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Aero Club Foundation to Award 10 Scholarships to Washington, D.C. Area Students Pursuing Careers in Aerospace

The Aero Club Foundation of Washington is pleased to announce that it will award \$5,000 scholarships to 10 Washington, D.C. area students who demonstrate a passion for aviation with the intent to pursue an education and career in aerospace.

Recognizing the importance of advancing aviation education and preparing tomorrow's leaders in aerospace, the Aero Club Foundation established its scholarship program in 2017, with the goal of reducing financial obstacles for students to enroll in college or university aviation programs, technical school, or flight training programs. Since then, the Foundation's scholarship program has awarded \$95,000 in scholarships to 16 Washington, D.C. area public and charter school students. This year, the Foundation received a record amount of scholarship applications and will award the largest number of scholarships since the program's inception.

Jana Denning, the newly appointed President of the Aero Club Foundation, praised the selection, "These students are an inspiration by themselves but the totality of their achievements and passion for aviation bodes well for our industry."

The 2024 Aero Club Foundation scholarship recipients are:



Brett Burch graduated from Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School in 2022 and currently studies communications at Towson University. Burch earned his Private Pilot Certificate in 2024 and is working towards completing his instrument training. In his scholarship essay, Burch described his first flight on a commercial airline when he was 12 years old. "I remember boarding the plane and being greeted by a young black pilot emerging from the cockpit," Burch wrote. "The phrase 'representation matters' may sound a bit cliché, but it's really true. That memory of a pilot that looked just like me always stuck with me and inspired me to work towards becoming a young black pilot too."



Zoé Denito is a three-time scholarship recipient who graduated from Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville, Maryland in 2022. She is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in astronautical engineering at Capitol Technology University in Washington, D.C. During her sophomore year, Denito worked as an Electrical Engineering Lab Aide, providing students with the tools and components needed to complete their class projects. In the Summer of 2023, she interned at the US Naval Academy's Maryland Space Grant Consortium Program, where she assisted instructors in teaching the Summer Heroes Youth Program. Denito notes, "This year, I am hoping to be involved in more outreach efforts, especially in underrepresented communities in STEM Fields. I am looking forward to multiplying ways to give back to my community."



Patrick Gilbert graduated from W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax, Virginia in 2022. He is a second-time scholarship recipient and is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree in Aeronautical Science at Rocky Mountain College in Montana. During his sophomore year at Rocky Mountain College, Gilbert successfully completed his FAA Commercial Pilot Rating and achieved Dean's list with high honors. He also competed for the school's Intercollegiate Flight Team, putting his flying, navigation, and flight planning skills to the test. Gilbert is currently working towards the next key milestone of his aviation career - becoming a Certified Flight Instructor. He says, "The goal is to achieve the rating this year and begin flight instruction for the college to help bring about students who are passionate about aviation and mold them into professional pilots."



Michael Mcleod attended Washington, D.C.'s School Without Walls and graduated in 2024 with plans to attend the University of North Dakota. His dream is to one day become an air transport pilot. Mcleod joined the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) in order to gain experience in the cockpit, and eventually had his first solo flight in a CAP aircraft. "My main goal in aviation is to be able to travel the world on long haul routes with a legacy carrier," said Mcleod. "Aviation has been such a passion of mine and I hope to continue it for the rest of my life."



Peter Nguyen is a 2024 graduate of Chantilly High School and plans to attend Cornell University in Ithica, New York. His teachers describe him as having a "fire for learning" and "spreading his infectious love for science to his peers." Having grown up in a northern Virginia community neighboring Washington Dulles International Airport, Nguyen is inspired to study aeroacoustic engineering in order to help find a solution to reduce aircraft noise in similar communities. "I hope to work with NASA as an aeroacoustic researcher... making the field of aerospace, and in turn the world, a quieter place," said Nguyen.



