American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

Breaking barriers on the path from scholarship recipient to team member

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Women continue to break barriers and overcome adversity in male-dominated industries, and the world of aviation is no exception. During Women's History Month and throughout the year, American Airlines is proud to support women and their career journeys by celebrating the contributions they make to the company and the communities they serve every day.

Through scholarship programs, networking opportunities, the Professional Women in Aviation (PWA) Employee Business Resource Group and more, American has also developed resources to encourage, inspire and assist young girls in pursuing their aviation dreams.

Sonia Thiebeau

Taking a single flight inspired and changed 12-year-old Sonia Thiebeau's life forever, setting her on the path to aviation. She began ground school at age 14 and learned how to fly. But a number of obstacles sent her on a different path: the automotive industry.

It didn't take long for her love of aviation to propel her back to the world of flight. In her mid-20s, she decided to pursue a career as an aircraft mechanic.

"When I was 25, I had to rely on myself for financial support," Sonia said. "I scoured the internet in search of scholarships, and one of the organizations I came across was Women in Aviation International."
American sponsors the Women in Aviation International (WAI) conference in Nashville every year, donating thousands of dollars in conference and continuing education scholarships. The event provides networking, education and mentoring opportunities for those interested in aviation and aerospace careers.

Sonia was awarded the American Airlines Maintenance Scholarship in 2013 and in 2014, she was hired at US Airways. She currently works as an Aviation Maintenance Technician at Phoenix (PHX).

She wasn't the only one who got her start through this scholarship. Kirstie McLean, an Aviation Maintenance Technician at Las Vegas (LAS), was last year's recipient of the American Airlines Maintenance Scholarship. "Winning the scholarship meant so much to me," Kristie said. "It made me feel like I definitely chose the right career path. It was a great feeling."

Kirstie graduated from the Aviation Institute of Maintenance in Las Vegas and has been with American since October. Her routine job duties consist of inspecting and servicing aircraft and making sure they are prepared for a day of flying.

"Every day is an opportunity to learn something new. You could work in the industry for 10 years and still there is always something to learn," she said. "I'm very grateful to American for the opportunity I was given and I'm excited for the future."

> The American Airlines Maintenance Scholarship is offered through Women in Aviation International. The 2020 scholarship application process runs July to mid-November 2019. Visit **wai.org** for more information.