A JetBlue Reunion 10 Years in the Making

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JetBlue Pilot inspires student to seek career in aviation --

NEW YORK, Sept. 9, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Ten years ago, JetBlue Airways (Nasdaq: JBLU) Captain Eric Scott invited a young traveler to visit the cockpit and unknowingly changed this boy's life.

To view the multimedia assets associated with this release, please click: http://www.multivu.com/mnr/63240-jetblue-pilot-mentor-inspires-student-to-pursue-aviation-career

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Elijah Hedrington was just five years old, traveling to Burlington, VT as part of the Fresh Air Fund. This program provides free summer experiences to New York City children from low-income communities. Elijah's escort happened to be Sheila Donnell, a JetBlue Inflight crewmember who volunteers for the program. On this flight, Sheila introduced Elijah to Capt. Scott. Capt. Scott invited Elijah into the cockpit.

At that very instant, Elijah decided he wanted to become a pilot, just like Capt. Scott. "He became a role model to me at that moment. He's my hero. I look up to him," Elijah said during a recent reunion with Capt. Scott.

Now at age 14, Elijah is continuing on his path to become a pilot. He is a sophomore at Bronx Aerospace High School, and a member of the school's robotics team that is building an airplane and seeking permission from the FAA to fly the aircraft. After recently hearing that Elijah is following in his footsteps, Capt. Scott offered to become Elijah's mentor to help keep him on track and encourage his career aspirations.

JetBlue arranged a reunion for Capt. Scott and Elijah in August at JetBlue's Terminal 5 (T5) at New York's JFK airport. Capt. Scott treated Elijah and a group of his friends to a special behind-the-scenes tour of T5.

"When I was coming up in aviation, I had a mentor. So when I heard that Elijah wanted a mentor I was motivated. I knew this was how I got this far, with someone teaching me the ropes. I know I can teach him a lot," said Capt. Scott. "At JetBlue, all pilots receive a professional mentor. It's about giving back to those that show an interest in our profession. It's not a job for us, it is a passion."

Capt. Scott has been with JetBlue for 11 years and is passionate about mentoring. He's the lead mentor at his alma mater, University of North Dakota, and is involved with JetBlue's University Gateway Program, a pilot talent pipeline program in conjunction with university programs and regional airlines. As Elijah's mentor, Capt. Scott will provide career and academic advisement.

Because Capt. Scott currently resides in the Midwest, far from Elijah, he also enlisted a back-up, First Officer Jovan O'Bryant, who lives in New York, to serve as Elijah's local mentor. Fittingly, Capt. Scott also served as a professional mentor to First Officer O'Bryant when he joined JetBlue three years ago. "I plan to be there for Elijah, whether he asks me a question over the phone, email, or face to face," said First Officer O'Bryant.

Elijah looks forward to the day he can give back. "When I become a pilot for JetBlue I would like to be a mentor, so I can give someone the opportunity that I had today," he said.

JetBlue, New York's Hometown Airline, encourages students to explore careers in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) professions, including aviation careers, from piloting the aircraft to maintaining the engines.

Original b-roll and interviews are available.

Contact JetBlue at (718) 709-3089 or corpcomm@jetblue.com for more information.

About JetBlue Airways

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