American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

Empowering girls to become the aviators of tomorrow

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Phoenix-based American Airlines team members took local Girl Scouts — Arizona Cactus-Pine Council (GSACPC) — under their wings for a behind-the-scenes tour of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

With a focus on the aviation industry, girls learned about the importance of STEM education. Female leaders from across departments talked about their careers at American and encouraged them to pursue futures in historically male-dominated science, technology, engineering and math-related industries.

Among these female leaders was First Officer Erika Leblanc, who started as a pilot in the Arizona Air National Guard.

“I was the only female pilot in the guard for 20 years,” said Leblanc. “It took a lot of hard work, training and dedication. I’m proof that girls can become pilots.”

Former Girl Scout and current Mayor of Phoenix Kate Gallego and an all-female flight crew greeted the girls as they began their day at the American’s line maintenance hangar at PHX. Mayor Gallego spoke to them about the high number of women in leadership roles that started as Girl Scouts and how it prepared her for her current role as Mayor of Phoenix.

“I hope some of you go into aviation.” said Gallego. “There are so many career options and maybe today you’ll find something that you love. I found my career path through the Girl Scouts and I know many of you will do the same.”

The scouts then boarded an Airbus A321 in the hangar, exploring the aircraft while the crew explained their roles at

American and the history of women in flight. They had the rare opportunity to visit the cockpit and sit in the captain’s seat alongside Mayor Gallego.

"It was pretty cool that everyone took the time to tell us their story,” said Girl Scout Isabella Collins. “I had no idea there were that many jobs at American.”

At the airport, volunteers took the group through TSA security, visited the American control center and ticket counters and walked the ramp.

Their airport adventure ended back at the hangar where they learned about engine maintenance with Senior Manager of PHX Line Maintenance Jeff Owen and Line Maintenance Supervisor Dave Heidt.

To commemorate the experience, the girls each received a specially designed patch from American.

Captain Lisa Richardson, First Officer Erika Leblanc and Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, took photos with the Girl Scouts in the cockpit of an Airbus 321.

American hosted over 40 local Girl Scouts for a fun-filled day at the airport and line maintenance hangar, immersing them in the world of commercial aviation.

Saving the best for last, the day ended with a Q and A session on engine maintenance.