilots account for about 4.1% of all pilots. In 2023, the International Air Transport Association reported an increase in the percentage of women pilots worldwide from 4% to 5%. Although this indicates growth, women pilots continue to comprise a small segment of the total. They encounter challenges associated with working in a male-dominated industry, managing cultural differences, discussing mental health concerns, and balancing professional and family responsibilities.

Women pilots may experience pressure to meet performance standards, serve as role models, and demonstrate capability on the flight deck, which can be compounded by long work hours, time zone changes, and unpredictable schedules.

Mindfulness in Aviation

Mindfulness involves focusing intentionally on the present moment with a nonjudgmental approach. In aviation psychology, mindfulness is increasingly recognized for its potential to reduce stress, enhance concentration, and support decision-making under pressure. Techniques adopted by pilots include mindful

breathing during pre-flight checks, body scans to identify fatigue, and deliberate pauses to manage cognitive load. Studies indicate that mindfulness practices can decrease physiological stress, improve emotional regulation, and strengthen situational awareness, complementing traditional strategies for managing fatigue.

Fatigue and the Scientific Perspective

Fatigue is prevalent across various professions, including aviation, where its impact on pilots is significant. A 2022 study conducted by Maki, Fink, and Weaver investigated sleep and performance among pilots, truck drivers, and astronauts. Findings showed that many participants averaged less than six hours of sleep per day, with early flight departures correlated with shorter rest periods, while later departures allowed more opportunities for rest during longer flights. Fatigue was associated with slower reaction times, lapses in attention, and occasional premature responses. The study suggested that irregular schedules, demanding workloads, and disrupted circadian patterns can influence pilot safety and decision-making, especially on long-haul routes.

Fatigue Among Women Pilots: Unique Considerations

All pilots are affected by fatigue, but women may face specific challenges. Research gaps exist due to fatigue management programs being based primarily on studies involving male participants, which may not fully address women's requirements. Cultural stigma in certain regions may discourage open discussion of mental health topics or seeking assistance. Access to fatigue management and wellness initiatives may be limited, particularly in smaller airlines. Fatigue can impact decision-making for women pilots, who also navigate underrepresentation in a male-dominated industry.

Community and Peer Support

Isolation can intensify stress and fatigue, but structured peer support can act as a protective buffer. For women pilots, especially in regions where representation is low, community networks offer more than camaraderie, they provide a safe space for open dialogue, shared problem-solving, and professional guidance.

Formal Peer Support Programs

Airlines that use Critical Incident Response Programs (CIRP) or peer assistance networks have trained pilots available to provide confidential support following operational stressors. Access to peer supporters can be particularly valuable because peers often understand both professional pressures and gender-specific challenges. A 2021 case study by Dickson and colleagues illustrates how peer mentoring can strengthen both professional and personal growth. Such an approach may be particularly relevant for women pilots. In the study, small groups met regularly, rotated leadership, and created safe spaces to exchange feedback, share strategies, and discuss challenges openly. Individuals reported greater confidence, stronger skill sets, expanded networks, and improved resilience. The case study illustrates how peer mentoring is a powerful and low-cost way for women pilots to support one another's success and well-being.

Mentorship Initiatives

Groups like the African Section can match newly licensed pilots with experienced mentors who can offer fatigue management tips, career advice, and work-life balance strategies. Cross-regional mentorship, such as pairing African women pilots with mentors abroad, may allow for proven wellness practices from companies and airlines alike with different support systems.

For the past five years, the African Section has been actively advocating for mental health awareness in aviation. Building on this foundation, the organization has developed the ME Program (Mindfulness and Emotional Approaches), a structured initiative designed to support aviation professionals and airlines in addressing fatigue, stress, and well-being.

The ME Program provides practical tools, peer-led strategies, and mindfulness-based techniques to help pilots regulate emotions, manage fatigue, and enhance performance. Backed

by neuroscience, the program emphasizes evidence-based methods, ensuring that interventions are both credible and effective.

This initiative represents a significant step forward in addressing the growing recognition that mental health in aviation is as critical as technical proficiency. By equipping women pilots and their peers with accessible, science-backed approaches, the ME Program creates an environment where pilots are supported not only as professionals but as individuals balancing demanding careers with personal well-being.

Well-Being in Training

Incorporating mindfulness, fatigue management, and emotional regulation into recurrent training reinforces these skills alongside technical competence. Peer-led sessions can normalize mental health conversations and share practical strategies.

Technology for Connection

Digital tools like secure forums, private social media groups, and fatigue monitoring applications enable women pilots to communicate despite variable schedules. Regular virtual discussions provide ongoing support.

Partnership with Mental Health Professionals

Collaborations between aviation organizations and culturally informed psychologists facilitate access to professional care without stigma when needed.


Connections within professional organizations, such as the African Section, offer opportunities for experience-sharing, mentorship, and peer support. Peer-to-peer programs, including those used by airlines for incident response, provide a confidential forum to discuss challenges.

Practical Strategies for Resilience

Monitor sleep using tools such as the Karolinska Sleepiness Scale, which rates levels of subjective sleepiness on a 1-9 scale.

Build support networks among colleagues, aviation groups, or peers. Advocate for research on fatigue that reflects the experiences of women pilots to develop effective interventions.

Looking ahead

The number of women pilots in Africa and globally continues to rise. Maintaining that progress requires addressing fatigue, mental health, and representation collectively. Data from IATA shows ongoing change, and research highlights the importance of managed fatigue for safety and performance. Supporting women in aviation involves fostering conditions that enable optimal decision-making thus contributing to future advancements in the industry. 

Captain Diane Pencil is a professional airline pilot and PhD candidate



Left to right: Long Island Chapter members Yana Synytska, Terry Caputo, Nancy Neumann, and Jill Hopfenmuller at a pancake breakfast at the historic Bayport Aerodrome.

On the Grass Runway

A summer morning with the Long Island Chapter reminds us that aviation is more than flight – it's friendship, inspiration, and community.

By Yana Synytska, *Long Island Chapter*

I often wonder: Why does time run as fast as an airplane taking off? Moments blur into memories, yet some stand out so vividly they feel like yesterday. I want to return, just for a moment, to a warm summer day filled with laughter, friendship, and flight – a day of pancakes, airplanes, and inspiration with my fellow aviators of the Long Island Chapter: Jill Hopfenmuller, Nancy Neumann, Terry Caputo, and myself, Yana Synytska.

It was the end of June, a Sunday morning, when we gathered at the historic Bayport Aerodrome (23N). This is no ordinary airport. Known for its grass runway and home to the Bayport Aerodrome Society, this place is a living museum dedicated to preserving aviation history. Vintage airplanes, classic cars, and hangars transformed into small museums bring the golden age of flight to life.

The first thing that caught my eye was the sight of airplanes lifting gracefully from the grass runway. The vivid colors of summer framed the scene perfectly: green grass, a brilliant blue sky, and bright red and orange airplanes buzzing overhead. The smell of pancakes in the air completed the picture. It was simple, yet magical – aviation as it once was and as it still is at its heart.

We began with a pancake breakfast that morning, sitting together at picnic tables, sharing food and stories. The energy in that group was extraordinary. The inspiration you receive from fellow aviators is fuel for your own journey – a reminder that no matter where you are in your flight path, you are not flying it alone.


