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SOAR INTO

This April, when many students were dreaming of sweet summertime, a lucky few were getting their hands dirty on a Saturday morning dismantling a Cessna 182 destined to aid the people of Paraguay. This is how students from the Jennings, Kirkwood, and Ferguson-Florissant School Districts in St. Louis, Missouri and the Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri chose to spend every Saturday in April. Twenty students, ranging from eighth to eleventh grade, had the opportunity to experience an innovative, hands-on aviation and STEM program through an organization called Wings of Hope (www.wingsofhope.ngo). Wings of Hope is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1963 and twice-nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize that saves and changes lives through the power of aviation. With support from Boeing and Maritz, the organization partnered with local school districts, the Girls Scouts, Women in Aviation and other aviation-related organizations to launch the Soar into STEM program.



Soar into STEM is a four week, outcomes-based program that provides middle and high school students with project-based learning, connections to STEM curriculum, 21st Century skills, and insight into humanitarian services delivered through aviation.

"Service for the good of others or just thinking about helping others gives me an overwhelming feeling of gratitude," said Amanda*, 17, a Girl Scout. "Thinking about the things Wings of Hope is doing makes me want to cry from how powerful it is and how it has helped so many people. If I ever get my pilot's license, I would like to do something like this."

The Soar into STEM program was primarily held at the Wings of Hope world headquarters at the Spirit of St. Louis Airport. Each session included hands-on repair and modification of an airplane. Students who had never heard the word aileron were now using an inclinometer and data from the service manual to verify the travel limits of the aileron system. The sessions also included guest speakers from a wide variety of organizations to share career path information and stories and information about how students can pursue their ambition in aviation.



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STEM

BY BROOKE BENNETT

As the Lead Teacher for Soar into STEM program, I was able to experience firsthand the development, knowledge, and relationships gained over the four sessions. Working alongside me, the program featured mentors from various aviation and STEM-related backgrounds to provide onsite guidance. Many friendships were formed amongst the students, mentors, and speakers and I had the pleasure to witness our group grow and learn together.

It is often as an educator that students leave an impact on you, but there was one student in particular whose passion was inspiring. On a bright and early Saturday morning, as our students began to arrive for our first session, almost all walked in with big smiles and eager participation. A young student walked in behind her mother like a kindergartener on the first day of school. Throughout our first session, Jasmine* was very timid – sat by herself at lunch, wouldn't participate in group discussion, and even called her Mom from the bathroom to pick her up early.

However, the moment Jasmine got a screwdriver in her hand, it was like she had come alive. I watched her communicate, collaborate, and problem solve to

remove a propeller and the engine cowling. Jasmine began to participate in group discussion and wanted to be the first person to fly left seat in the flight simulator. We had made a significant amount of progress, but I knew there was still more in her. During the third session, we took a tour of the Spirit of St. Louis Control Tower where students could see the paper strips representing the flight plan they just created. In our discussion at the end of the day, I knew the Soar into STEM program had made an impact on Jasmine's future.

By the end of the program, this initially reluctant student was committed to a career in aviation. Jasmine stated, "I have a goal to be a control tower person when I get older because I loved sending out different codes." It was an honor to lead a program that helps students who have never been exposed to aviation learn about the wide variety of aviation careers and support them on their journey, and Wings of Hope looks forward to an expanded, even more successful Soar into STEM program in 2020.



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