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Southwest Airlines Adopt-A-Pilot Educational Program Celebrates 10 Years of Providing Mentors, Learning, and Fun

Students Explore Science, Math, Geography, and Career-Planning From an Aviation Perspective

DALLAS, Feb. 5 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- During the past 10 years, more than 140,000 students nationwide have discovered the science behind what makes 72,000-pound airplanes fly; they have studied United States geography by tracking their "adopted" Southwest Airlines Pilots' travels; and they have considered their own future career goals. This year, 30,000-plus students will participate in the 10th Anniversary of the Southwest Airlines Adopt-A-Pilot program, learning that they can pursue their dreams through education, dedication, and support from the community.

From February through May, fifth-grade students across the country will "adopt" Southwest Airlines Pilots in this award-winning educational mentorship program that leads students through a variety of core subjects with an aviation twist. Students will learn to research careers, develop life values, and realize the importance of achieving and staying in school. More than 650 Southwest Pilots are volunteering in this year's Southwest Airlines Adopt-A-Pilot educational program. During the four-week long mentorship program, Pilots volunteer their time in adoptive classrooms and correspond from the "road" via e-mail and postcards. Classrooms chart the Pilot's course on an official United States route map and complete lessons covering a broad range of subjects -- all related to the Pilot's monthly flying schedule. Program curriculum and other program details can be viewed at <http://www.southwest.com/adoptapilot>.

"Ten years ago, a few dozen Pilots helped launch the then-fledgling Adopt-A-Pilot program. Thanks to the volunteer spirit of hundreds more Southwest Pilots since, we are thrilled to see the reach of the program and are grateful to the tens of thousands of students and their teachers who have touched our lives along the way," said Greg Crum, Southwest's Vice President and Director of Operations. "Our primary goal is for students to believe in themselves -- and to know their communities believe in them, as well. We are proud to dedicate this 10th Anniversary year to all of the many people who make Adopt-A-Pilot possible."

Since the program's inception in 1997, Adopt-A-Pilot has seen many additions to its original mentorship and curriculum elements. The Adopt-A-Pilot Blog, found at <http://www.adoptapilot.blogs.com>, has become a popular forum for participating Pilots, teachers, and students nationwide to share program ideas and photos. The program also has added an annual national contest, "Career Takeoff," that reinforces the program's school-to-career theme. Students may also participate in an official Adopt-A-Pilot tie design contest, creating the artistic concept for the upcoming year's limited edition silk tie that is worn by participating Southwest Pilots.

To commemorate the program's 10th Anniversary, Southwest Airlines will host a celebration at its Headquarters in Dallas. The late spring event will recount the program's history and honor participating Pilots, teachers, and students. Southwest Airlines initially developed this premiere community relations program in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education and the Smithsonian Institute's National Air and Space Museum. National leaders such as former Secretary of State Colin Powell, former President Bill Clinton, and First Lady Laura Bush have recognized the program.

Southwest Airlines (NYSE: LUV), the nation's largest carrier in terms of domestic passengers enplaned, currently serves 63 cities in 32 states. Based in Dallas, Southwest currently operates more than 3,100 flights a day and has 32,000+ Employees systemwide.

Click here to view program photos:

<http://gallery.swamedia.com/photos/value=open/type=jpg>

<http://www.southwest.com>

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