Clint Ngwa graduated from Phelps Architecture, Construction, and Engineering (ACE) High School in Washington, D.C. in 2023 and currently attends Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Ngwa was born in Cameroon and his passion for aviation started on his first flight. "When I moved to the United States five years ago, I envisioned myself becoming an international airline pilot in the future," writes Ngwa. He added, "I am now on a tangible trajectory toward achieving my dream of becoming a pilot."



Isabelle Rivera attended Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland, graduating in 2024. She plans to attend the University of Maryland – College Park and study Aerospace Engineering. In her scholarship essay, Rivera describes her choice of major as "a domain where my passion, ambition, and dedication converge". In addition to being a student pilot, Rivera is a member of the Ninety-Nines International Organization of Women Pilots and an explainer at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. She aspires to drive change, promote diversity, and contribute to the collective understanding and exploration of space.



Shae Stonemeier is a three-time scholarship recipient who graduated from Wheaton High School in 2022. She is currently enrolled at Purdue University and is pursuing her degree in Mechanical Engineering. During her sophomore year at Purdue, Stonemeier gained invaluable engineering and leadership skills through her work with Purdue's Electric Vehicle Club, which has helped her to find her passion in sustainable resources and battery development. "I am currently feeling incredibly open to the many options that I know I will have in my career, including having a positive impact on sustainability in the aviation industry," said Stonemeier.



Juliana Thompson-Williams graduated from Bishop McNamara High School in Forestville, Maryland in 2024 and plans to study Aerospace Engineering at the University of Maryland. During her junior year of high school, she was accepted into the NASA Connectors Program and was inspired to pursue a career in aerospace after a shadow day at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. Thompson-Williams's mentor at NASA Goddard, Dr. Erin Smith, writes "Ms. Thompson-Williams is incredibly intelligent, passionate about all things space, and has an enthusiasm that is completely infectious. She also has a confidence and assuredness that belies her age."



Liyat Tsehai is receiving the Aero Club Foundation's scholarship for the second time. She currently attends Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and graduated from Francis L. Cardozo Education Campus' TransSTEM Academy in Washington, D.C. in 2023. Tsehai is an aspiring commercial pilot who is pursuing a degree in Aeronautical Science while simultaneously undergoing flight training to obtain her Private Pilot's Certificate. "I am committed to embracing the responsibilities that come with being a pilot and am thrilled about the prospect of exploring the world from the cockpit," said Tsehai.

"This year's record scholarship distribution is a direct result of the years of work that past Aero Club Foundation President Yvette Rose put into the program and her perseverance in cultivating student and teacher relationships in the Washington, D.C. area," stated Denning. She continues, "I would also like to thank the program's major donor, United Airlines, in addition to those who have made contributions to the Aero Club Foundation of Washington. Your support is critical in preparing and empowering the next generation of aerospace leaders."

Members of the 2024 Aero Club Foundation Scholarship Selection Committee included: Steve Morrissey, Chair of the Selection Committee and United Airlines; Darby Becker, GE Aerospace; Rachel Jackson, RTX; Shaesta Waiz, Dreams Soar, Inc.; and Sterling Wiggins, The U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The Aero Club Foundation looks forward to recognizing each scholarship recipient at the Aero Club of Washington's Breakfast on July 31, 2024 at the Westin Washington D.C. Downtown Hotel.

For more information or to register for the Aero Club's July 31st Breakfast, please visit www.aeroclub.org. To make a tax-deductible contribution to the Aero Club Foundation of Washington, please visit www.aeroclub.org/foundation.

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About Aero Club Foundation of Washington

Founded in 1995, the Aero Club Foundation of Washington fosters and promotes interest in the principles and development of aviation and aeronautics by establishing, sponsoring and supporting student educational programs at public and public charter schools in the District of Columbia. To learn about the Aero Club Foundation's educational outreach initiatives and events, scholarship program, or to make a tax-deductible donation, please visit www.aeroclub.org/foundation.