One of the most touching moments was hearing the love story of Jill and her husband, Steve, who introduced her to flying with

a sightseeing flight out of Bar Harbor, Maine. Both are aviators whose passion for flight has been the thread weaving their lives together. Stories like theirs remind us that aviation is not only about aircraft and aerodynamics – it's about people, connection, and the way flight brings hearts closer.

We wandered through the museum hangars, each filled with vintage airplanes lovingly cared for by their owners. Every plane had a story, and every owner was eager to share it. From the gleaming propellers to the smell of oil and history, you could feel the soul of aviation in every corner.

But what truly made that day unforgettable was the sense of community. Networking in aviation is more than just exchanging names – it is about building bridges, creating possibilities, and lifting each other up. Many people may join organizations like The Ninety-Nines seeking scholarships or opportunities, but what they may not realize is how much richer life becomes when you embrace the fellowship, mentorship, and friendships it offers.

Personally, I am deeply grateful for the support and encouragement I've received from the women in our chapter. As a Ukrainian aviator, being welcomed into this sisterhood has been a gift beyond words. That morning at Bayport reminded me once again: Aviation is not just about flying airplanes – it's about lifting spirits, inspiring dreams, and carrying each other higher.

As the sun rose higher in the sky, we left the grass runway with full hearts, brighter spirits, and a renewed sense of purpose. The Bayport Aerodrome gave us more than a pancake breakfast – it gave us a memory etched into the skies of our journeys. 

Flying the Hudson Corridor: A Winter Excursion

By Bev Weintraub, *Greater New York Chapter*

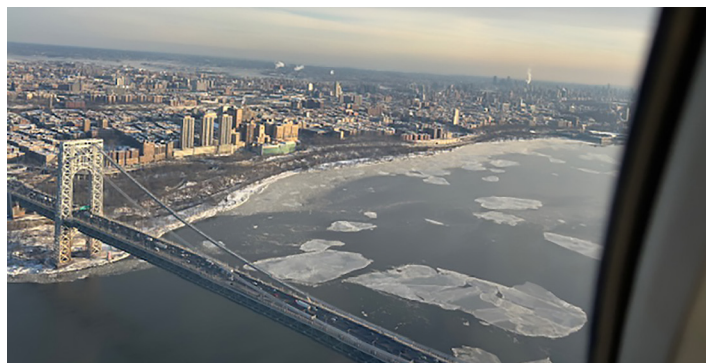
January's weather was definitely not conducive to flying in my part of the Northeast. The winds frequently gusted 20 knots or more, and my small airport in New Jersey has one north-south runway with a constant crosswind from the west. Temperatures were in the teens, or lower, and we had more snow than we'd had in years. Planes might like the cold – pilots, not so much. But planes also need to fly, and my Archer had been sitting in its tiedown spot, idle, for three weeks. I needed to get out there, dig out, and fly.

Airport management at Lincoln Park (No7) does a good job of plowing the runway, ramps, and taxiways, and they're very careful not to get the plows too near the props. But that means a buildup of ice and snow across the parking spaces. On this particular day, the temperature was a balmy 25 degrees Fahrenheit and winds were light. I put on my snow boots, pulled the shovel out of my car and started to dig. There was a foot or so of snow with an icy crust across the tiedown spot, but fortunately it was powder, with no ice underneath. After 45 minutes of shoveling I had a clear path to the ramp.


There was an eight-inch snowdrift on the left wing next to the fuselage and a two-inch layer of snow and ice across both wings. Thank heavens for wing covers! I had bought a pair last year to avoid an icy buildup on my wingwalk, and they proved to be a godsend. They're just canvas – not meant for year-round use – and are a pain to get on and off. But so worth it. After brushing off the snow, I unclipped them and lifted up all that ice. I had clean wings, with just a little ice on the horizontal stabilizer. I cleaned that off and preflighted while the line guy gave me a preheat, and the "Flying Typewriter" and I were good to go.

Some friends had been posting pictures of the frozen-over Hudson River, so I thought I'd take a look. That would give me about an hour of flight time – enough to give the engine some exercise – and, because shoveling had taken longer than I had expected and it was already midafternoon, I could still land and tie down before dark.

There are two ways for transient aircraft to fly the Hudson: request clearance into the Class B airspace for the Skyline Route from LaGuardia Airport (KLGA) tower (flying south) or Newark Liberty International Airport (KEWR) tower (flying north), or self-announce on 123.05 between 1,000 and 1,300 feet MSL. Above is the Bravo, and below is airspace for sightseeing helicopters and other aircraft that aren't flying the corridor end to end. There are mandatory reporting points along the way, and all aircraft must turn on all beacons, lights, and strobes. With all the pilots talking to one another ("Hudson traffic, Archer, Intrepid, 1,100 southbound"), their aircraft lit up like Christmas trees and with everyone showing up on ADS-B, it's a pretty effective way of maintaining situational awareness and staying out of each others' way. Some pilots complain about the helicopters, but the one time I was cleared into the Bravo, it was much more congested with helicopter traffic than I ever saw in the Hudson Class B exclusion. (The FAA has a training course for the New York City Special Flight Rules Area (SFRA): https://www.faa.gov/gslac/alc/course_content.aspx?cID=79&sID=388&preview=true.)



The air was very smooth, and there wasn't much traffic. The river itself was full of floating chunks of ice but wasn't frozen over. Because the river changes direction and is sometimes salt and sometimes fresh water, the ice had most likely floated downstream from upstate. I entered the corridor at the Alpine Tower, flew south over the George Washington Bridge, past the Intrepid, Governors Island, and the Statue of Liberty, and then over the Verrazzano Bridge, past Coney Island and out of the corridor to the south. It amazes me every time I fly the Hudson that we're allowed to do this – it's a privilege, and one of the best things about being a pilot, in my opinion.

A quick 180 over New York Harbor and I reentered the corridor to the north, and 20 minutes later, I made a left turn at the Alpine Tower and headed back to the airport – which raised another weather-related issue. Normally, I taxi on the grass into my parking spot, but with two to three feet of snow on the ground, that wasn't an option, and I can't push the plane by myself. Two very nice young gentlemen from the flight school drove over – without coats – and helped me push back. And that's when I realized I'd have to kneel down in the snow to reattach the wing covers and tie the plane down. Next time, I'll bring snow pants as well as boots. 

A Tea Party with Amelia's Niece

By Terri Donner, *Kentucky Bluegrass Chapter, UPS Airbus Captain, retired*

My first encounter with Amelia Earhart's family occurred when I won an Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship in 1981 for my Multi-Engine Rating. I attended The Ninety-Nines annual conference in Boston and was presented my certificate by Muriel Earhart Morrissey, Amelia's younger sister, who was over 80 years old. She was gracious, and sort of mysterious, to a star struck 21-year-old. I often thought of my good fortune to have met her, as I moved along in my professional flying career.

Somewhere around the time I transitioned from the Boeing 727 to the Airbus 300 at UPS (2007), my interest in Amelia Earhart blossomed. I found more time for reading and researching Amelia's life and the Airbus seemed to have layovers in many places Amelia had lived or traveled. On a layover in Des Moines, Iowa, I found two of the four houses where Amelia's family lived while her father was a railroad attorney. I took a photo on their front porches. I found the area where Amelia was a social worker in Boston, but the building was long gone. One day in Burbank, I went to the house where she lived with her husband, George Putnam. I stood out in the street in front of it and wondered what it was like for her to be living inside it many years before. I read that Amelia had traveled to Banff and Lake Louise, so I visited that area on a Vancouver, Canada layover. I thought to myself, for such a short life, 37 years, Amelia sure did get around.

