American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

An old plane teaches a new generation

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In September 2019, American retired its remaining fleet of McDonnell Douglas MD-80 aircraft. As the last plane touched down at an aircraft retirement facility in Roswell, New Mexico, American's MD-80 service came to an end. However, the usefulness of these MD-80s is far from over.

American recently donated two MD-80 aircraft — one to Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois, and a second to CareerTech in Oklahoma City — to help inspire and educate future aviation professionals. When the two planes flew to their respective schools, they were met with cheers from enthusiastic aviation maintenance students who were eager to learn more about the aircraft that would soon become their new hands-on classroom.

Lewis University hosted a dedication ceremony for their new MD-80, which included students, elected officials and leaders from both American and Lewis. Many American team members at O'Hare International Airport (ORD) are Lewis alumni, and several ORD Line Maintenance team members mentor students from the school. The MD-80 donation will help build future opportunities for students close to American's Chicago hub.

"In Chicago, we have nearly 550 aviation maintenance technicians whose work allows our airplanes to fly safely each day, and I salute the professional work they do behind the scenes to take care of our customers," said Franco Tedeschi, American Airlines Vice President – Chicago. "This donation means that we will uphold our commitment to strengthen the partnership we have with Lewis University and be a path to the next opportunity for students."

"The skills and training that myself and fellow classmates have obtained here is something that we'll never take for granted," said Amanda Colón, an aviation and aerospace technology student at Lewis. "We are so honored to have been given the privilege and experience to work in and around this aircraft in the pursuit of further advancing our knowledge and skill set."

In total, American donated eight MD-80s. Four of those planes found homes in Oklahoma, where the aerospace industry is rapidly growing. American operates the world's largest commercial aviation maintenance base in Tulsa and is committed to working with local schools and organizations on STEM education to help the future workforce succeed. CareerTech also held a ceremony with American team members when its MD-80 — which the students nicknamed Zelda — was delivered last month.

"The future is bright for American in Oklahoma. And to ensure we can continue to meet demand, we have to invest in the future of our workforce, which includes building a pipeline for skilled, trained mechanics," said Erik Olund, Managing Director of Base Maintenance for American. "Donating this MD-80 for hands-on experience and training is one of the best ways we can do that."

Amanda Colón sits on the flight deck of the MD-80 American donated to Lewis University.

Franco Tedeschi, American Airlines Vice President – Chicago, joined several elected officials and Lewis University leaders at the Lewis University celebration.