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Southwest Airlines Adopt-A-Pilot Program Celebrates 10 Years

Hundreds Gather for 'School Assembly' Event to Honor Pilots, Teachers, and Students Who Have Contributed to the School-to-Career Mentorship Program

DALLAS, April 26 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- What if you could inspire struggling students to believe in themselves -- and in their future careers? What if you could ignite a students' desire to pursue a degree in science, math, writing, or other fields? What if you could look back on the past ten years and see that you made a difference?

Southwest Airlines (NYSE: LUV) today celebrated the contribution of hundreds of Pilots who have helped make a difference in their local communities by volunteering in the Southwest Airlines Adopt-A-Pilot community education program that is celebrating its 10th Anniversary this year. The "school assembly" style event included hundreds of Employees, Southwest leadership, and special VIP guests who cheered amid sky-high confetti as Southwest Airlines unveiled a Boeing 737-700 plane dedicated to the Adopt-A- Pilot program.

The plane unveiling marked the finale of the event that included comments from Southwest CEO Gary Kelly, President Colleen Barrett, and former NASA Astronaut turned Southwest Pilot, Captain Robert "Hoot" Gibson. Also featured was a "class reunion" with "original" Pilots who have volunteered in the program continuously since 1997, including Phoenix-based Captain Jesus Melian, who was reunited with former Adopt-A-Pilot student Chun Mei Yu. Melian mentored Yu's class several years ago at a small Connecticut school. She is now pursuing a nursing degree at the University of Connecticut and credits Adopt-A-Pilot with helping inspire her when she was a young immigrant, acclimating to her new life in the United States.

"Ten years ago, Southwest Airlines launched a fledgling education and community relations program called Adopt-A-Pilot with the hope that we could unite at least 50 Pilots with 50 classrooms," says Colleen Barrett, Southwest Airlines President. "Today, more than 650 Pilots are volunteering in classrooms coast-to-coast, reaching more than 30,000 students. We couldn't be more proud to work with the exemplary teachers and students who have made this program possible. And our hats are off to the Pilots for their personal investment of time and energy, as they exemplify the Southwest Spirit that our Employees share in every community, every day."

Other event highlights included a presentation to two Adopt-A-Pilot students who created winning designs for the official Adopt-A-Pilot 2007 Tie. The Adopt-A-Pilot ties are worn year round by Pilot program participants as a uniform piece. The winning students from Tucson, Arizona, and Glencoe, Illinois, attended today's event along with their parents and teachers.

Each year from February through May, fifth-grade students across the country "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 learn to research

careers, develop life values, and realize the importance of achieving and staying in school. During the four-week long mentorship program, Pilots volunteer their time in adoptive classrooms and correspond from the "road" via e-mail, postcards, and the program blog at <http://www.adoptapilot.blogs.com> . Classrooms chart the Pilot's course on an official United States 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> .

Southwest Airlines, 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 3,200 flights a day and has 32,000+ Employees systemwide.

Click here to view event photos:

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

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