In 2012, I discovered that Amelia's niece was still alive. A simple internet search turned up an address for Amy Kleppner, Muriel's daughter, in Silver Spring, Maryland. My own sister lived near that address and before I could chicken out, I talked Laura into driving me to the house of record for a chance meeting with the owner. The very nice woman who answered the door believed my sincere story and explained that she had bought the house from Mr. and Mrs. Kleppner more than ten years earlier. But to my surprise and delight, she volunteered to give me their current address in Wardsboro, Vermont.

I felt confident I was on the right path to connect with some more Earhart DNA. I decided it was best to introduce myself, the old-fashioned way, by writing Amy a short note. I told her a little bit about myself, my interest in aviation, my affiliation with The Ninety-Nines since I was 18 years old, and that I had named my own daughter Amelia. I was over the moon when she wrote me back and we even became pen pals for a while. I finally popped the question, "Would you be willing to meet me for a cup of coffee sometime?" After what seemed like forever to reply, Amy sent me a note inviting me to her

1790s farmhouse for tea!

A few weeks later, on a gorgeous fall day (October 12, 2015, to be exact), with the Vermont maple trees in full splendor, I turned down Kleppner Road and spotted Amy waiting for me on the front porch. From the moment I saw her, I could see a familial resemblance to her famous aunt. She greeted me sort of matter-of-factly and offered me a chair on the porch. I tried to remain calm and figure out how to get to know her without acting like every other Amelia Earhart-crazed fan she had ever talked to. I remember at first she did not make a lot of eye contact but gazed out at her 260-acre plot and seemed to enjoy telling me about the wild turkeys and deer that roamed about often and the bear she saw the week before! She went inside to produce the photo of it and I was truly impressed.

I carried a little pink spiral notebook and had a few questions I wanted to ask Amy. Our conversation flowed easily for a while as I told her how cool I thought it was that I met her mother over 30 years ago at The Ninety-Nines conference. Amy told me that she had "looked me up" and how much Muriel loved to go to events and make speeches about her famous sister. She shared a bit about how both she and her mother were teachers. She impressed me with her Ph.D. in philosophy from Columbia University. We talked briefly about travel and adventures, but she had me beat with worldly destinations that I was still dreaming about in Antarctica, the Galapagos Islands, and Europe, and her extensive hiking accomplishments.

After a while, she invited me inside her lovely farmhouse for a tour and that cup of tea. Her sweet husband, Adam, appeared and joined us at the kitchen table where a plate of homemade cookies appeared. At one point Amy hopped up to get some scrapbooks and a folder with notes about a book she was writing about Amelia, and I asked Adam if the local community knew who she was. He grinned and shook his head "no." My suspicions were confirmed that this was one very private little lady. The notes Amy shared were not the same stories I had read in several publications. She impressed on me that Amelia was very interested in women's rights and wanted to be taken seriously. Her childhood and family experiences resulted in her unique choices as an adult. Amelia knew what it was like to work hard for her goals and to keep her focus on the prize. Amy told me that she had been working for years on her book about Amelia and her advocacy for women. I just remember being overwhelmed by all of Amy's deep, careful thoughts and cementing my belief that Amelia was way ahead of her time.



I got the courage to ask Amy the big question, "What do you think happened to your aunt?" She was quick to respond, "She ran out of gas and was lost in the Pacific Ocean." She also added something to the effect that there was no reason to keep looking for her. Our conversation was easy and moved along. Adam and Amy had questions for me. They wanted to know how it was to combine a flying career and motherhood. I enjoyed sharing my perspective. As our tea party was wrapping up, I asked Amy if we could take a photo together. She was happy to oblige, and we posed in her cozy kitchen.

We exchanged Christmas letters, notes, and emails for 10 more years. I could tell she was slowing down and her traveling seemed to stop. I received an email from her son, Bram, that she passed away peacefully at home, in December 2024. I saw that Bram lived in Burlington, Vermont, and when we corresponded, I asked him if he would like to address The Ninety-Nines at the 2025 Ninety-Nines International Conference in Burlington. He happily accepted the invitation. What a treat it was to meet another generation of Earhart DNA and gaze at the Earhart family Bible that he brought for all to see. Soon thereafter, Bram notified me that his mother's manuscript was in the final stages of completion and would be released in March 2026 in conjunction with Women's History month. He invited me to read it and provide a couple sentences of feedback. As I was reading it, I felt like I was sitting down talking to Amy again. I could feel her telling the Amelia story, her own way. After all, this was probably one of the last people who knew her personally. What a tough act it must have always been to be in her aunt's big shadow.

I made a visit to Brownsville, Texas, in January this year to visit the town where Amelia got her Commercial certificate in 1929. There is a beautiful bronze statue of Amelia sitting on a park bench. There is a quote on the bench that says, "Everyone has oceans to fly, if they have the heart to do it. Is it reckless? Maybe. But what do dreams know of boundaries?" I think, that maybe, Amy was thinking of this quote when she chose the title of her book, *Oceans to Cross*. I highly recommend that you read it with a cup of tea.

From Propellers to Powertrains: Why Women Pilots Must Lead the Charge into Electric Aviation

By Susan Roe Musacchio, *Chicago Area Chapter*



Since 1929, The Ninety-Nines, Inc. has empowered women to lead in every chapter of aviation history. Today, we stand at the threshold of the next transformation: the rise of electric and hybrid aircraft, and the global shift toward advanced air mobility (AAM). This is not a trend. It's a technological, environmental, and operational revolution – one that demands the knowledge, voice, and leadership of women pilots.

The 2025 Oshkosh Electric Aircraft Symposium, hosted by the Vertical Flight Society, highlighted how rapidly this future is becoming reality. Over 40 companies unveiled electric aircraft technologies, updated certification pathways, and pilot training innovations. The industry isn't just evolving – it's being redefined. And women pilots must be part of that redefinition.

But involvement doesn't start with a symposium. It starts with understanding – with educating ourselves, mentoring others, asking hard questions, and inserting our long-underrepresented perspectives into the design and development of tomorrow's skies.

What's Changing in Aviation

Fast electric aviation isn't one aircraft or idea. It's a complex web of:

- eVTOLs (electric vertical takeoff and landing) aircraft designed for air taxi operations in urban areas
- eCTOLs (electric conventional takeoff and landing) aircraft for short- to medium-range regional flights
- eSTOLs (electric short takeoff and landing) aircraft for remote and rugged terrain
- Hybrid and hydrogen-electric propulsion systems
- Electric aviation is in its infancy, with many configurations still evolving
- New pilot training requirements, flight controls, energy management systems, and safety protocols
- Ground infrastructure, including vertiports, charging systems, and digital traffic management

Many of these technologies are already flight-tested. Some are in FAA certification review. Several will enter operational service by 2026. To influence what this future looks like – for pilots, passengers, and communities – women in aviation must become informed advocates today.

The Ninety-Nines: Built for This Moment

The mission of The Ninety-Nines has always been about more than flying. It's about education, empowerment, mentorship, and progress. These values are exactly what the electric aviation field needs.

- **Education:** As new aircraft systems replace traditional models, pilots will need fluency in energy management, avionics, and emergency procedures. The more we understand, the more we can

shape how training is designed – and how safe, inclusive operations are built.

