



NEWS RELEASE

# Inspiring the next generation for careers in aviation

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The American Airlines team at Chicago O'Hare (ORD) recently hosted nearly 50 local students from Tuskegee NEXT and AeroStar Avion Institute for a behind-the-scenes look at the operation. The tour was meant to inspire careers in aviation for youth in underserved Chicago communities, some who have never been to an airport before.

Chicago O'Hare (ORD) Chief Pilots Tim Raynor and Bill Sponsler spearheaded the educational tour to encourage students from economically disadvantaged communities to follow their dreams of a career in aviation. They believe the benefits of these tours are worth all of the hours of preparation and coordination it takes to plan them. Team members from all aspects of the operation volunteered to open their workspaces and speak directly with students on the many interesting career paths available at American

"We take these opportunities seriously, especially in light of the airline's plans to ramp up pilot hiring over the next couple of years. This is not just a learning experience for these students, but it's a way for our team members throughout the operation to connect with them and inspire American's next generation of aviators," said Capt. Raynor.

**Tuskegee NEXT** and **AeroStar Avion Institute** partner together to create programs and a talent pipeline that connects young people from diverse backgrounds and underserved communities to careers in STEM and aviation. The organizations offer training and education to students as young as those attending kindergarten, and encourage students to connect with future employers, find mentors and engage in meaningful experiences within the aviation workforce.

"By creating a pipeline of students and engaging in opportunities like today, we've seen kids get a foothold in an industry where there was no door previously," said Tammera Holmes, found of Aerostar Avion Institute. "The airline cadet academies are the last piece of the pipeline, and it's one of the most rewarding things to see students go



from AeroStar to Tuskegee NEXT to an academy. It's exactly what we plan for but it's still surreal."

An alumna of AeroStar and Tuskegee NEXT, Faith Little is one of those success stories. She was accepted into the American Airlines Cadet Academy and is preparing to start in the next few weeks. Faith says she hopes to be a widebody pilot for American. Experiences like this tour, she says, help her envision her future at the airline.

"I am so proud to be where I'm at and I've always wanted to be a role model for the younger generation. So many students before me didn't have anyone to look up to because there weren't many people like us in this industry," Faith said. "Being here today motivates me and inspires me to keep working toward my dream and shows the younger students that anything is possible."

American has been a longtime partner of Tuskegee NEXT, which builds on the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and transforms the lives of at-risk youth through aviation education and career path opportunities.

Faith in the flight deck of a Boeing 787.

First Officer Frederick Watts gives students a tour of the flight deck on a Boeing 787 aircraft.

Chief Pilots Tim Raynor and Bill Sponsler pose for a photo with the tour group at O'Hare Airport.