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I Hart Flying Foundation Launches “HART-Led Cleared for Takeoff” Campaign with National “Access Granted: Runway to Rise” Scholarship Series

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As the aviation industry faces critical workforce shortages and a growing need for stronger leadership pipelines, I Hart Flying Foundation (IHFF) announces the launch of its 2026 national scholarship cycle under its multi-year campaign: **HART-Led: Cleared for Takeoff**.

- The first phase, ***Access Granted: Runway to Rise***, officially opens April 21, a pivotal step as the organization approaches its 10-year milestone. This scholarship series supports women at the earliest and most vulnerable stage of flight training, where economic factors are often a significant barrier and professional momentum is most fragile.

Addressing the Real Gap in Aviation

With women representing less than 6% of pilots globally and less than 3% of aircraft maintenance technicians, the need for a more robust workforce pipeline has never been more critical. While the industry continues to focus on attracting new talent, a deeper challenge remains: ensuring those who begin their training have the resources to complete it.

Many aspiring women pilots start with the passion and capability to succeed but are forced to pause or abandon their progress due to financial interruption. I Hart Flying Foundation exists to change that.

Through its ***HART-Led Approach***, a structured, investable model, the organization provides support across three critical phases: **Access, Advancement, and Completion**. This is a structured model designed to eliminate funding gaps and sustain momentum, enabling women to progress seamlessly from their first flight to professional aviation careers.

“It’s not a capability problem; it’s a continuity problem, and we’re here to solve it,” said Rachelle Spector, Founder and CEO of I Hart Flying Foundation.

“Through our HART-Led Approach, we ensure women don’t just have access to aviation. They advance, complete, and lead. Because when women advance, aviation leads.”

Powering the First Phase of Flight

The Access Granted: Runway to Rise series funds initial training, builds confidence, and creates early momentum. In this cycle, IHFF will award \$20,000 in flight training scholarships, along with pilot supplies and equipment, supported by a growing network of industry partners. This phase is designed to ignite lift, powering a scholar's "first rotation" and setting the trajectory for long-term career advancement.

A Structured Model for Workforce Development

IHFF's scholarship model is intentional, milestone-based, and designed for measurable impact. Each scholar receives structured funding aligned to key training milestones, along with mentorship and oversight by a national Selection Committee. The process includes a structured evaluation framework and blind review to ensure fairness, consistency, and candidate readiness.

The Selection Committee includes respected Aviation leaders such as Captain Beth Powell, Lisa Holland, and Glendon Fraser, among others across the industry.

To date, I Hart Flying has:

- Awarded nearly \$400,000 in flight training scholarships and in-kind support
- Supported almost 50 HART Scholars nationwide
- Maintained a 98% advancement rate to the next certification level
- Achieved a 100% completion rate once scholar's advance

Industry Leadership Driving the Future

Securing the future of aviation is a collaborative effort. Leading voices within the industry emphasize that success depends on aligning modern training pathways with high-level professional development.

"Strengthening the aviation workforce pipeline requires intentional investment in both initial access and long-term career trajectory," said Paul Floreck, Board Member of I Hart Flying Foundation and Senior Vice President of Sales, US and Canada at Dassault Falcon Jet.

"IHFF is addressing the talent shortage by creating clear, structured pathways for women to not only enter the flight deck, but to successfully advance into leadership roles."

Partner Experience and Industry Impact

The impact of the HART-Led model is best seen through the eyes of its partners. By engaging directly with talent at national industry events, organizations play an active role in cultivating the very workforce that will eventually lead their operations.

"Partnering with I Hart Flying Foundation gives us a front-row seat to the future of our industry," said Lisa Holland, Chief Executive Officer of Sheltair Aviation.

"Whether at NBAA or other major events, we've had the chance to meet HART Scholars and follow their progress firsthand. The foundation's structured approach works, it is delivering measurable results for the women in the program and for the broader aviation pipeline."

Expanding the HART Nation

Each cycle continues to expand our HART Nation, a growing network of industry partners, sponsors, and leaders working together to shape the future of Aviation.

This cycle is made possible by committed partners including Clay Lacy Foundation, Central American Airways, Gulfstream Aerospace Corp., Dassault Falcon Jet, Enterprise Mobility Foundation, Solairus Aviation and Sheltair Aviation.

In-kind support provided by King Schools, Bose Aviation and Starbucks

Partnering with Purpose

As I Hart Flying approaches its 10-year milestone, it continues to scale a national model for workforce development, ensuring women don't just enter aviation, but Advance, Complete, and Lead.

Applications for the Access Granted: Runway to Rise cycle open April 21. For more information or to "Partner with Purpose," visit iHartFlying.org and follow @iHartFlying on Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube.

About I Hart Flying Foundation

I Hart Flying Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded and led by Rachelle Spector. A pilot, entrepreneur, and industry advocate advancing Women in Aviation. The organization is focused on eliminating financial barriers that interrupt flight training by delivering structured, HART-LED scholarships designed to ensure Access, Advancement, and Completion.

Through a disciplined, milestone-based funding model, I Hart Flying supports women as they progress through critical certification phases, from initial training through advanced ratings, ensuring continuity and measurable outcomes. With a 98% advancement rate and a 100% certification completion rate among those who advance, the model is designed to maximize both impact and investment efficiency.

By partnering with aviation and industry leaders, I Hart Flying aligns philanthropic investment with workforce development. Strengthening the pilot pipeline, supporting career readiness, and contributing to a more sustainable and diverse aviation ecosystem.

Learn more and Partner with Purpose to help shape the future of aviation together at ihartflying.org.

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