- **Mentorship:** Students and young aviators look to The Ninety-Nines for guidance. By embracing and explaining the evolution of flight – from fuel to electricity – we can keep the next generation inspired and engaged.
- **Representation:** If women are not part of the research, testing, piloting, and regulatory work happening now, the needs of half the population risk being ignored.

The Role of Pilots in an Electric Future

As this industry takes off, the role of the pilot is evolving, not disappearing. Here's how pilots will remain central:

- **Human Factors and Flight Testing:** Aircraft designers need pilot input to build cockpits, controls, and decision support tools that are safe, intuitive, and operationally sound. Diverse input – including gendered perspectives – is vital.
- **Training System Development:** Electric aircraft require new standards for simulator training, certification, and flight readiness. Experienced pilots can help define what proficiency looks like in this new era.
- **Community Integration and Public Trust:** The future of AAM depends on public buy-in. Pilots – especially those with long-standing community ties – are some of the best advocates for safety, education, and neighborhood engagement.
- **Mission Innovation:** Electric aviation isn't just for air taxis. It's for remote medical deliveries, short-hop passenger routes, climate research, first responder operations, and STEM outreach. Pilots with purpose will define new missions.

What You Can Do Now

Getting involved doesn't require a new certificate or degree. It requires curiosity, clarity, and community engagement. Here are starting points for women pilots ready to step into the electric future:

1. Educate Yourself

- Follow the Vertical Flight Society and NASA's AAM programs for credible updates.
- Subscribe to eVTOL Insights, FutureFlight, and Electric VTOL News.
- Attend local briefings or webinars hosted by organizations like Women in Aviation International and AOPA on emerging technology.
- Companies you can watch now and follow on social media: Joby, BETA Technologies, XTI, H55, Wisk Aero, Horizon Aircraft, VerdeGo Aero, Evolito, Samson Sky, Hydroplane, Bristell, CubCrafters, Hartzell Propeller, Ampaire, magniX, Skyfly, Electro Aero.

2. Incorporate Electric Topics Into Flight Discussions

- Host a local Ninety-Nines chapter session focused on electric aircraft safety or pilot training.
- Invite guest speakers from companies like Joby, BETA Technologies, or Eviation.
- Discuss with CFIs how electric trainers might fit into future curricula.

3. Mentor With the Future in Mind

- Talk to young pilots not only about stick-and-rudder skills, but also about emerging technologies and opportunities.
- Encourage STEM students to explore aviation through the lens of sustainability, energy systems, and urban mobility.

4. Give Feedback to Innovators

- Participate in surveys or focus groups on cockpit design, pilot workload, or interface usability.
- Offer pilot insights through professional associations or at conferences.
- Reach out to companies developing electric aircraft – many are eager to hear from experienced aviators.

Why Your Voice Matters

In the early days of aviation, women weren't just passengers in progress, they were test pilots, barnstormers, mechanics, and mentors. That same spirit is needed now, as we electrify the sky. But technology won't wait. Decisions are being made right now about how these aircraft will fly, who will train in them, and how they'll be integrated into our communities. If the only people in those rooms are engineers or investors, the results will reflect that. But if women pilots – especially those grounded in decades of flying experience and

the deep networks of The Ninety-Nines – are present, we get safer systems, smarter training, and a more human-centered future.

The Future Is Not Optional – But Inclusion Is

Electric aviation is coming. Whether we participate or not, our world is changing. But inclusion? That part is a choice. And involvement – real, informed, courageous involvement – requires intention. For The Ninety-Nines and all women pilots, this is a call to learn, to lead, and to lend our wisdom where it matters most: in the shaping of aviation's next great chapter. The sky is shifting. Let's fly forward – together.

About the Author

Susan Roe Musacchio is a third-generation aviator, award-winning filmmaker, and founder of Aviatrix Company – a media and education platform dedicated to the future of sustainable aviation and women's leadership in emerging flight technologies. A Detroit native, Susan's heritage is rooted in both the automotive legacy and aviation innovation of the region. Her grandmother flew during the early days of American aviation, and that pioneering spirit now drives Susan's work at the intersection of history and the future of flight. Through films, public speaking, and community storytelling, she helps demystify electric aviation and AAM for broader audiences. Her mission is clear: Tomorrow takes flight when women lead.

The Mental Runway

What Your Nerves Might Be Telling You



Tammy Barlette

*Tucson Chapter,
Founder and CEO of
Crosscheck Mental
Performance Training*

“I get so nervous.” It's something I hear often from pilots at every stage of training and experience, usually said with frustration, sometimes even embarrassment, as if nerves are something to eliminate before we can perform well. But what if that's not true?

Think about what nerves actually feel like: a racing heart, sweaty palms, butterflies in your stomach, maybe restless energy or a sudden urge to use the restroom one more time before stepping to the aircraft. Now ask yourself this: What does

excitement feel like? It's very similar.

Physiologically, your body responds in much the same way to both nerves and excitement. The sensations largely overlap, and the biggest difference is the label you assign to them. And that label matters more than most people realize.

When you tell yourself, I'm nervous, your brain often interprets that as a warning. Something must be wrong. Maybe you're not prepared. Maybe you're not ready. That interpretation subtly shifts your mindset, often leading to hesitation, second-guessing, and a decrease in performance. But in many performance situations, those physical sensations are not a warning sign. They are a readiness signal.

That surge you feel is your body doing exactly what it was designed to do when something important is about to happen.

Adrenaline sharpens your focus, increases your alertness, speeds up your processing, and prepares you to perform. As pilots, those are not things we want to suppress. Those are things we need.

The key is aligning your internal dialogue with what is actually happening in your body. Instead of “I'm nervous,” try “I'm excited,” “I'm ready,” “I've got this.” This is not just positive thinking. It is a deliberate mental skill, choosing to interpret the same physical experience in a way that supports performance instead of undermining it. And like any skill, it takes practice, especially if you've spent years labeling that feeling as nervousness.

There's a powerful example of this from Olympic sprinter Michael Johnson, who was once asked if his heart was pounding before a big race. His answer was, “Definitely. And when I'm nervous, I'm comfortable.” He didn't eliminate the feeling. He redefined it.

I learned this lesson the hard way long before I ever stepped into a cockpit. As a gymnast, I once convinced myself that nerves were a problem I needed to eliminate. I stood on the beam, told myself to calm down, and went for a difficult skill I had never missed when I felt what I interpreted as nerves. And I missed. What I didn't understand at the time was that those nerves were not a sign that I was unprepared. They were a signal that what I was about to do mattered and that my body was ready to meet the moment. When we misinterpret that signal, we don't just feel worse. We often perform worse.

So, the next time you feel what you've always called nerves before a flight, pause for a moment. Nothing has gone wrong. Your body is doing exactly what it's supposed to do. The question is: What are you going to call it?

Sedona, Arizona



Left: KSEZ, the mesa-top airport of Sedona Arizona. | Center: Impressive buttes surround Sedona Airport, making it an airport to be well-prepared for in advance. | Right: Takeoff from Sedona Airport on runway 21 towards lower ground. (Photos by Mark Allen, Sedona Airport Staff)



Mary Bryant
Florida Suncoast
Chapter

Mary has been a pilot and 99 for over three decades. She holds ATP, CFII, MEI, and CE500 Ratings. She is an aviation business owner, aircraft owner, and active pilot. She loves to fly and is always looking for places to go and things to do; suggestions always welcome!
marybryant100@gmail.com

Sedona, Arizona Airport (KSEZ) is perhaps my favorite airport in the U.S. I've flown in every state except Hawaii, so that says a lot. This mesa-top airport has magnificent views of red-rock buttes and steep canyon walls, a friendly FBO, Red Rock Aviation, and a nearby restaurant and charming hotel. All are located on top of the mesa within walking distance of the FBO.

