

Record breaking pilot Barrington Irving Joins Wings of Hope Honorary Council

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Barrington Irving, a pioneering pilot and aviation educator, has joined the Honorary Council of Wings of Hope, the St. Louis-based aviation charity. Other council members include former Secretary of State Colin Powell and former U.S. Senator John Danforth.

Irving was born in Jamaica and grew up in inner city Miami, surrounded by poverty, crime and failing schools. When he was 15, a chance encounter with a pilot ignited in Irving a passion for aviation that would lead him to shatter his own expectations and the record books.

He first saved his money to buy a flight simulator game that allowed him to fly anywhere and in any kind of weather conditions from the safety of his PC. That made him passionate enough to save more of his money so that he could afford flight lessons.

Irving returned to the Miami-area city he left March 23, 2007 in a Columbia 400 built of donated parts. He was optimistic his 27,000-mile continent-hopping trip aboard the "Inspiration" would live up to the plane's name and motivate young people _ especially minorities.

Alan Diaz/AP

By the time he turned 21, Irving had lost friends to violence and prison. "I'll never forget asking myself the question, 'What's one thing I can do whether I live or die that would be worth something?'" he told NPR's Michel Martin. An idea hit him: to fly around the world.

In 2007, at the age of 23, he set a Guinness World Record as the youngest person at that time and only African American to fly solo around the world.

"Barrington's rise from some of the toughest streets in America to record-setting pilot is an inspiration to any child who has ever dreamed of something better," said Wings of Hope President Don Hamblen. "Even more impressive is his dedication to sparking a passion for STEM careers in



Barrington Irving

young people.”

Irving founded Experience Aviation, a nonprofit that aims to boost the numbers of youth in aviation and other science and math-related careers. The program engages students with hands-on robotics projects, flight simulator challenges, and STEM-inspired field trips. In his inaugural “Build & Soar” program, 60 students from failing schools built an airplane in just 10 weeks—and then watched Irving fly it.

In 2014, he launched the world’s first flying classroom, a jet with digital, cutting-edge global flight curriculum that travels the world inviting students to participate in real-world STEM research and expeditions.

Wings of Hope works in Africa, Asia and the Americas, partnering with communities to improve their health, education, food security and economic opportunity. In 2003, the charity established its Medical Relief and Air Transport Program, the only free medical air transport service in the U.S. with air ambulances that can accommodate stretchers, wheelchairs and medical equipment.

For more information, visit wingsofhope.ngo or call 636-537-1302.