You'll need transportation to descend the mesa to the town of Sedona to find world-class resorts and spas, a cute downtown with numerous art galleries and stores appealing to tourists and crystal seekers. Phenomenal hiking, biking, and jeep tours through the towering red rock spires and petroglyph-covered hills are readily available. The area is known for its new-age mystical properties and multiple healing energy vortices, with many areas also sacred for centuries to Native Americans.

The airport is in a desert environment at 4,831 feet, with a pattern altitude of 6,004 feet, so density altitude can be an issue, especially on hot days. Buttes tower more than 7,000 feet on both sides and to the north of the runway, so landing is generally on Runway 03, with takeoff on Runway 21 toward lower ground.

When approaching the edge of the mesa to land on Runway 03, it's not unusual to encounter a downdraft so careful attention to altitude, power, and speed is paramount. More than one aircraft has added power to counteract the downdraft and then struggled with excess speed when trying to stop before reaching the other end of the runway near the edge of the north side of the mesa. In view of the surrounding higher terrain, going around or taking off on

Runway 03 is not practical in most general aviation aircraft. So prepare well, pay attention, exercise caution, and don't go into this airport in underpowered aircraft or with questionable weather. All that aside, it is so worth it.


If you only have time for a meal with a view, the Mesa Grill is just off the west side of the runway with good food and spectacular views. Indoor and outdoor seating is available.

An overnight stay can be happily accommodated without leaving the Airport Mesa at the comfortable Sky Ranch Lodge. Reserve well in advance as its richly landscaped grounds and stunning views make it very popular with pilots. For those with more time and larger budgets, The Enchantment or L'Auberge Resorts, among others, offer magnificent accommodations and exceptional spas.

Leave lots of time to hike and explore the magnificent terrain and native trails. They will not disappoint and will provide you with striking photo opportunities. For those seeking meditation, healing, and spiritual growth, maps to the key vortices and contemplative sites are readily obtainable.

If time allows, drive south through woody Oak Creek Canyon for a respite from the desert heat and sun. Accommodations are few but special in the Canyon. A little further south takes you to Montezuma Castle National Monument, one of the better-preserved cliff dwellings.

I can't attest to the efficacy of crystals and the famous healing vortices, but Sedona does seem to have a very special atmosphere, a beckoning presence and seemingly magical qualities.

Enjoy! 

“With SiriusXM I feel safer in my cockpit.”

Lin Caywood, Vice President of the Air Race Classic



“During my fourth Air Race Classic, there was a weather front coming in as we were flying through the mountains. A combination of good luck, analysis and faith in SiriusXM’s weather allowed us to be one of the few teams that made it out of the mountains before the weather came in.”

Lin Caywood

Commercial SEL & MEL, tailwheel, seaplane, CFI, CFII, MEI, Cessna 182T and 150 owner

2025 AOPA Distinguished Flight Instructor and 2024 AOPA Best Flight Instructor – Eastern Region, Vice President of the Air Race Classic, PALS Pilot and 99s Governor of the Mid Atlantic Section

SiriusXM AVIATION

Learn more at siriusxm.com/aviation or watch Lin discuss her experience using SiriusXM Aviation Weather by scanning the QR code.



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Photo credit: Lin Caywood

Milestones



Madison Barch
CFII
– Michigan

Maya Cardenas-Berkowitz
Commercial
– Bay Cities



Madeline Breitenstein
Private
– Kentucky Bluegrass



Kiegham Broney
Instrument
– British Columbia Coast



Jisun Choi
Solo
– Dallas Chapter



Timber Dawson
CFII
– Kentucky Bluegrass

Mathilde Fievez
Private
– Phoenix



HalliAnn Glover
Solo
– Arkansas



Megan Gorak
Private
– Michigan



Dora Green
Private
– Kentucky Bluegrass



Jessica Green
Solo
– Arkansas

Mina Gu
Tailwheel endorsement
– Bay Cities



Laura Higginbotham
Solo
– Florida First Coast



Britney Howard
Commercial Multi-engine
– Kentucky Bluegrass



Samantha Inguanzo
CFI
– Florida Goldcoast

Raj Karwa
CFI
– Lake Tahoe



Kimberly Kessel Elsholz
Commercial Multi-engine
Seaplane
– Florida Suncoast



Dawn Madeja
CFII
– Wisconsin



Erica Okwuazi
Private
– Chicago Area

Katie Palmer
Commercial
– Pikes Peak



Karyn Ranzau
First Officer,
Republic Airways
– Kentucky Bluegrass



Bailey Reiners
Commercial Multi-Engine
– Chicago Area



Samantha Rengstorf
Solo
– Arkansas



Maddie Schlecht
Private
– Chicago Area

Marly Serrano
Private
– Chicago Area

Eriel Sexton
Private
– Chicago Area

Yevheniia Smolinska
CFII
– Bay Cities



Rachel Stivers-Bender
Solo
– Kentucky Bluegrass

Toria Socolosky
Commercial
– Eastern New England



The Florida Goldcoast and Treasure Coast Chapters hosted Girls Scouts for a full day of aviation discovery at Girl Scout Aviation Education Day. Highlights included hands-on learning experiences covering geography, drones, and pre-flight, and a navigator scavenger hunt followed by a reflection period.

FLORIDA GOLDCOAST & TREASURE COAST CHAPTERS

Girl Scout Aviation Education: Phase I – Preflight and Takeoff Roll

Excitement and curiosity filled the air as more than 55 Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida gathered for a special aviation education day, an event designed to introduce young girls to the fascinating world of aviation, aerospace, and STEM careers. Inspiring local Girl Scouts is one of the Florida Goldcoast and Treasure Coast 99s' most anticipated annual events. For about fifteen years, they have worked together with Friends of The 99s, aviation professionals, and other volunteers to share their knowledge and passion for flight, and to inspire the next generation of pilots, engineers, and other aviation enthusiasts.

From the moment the event began, participants were actively engaged and immersed in hands-on learning experiences. Seminars were set up around the venue where Girl Scouts could explore the basics of aerodynamics, learn about the different parts of an aircraft, discover how airplanes fly, and “fly” a pattern around a runway. Volunteers guided the girls through simple demonstrations and hands-on activities that showed how lift, drag, thrust, and gravity work together to keep planes in the sky. The girls solved a scavenger hunt as they learned about charts and navigating the air. A highlight of Girl Scout Aviation Education Day was the opportunity to learn how aviation impacts the environment.

One of the most popular activities was flying an actual Redbird simulator. The girls learned to take off, fly straight and level, make steep turns, and land the airplane. Through this activity, they learned that flying often involves planning ahead and lots of practice. Everyone left the simulator with a huge smile on their faces.

Many of our speakers shared their personal journeys into aviation careers and spoke about how their early interests in science and exploration led them to work in the aviation industry. The girls learned that aviation does not just mean pilots but can relate to any career field of interest. A presentation on drones sparked interest in a specific aviation-related career. Since all of our speakers were female, conversations helped the Girl Scouts see the ladies as role models and recognize that careers in aviation are not only exciting but also achievable. Hearing directly from women who are succeeding in aviation roles was particularly powerful for the participants.

Girl Scouts were able to explore aircraft up close, learn about cockpit controls, and understand the safety procedures that keep aviation running smoothly. Many girls had their first opportunity to sit in a pilot's seat and imagine themselves flying an aircraft someday.

At the end of the day, Myra Bugbee, the organizer of the event, called the group together to reflect on the day. Pausing to reflect in a thoughtful manner, students connected new skills to real-world

applications and took ownership of their learning. Myra and Katie Koch emphasized the importance of perseverance, education, and curiosity. They encouraged the girls to ask questions, explore STEM careers, and never feel limited by stereotypes. They highlighted the importance of teamwork and developing leadership skills.

Events like this provide early exposure and positive experiences that can shape future life choices. Parents and troop leaders expressed appreciation for the opportunity. Many noted how engaged and inspired the girls (and their parents) were throughout the day. For some participants, the event ignited a brand-new passion for aviation. For others, it simply expanded their understanding of the many possibilities that exist within STEM careers. Several Girl Scouts attended previous Girl Scout Aviation Education events. This proved that The 99s are making an impact on the young ladies.

According to one report, the aviation industry in the Miami-Dade area of Florida directly employs 88,602 individuals, over 20% of Miami's workforce. At the beginning of the day a handful of young ladies thought they may be interested in an aviation-related career. By the end of the day, most of the girls raised their hands. These girls will have ample opportunities if they choose aviation-related careers.

As the event concluded, each Girl Scout left with new knowledge, memorable experiences, a sense of excitement about the future, and an aviation patch. Whether they dream of becoming pilots, engineers, scientists, or innovators in other fields, the lessons from the Girl Scout Aviation Education Day will continue to inspire them to explore, learn, and reach for new heights.

By combining hands-on activities, mentorship, and real-world exposure, Girl Scout Aviation Education Day proved that when young girls are given opportunities to explore aviation and STEM, their potential truly takes flight.

The Girl Scouts can continue their excitement by attending Phase II, a more intense career event with American Airline, and Phase III – The 99s Let's Fly Now! First Flight Program on April 25 at Homestead General Airport sponsored by Florida Goldcoast 99s and Homestead Executive Jet Center/Pilot Training Center Homestead.

To create an inspiring day like this truly takes teamwork. Many thanks to Laurene McEneny for helping to organize the event, Wayman Flight Academy for providing a beautiful, air-conditioned space for our activities, and all of the fabulous volunteers who donated their time and expertise to empower our next generation of young ladies in the aviation field.

– Myra Bugbee

Grass Roots



Top: Pioneer female aviators: Beth Manwill (as Amelia Earhart), Tess McGill (as Louise Thaden), Lily Goodworth (as Marvel Crosson).

Bottom: Front row, left to right: Old Dominion Chapter members Nancy Schuster, Sue Passmore, Laura Savino; Taylor Peck, Dallas Chapter; FLY Composer Jordan Kamalu; Morgen Reeb; and RJ McGlasson; all other rows: cast, crew and University executives.

(Photos by Southern Virginia University)

OLD DOMINION CHAPTER

The Old Dominion Chapter had a wonderful opportunity to attend the world premiere of a new musical, FLY, inspired by the true story of the 1929 National Women's Air Derby. The Southern Virginia University theater production was developed in collaboration with the show's creators: Jordan Kamalu, composer; and Taylor Peck, playwright.

FLY follows Louise Thaden, Marvel Crosson, Amelia Earhart, Pancho Barnes, Ruth Elder, Bobbi Trout, and Claire Fahy as they compete in the first ever cross-country air race for women. The cast brought the characters to life in an amazing way. The creators chose these racers to bring focus to the specific struggles the women were facing – concern for safety, missing family, death, etc.

Will Rodgers, Wiley Post, and Cliff Henderson added wit along the way. The pilots discovered that unity and not rivalry was their greatest strength. FLY truly celebrated the camaraderie of the women racers, who ultimately created The 99s organization to continue that camaraderie after the race.

The student cast members, the production staff, and the theater directors made a trip to the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum's Udvar Hazy Center to learn more about women pilots and the aircraft involved at the time. Laura Savino was able to connect with them at the museum during their visit.

Each cast member also created a research project for their character so they could properly portray the finer points of each racer.

Taylor Peck and Jordan Kamalu attended the opening weekend performance. They reported, "we had an opportunity to engage with the creators during the post-show experience. The result was a fabulous performance that we enjoyed tremendously. The cast and crew were so grateful that we attended their performance. We highly recommend it."

Taylor Peck is a 99 from the Dallas Chapter, South Central Section. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in theatre studies from Brigham Young University and an Master of Fine Arts from the University of California at Riverside. She specializes in new works development.

For more information about the musical see:

www.jordankamalu.com/fly

www.taylormariepeck.com/home/playwriting

(note: The original title of the musical was *FLY*. It was only temporarily renamed to *AirBorn* to prevent confusion with another production.)

– Susan Passmore



NOLA CHAPTER

The NOLA Chapter is aware of so many new members that just don't know how important voting can be. So, we had a party to encourage our girls to be active! The prize for showing up was a ride in a brand new 2025 Twin Diamond. We also sent out emails telling the girls to look for their ballot and not just toss it. Your International Board works hard for you.

– Mae Marquet

New members of the NOLA Chapter learn the importance of voting for their International Board of Directors.



Author Sarah Byrn Rickman of the Pikes Peak Chapter with Colorado Chapter and 99s Life member Donna Miller. (Photo by Stacy Pritts, Pikes Peak 99) | Pikes Peak 99s booth and members, left to right, seated: Stacy Pritts, Social Media Chair, and Katie Palmer, Chair; back row: Melissa Kurrle, Secretary; Zoan Harclerode, Treasurer; Sarah Byrn Rickman, member and author; Cassia Batts, Membership Chair; and Patsy Buchwald, Scholarship Chair and historian.

COLORADO & PIKES PEAK CHAPTERS

To celebrate Women of Aviation Worldwide Week within Women’s History Month, the Colorado Chapter and Pikes Peak Chapter joined forces to partner with the Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum for a special event on March 7, 2026. Together, they highlighted the history and legacy of women in aviation at the museum’s Exploration of Flight hangar at Centennial Airport (KAPA) by spotlighting the past, present, and future of The 99s.

The two chapters brought brochures, posters, interactive activities, scavenger hunts, and even coloring materials to help attendees better understand aeronautical charts. The Pikes Peak 99s displayed binders of archival photographs, news clippings, and historical artifacts. Pikes Peak member and acclaimed author Sarah Byrn Rickman was also in attendance and showcased her books on Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of WWII.

One of the featured speakers included 99s Life and Colorado member Donna Miller, retired captain at American Airlines, who spoke of finally achieving her dreams through a career journey flying cargo planes and charter flights. Another was Heather Bulk, CEO and co-founder of Special Aerospace Services (SAS), who credited creativity as a route to success and cited similarities between the space and aviation industries.

The lively event was open to the public and provided opportunities for education and meaningful connections amid exhibits, vendors, a prize wheel, food truck, and aircraft.

The festivities also caught the attention of local media. Colorado Chapter Vice Chair Anastasia McCune told the *Denver Gazette*, “[Flying] changed my life, so it’s really neat to think that we can do anything to help somebody change their life in that way.”

The Colorado and Pikes Peak Chapters extend our heartfelt thanks to Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum, along with the many wonderful volunteers and attendees whose enthusiasm and support made this celebration of women in aviation a success!

– Sarah Nguyen, *Publicity Chair, Pikes Peak Chapter* and Kristin Smith, *News Reporter, Colorado Chapter*



The Katahdin Wings members and Girls in Flight participants celebrate at the end of a successful morning of introduction to aviation.

KATAHDIN WINGS CHAPTER

Up, Up and Away: Girls in Flight

Katahdin Wings Chapter and Owls Head Transportation Museum hosted a fun and successful day of aviation education for girls ages 8 to 12. On March 14, 2026, Katahdin Wings Chapter members Lisa Reece, Jenny Jorgensen, Eva Murray, Lori Plourd, Julia Stambolis, Casey Raymond, Brenda Thibodeau, and Karissa Davan were joined by friends including CFI Marcia Wescott from PlaneSense; Avery Turner and Ollie Chaine from the Fryeburg Academy’s Aviation program; student pilot Greta Bolinger; student pilots and museum volunteers Jenny Gold and Sapphire Radley. They gathered at the Owls Head Transportation Museum to share their aviation enthusiasm and knowledge with 40 young ladies from all over Maine.

The girls were divided into groups and rotated through four stations. Each group was introduced to Women in Aviation, where Lori shared a fun presentation of women in aviation history and The 99s, then met Marcia, a professional pilot.

The girls moved on to Forces of Flight, where Julia, Greta, Avery, and Ollie explained lift, drag, thrust, and weight. The girls then worked together in teams to design different parachutes to test in the museum’s vertical wind tunnel. From there they moved to Eva’s station, where she explained airport operations and the role of ATC. Karissa, Brenda, and Jenny Gold assisted Eva. They learned the phonetic alphabet, experienced an airport traffic pattern, and got to wear a headset. Lisa, Jenny, and Sapphire then brought the girls throughout the museum on an aviator’s search, where they solved clues that brought them to several of the museum’s highlights – such as the Wright Brother’s bicycle shop and their Wright flyer, Harriet Quimby and her Bleriot, and the Red Baron’s tri-plane – among many other historic exhibits. Along the way, they even met Amelia Earhart (played by museum volunteer Amelia Spahn).

As a way to wrap up the event, all the girls gathered in the auditorium to share brief feedback: awesome, fantastic, interesting, lots of fun, amazing, and our favorite “best time of my life!” At the end of the event, each girl took home a goody bag filled to the top with aviation educational materials, aviation puzzle books, women in aviation history pamphlets, airplane cookies and jewelry, and other snacks.

The Katahdin Wings are very grateful for the involvement of Megan Kestersen, Heidi Parsloe, and Caylie Anderson from the museum’s recently opened Science and Industry Center, which provides hands-on engineering challenges to spark curiosity and imagination in learners of all ages. They supplied the professional marketing and some of the supplies that made the day an interactive experience of aviation exploration for all the girls, young and old! We also thank all the chapter members and friends that joined us to help with keeping the girls organized and on track, as well as collecting and making donations to the goody bags. It was truly a team effort that led to a fun, successful, and memorable day for all.

– Lori Plourd

Grass Roots



99s at the Welcome Desk

CHICAGO AREA

Aviation Safety Seminar and Expo 2026

Safety Seminar recap from Chicago Area Chapter Chair Vickie Szewczyk:

“Thank you to Madeleine Monaco for chairing another amazing Expo! There were roughly 300 in attendance, plus about 30 Chicago Area Chapter 99s to staff the event. Also, thank you to our Treasurer Susan Roe Musacchio for handling the vendor tables (there were 32); Welcome Desk manager Megan McArthur, with Greeters Ana Adona, Gabby Fullilove, and Angela Manno; Cynthia Madsen and Megan for the new 99s membership booth; Ellen O’Hara and guest Eve Walker for 50/50 raffle sales; Jen Markovska and Jamie Swanson for Flying Companion instructors; Larisa Kano for VFR introductions; Corie Wild and Eva Kozlowski for photography; Krista Coltrin for public relations outreach; and anyone else that I missed! It takes a team effort to put on the Expo, but I can tell you that it is appreciated. Members from my EAA chapter have told me how much they look forward to the event. It is something special that the Chicago Area Chapter has been putting on this Expo for over 50 years. Thank you and great job!”

Program Details:

IFR PILOT SESSIONS: Speaker introduction by Vickie Szewczyk, with opening remarks by Madeleine Monaco

- **Flying Real IFR** – A Comprehensive Review, by Gary Reeves (aka “the guy in the pink shirt”). A full morning of Instrument instruction. Immerse yourself in becoming more proficient and make your IFR flying easier and safer.
- **ATC Was My Co-Pilot**, by Iowa Chapter member Minnetta Gardinier, Air Race pilot and 99s Vice President
- **Tales from the TRACON** by Eddie Trujillo, air traffic controller

VFR PILOT SESSIONS: Speaker introduction by Larisa Kano, with opening remarks by Madeleine Monaco

- **VFR Airport Runway Procedures**, by Jennifer Settle, FAA runway safety
- **Mosaic Can Change Your Pilot Life**, by Michael Baraz, CFII, FAA safety representative
- **Backcountry Airstrips & Your Role in Safe Ops**, by Mike Purpura, regional manager
- **Between a Rock and a Hard Place – Pilot Mental Health**, by M. Penny Levin, CFI, Ph.D.
- **Flying Paved Alaska**, by Dave Montgomery, intrepid aviator

FLYING COMPANION SESSIONS: A comprehensive all-day program for right seat riders.

All Flying Companion sessions created, produced, and presented by Chicago Area 99s Jen Markovska and Jamie Swanson

- **How Does It Fly?**
- **Customary Communications**
- **Finding Your Way Around**
- **Stay Calm and Carry On**

– Diane M. Cozzi



Cheri Thompson and her husband, Dr. Mike Thompson, dressed for the occasion and danced at the Aviation Explorer Post No. 8 swing dance fundraiser.

NORTHEAST KANSAS CHAPTER

The Northeast Kansas Chapter is a stalwart supporter of the super active Aviation Explorer Post No. 8 in Topeka, Kansas, – they even have an affiliated arm that maintains several aircraft! The mission of the Aviation Explorer Post, in part, is to provide youth experiences and exposure to career opportunities in the field of aviation. This February, the Post held their second annual swing dance fundraiser and Chapter Chair Laura Burnham, Girl Scout Liaison Tammy Willits, and longtime member Cheri Thompson attended with their significant others. Member Cheri and her husband, Dr. Mike Thompson, dressed and danced for the occasion. The Post did a great job with period advertising of the event.

In April our chapter will make our annual visit to the Post to talk about The 99s and to make a monetary donation toward their good work.

– Sara Tompson



Michigan Chapter members at the Women's Aviation Career Symposium (WACS)

MICHIGAN CHAPTER

While Michigan's continued winter-like weather has been challenging for flying, the Michigan Chapter 99s have kept busy over the last two months with activities to promote our organization, recruit new members, and celebrate the accomplishments of women in aviation.

The Michigan Chapter had a booth at the Women's Aviation Career Symposium (WACS) held at Western Michigan University's College of Aviation in Battle Creek, Michigan, on February 28, 2026. This is the second year the Michigan Chapter has exhibited at the event, which this year had over 200 attendees. Michigan Chapter member Sarah Drevon and Eastern New England Chapter member Leah Murphy received 2026 WACS scholarships and were recognized during the event. The following members attended and helped staff our booth: Sarah Haskett, Emma Coulter (Ventura County Chapter), Megan Gorak, Deborah Howell, Berfin Kayikcioglu, Julie Lowman, Esme Lowry, Arian Perez, and Madelynn Yakim.

We held meetings via Zoom in both February and March. In February, Chapter Secretary Frances Rose led a discussion of the book *The Great Stewardess Rebellion* written by Nell McShane Wulfhart. The book was recommended by Claire Duggan, who has years of experience as a flight attendant. Our March meeting included a brainstorming session led by Sarah Haskett to solicit feedback from members for planning future meetings and in-person events.

We were well represented at the North Central Section Meeting held at Sporty's Pilot Shop in Batavia, Ohio, on March 27-29. Attendees included: Linda Langrill, Chapter Chair; Frances Rose, Secretary; Sarah Haskett, Air Marking Chair; Deborah Howell, Fund Raising Chair; Susan Siporin; and Audrey Cook. Michigan Chapter Chair Linda Langrill dressed in a period costume and delivered the chapter's annual report to the song of *You'll Be Back* from the musical *Hamilton*.

Our chapter is partnering with the Michigan chapters of the Women in Aviation International to honor the service of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) on May 23, 2026. Volunteers will be placing tributes at WASP gravesites throughout Michigan. We are proud to help raise awareness of the significant contributions made by these women during WWII.

We are also honoring the last living WASP Nell "Mickey" Stevenson Bright on her birthday. Mickey will be celebrating her 105th birthday on June 20, 2026. Chapter Chair Linda Langrill asked members to send Mickey birthday cards to reach a goal of 105 cards. Mickey was part of Class 43-W-7 which graduated on November 13, 1943, and she was one of only twenty women chosen to fly B-25 bombers. She now resides in Salt Lake City, Utah, and continues to tell the WASP story as often as she can.

We recognized the following members who were awarded the Michigan 99s Sandy Denton Trophy in the last two months: Madison Barch, CFII; Megan Gorak, Private Pilot.

We welcomed three new members: Johanna Walker, Gina Anzicek, and Brielle Coventry.

- Barb Vukits



AUSTIN HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

Sweet Success at the 2026 Bluebonnet Airshow

The Austin Hill Country Chapter of the Ninety-Nines had a beautiful, fun-filled day at the 2026 Bluebonnet Airshow, coming together for another successful bake sale in support of our scholarship fund.

Thanks to an incredible team effort, this year's bake sale was our best yet. After raising \$670 last year, we set our sights on beating that total—and we did just that, bringing in an amazing \$1,235!

This success truly belonged to everyone involved. Whether you baked delicious treats, worked the table, encouraged airshow guests to stop by, or simply cheered us on, your energy and support made all the difference. It was a great reminder of how much we can accomplish when we come together.

We're so grateful for our wonderful Austin Hill Country 99s and Friends of The 99s who made the day so special. Here's to keeping the momentum going for an exciting year ahead!

- Hannah Lundgaard

Grass Roots



Rio Colorado 99s at the Flying Poker Run (standing back row left to right: Pam Rudolph, Shannon Hicks, Shelley Smith, Frances Irwin, Marina Lindbergh, Danielle Bucher; scholarship winners kneeling: Brice Chambers, Paola DePaso, Jessica Baerwolf, Kelly Urich, Justine Volk, and Andrea DePaso).

RIO COLORADO CHAPTER

Spring was in the air as pilots up and down the Colorado River hopped in their airplanes to fly in the Rio Colorado 99s' Flying Poker Run. Participants included 99s from other chapters, such as Phoenix and Fullerton, as well as local pilots, with over 50 poker hands sold. After picking up playing cards at the outlying airports – which included Needles Airport (KEED), Sun Valley Airport (A20), Kingman Airport (KIGM), and Indian Hills Flying Field Airport (2I10) – everyone met up in Lake Havasu City Airport (KHII) to draw their last card, be judged for best hand, and enjoy a lunch of delicious tri tip, pulled pork, and smoked chicken sliders with all the fixin's from Coach T's BBQ.

The annual event raises funds for the Don & Tookie Hensley Memorial Scholarship Fund. One of Tookie's greatest joys was being a flight instructor saying, "I still love being able to make someone's dream come true!" What better way to honor them than to continue giving the dream of flight in their name?

The Rio Colorado Chapter awarded \$12,000 in scholarships at this year's poker run to four worthy student pilots to begin flight training. Mother-daughter duo, Paola and Andrea DePaso, exemplify that it is never too late or too early to start flying and that aviation is a family-friendly pursuit. High school student Brice Chambers is striving to achieve his goal of becoming a commercial pilot, inspired by his late father's encouragement to chase his dream and do what he loves. Kelly Urich, who recently moved to Lake Havasu and was introduced to The 99s, is pursuing a dream that she once did not realize was possible. The Rio Colorado 99s take pride in supporting them on their journey.

Rio Colorado 99s extend a heartfelt thanks to our incredible sponsors and partners that helped make the day possible: Velocity Aviation FBO LHC for partnering with us to provide the luncheon, along with a gift card for aviation fuel, and providing cool swag for giveaways. Appreciation is given to all who contributed to our aviation-related raffle basket: Velocity for the fuel; UniAviation for the headset case; AirCraft Spruce for a gift card; Hangar 24 Restaurant for a gift card; a case of Aeroshell 100W aircraft oil from Aviatrix LLC; and donations from ACS Products, Red Onion, Havasu Olive & Garlic Company, and many more. The collective support transformed the day into a meaningful fundraiser that will continue to uplift and inspire future generations of aviators.

– Pam Rudolph



Our newest Life Members

Jan Archibald
San Fernando Valley Chapter

Judith Barker
Alameda County Chapter

Gloria Blank
San Antonio Chapter

Pam Catlin
Michigan Chapter

Megan Dukes
All-Ohio Chapter

Elisabeth Dupuy
Ambassador Chapter

Mignon Gery
Ventura County Chapter

Carol Joyner
San Gabriel Valley Chapter

June Leach
Fullerton Chapter

Judy McCarthy
Ventura County Chapter

Grace McGuire
New York-New Jersey Section

Berneta Mosher
Scioto Valley Chapter

Deborah Rihn-Harvey
Houston Chapter

Terry Rinehart
Long Beach Chapter

Cherie Williams
Sacramento Valley Chapter

Ellen Williams-Waldmiller
Antelope Valley Chapter



Our most recently enlisted Friends of The 99s

Juliet Algos
Burnaby, BC

Averie Boucicaut
Boca Raton, FL

Marcio Braga Domingos
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Youri Bujko
Bend, OR

Jay DeAndrade
Jacksonville, FL

Ayleen Gutierrez
Longmont, CO

Valyncia Joachim
Austin, TX

Helena Martins
Norman, OK

Karrie McNeil
Southaven, MS

Smith Schenden
Irvine, CA

Sarah Vetick
East Windsor, NJ



New Horizons

This space is dedicated to our members and 49½s who have passed on to New Horizons. We will miss them, and thank these 99s for all of their contributions to our organization.

Nancy Crase
Phoenix Chapter
February 3, 2026

Babette Andre
Colorado Chapter
February 6, 2026

Ruth Woodruff Teel
Life Member
North Central Section
February 28, 2025

Jean Emily Murry
Life Member
Greater St. Louis Chapter
February 22, 2026

Jean Franklin Hancher
Life Member
First Canadian Chapter
March 20, 2026

Annette Orton
San Luis Obispo County Chapter
March 27, 2026

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