



NGPA

SPRING 2022

CONTAILS

THE WORLDWIDE LGBTQ AVIATION COMMUNITY

**SCHOLARSHIP
ISSUE!**



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journey in the aviation industry.





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WHO WE ARE

The NGPA is the world's largest organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender aviation professionals, allies, and enthusiasts. Established in 1990, we are dedicated to building, supporting, and uniting the LGBTQ aviation community worldwide.

WHAT WE DO

Through education, scholarships, outreach programs, advocacy, and social events, the organization encourages members of the LGBTQ community to begin piloting careers; fosters equal treatment of LGBTQ aviators through advocacy and outreach; promotes aviation safety; and provides an affirming social and professional network for LGBTQ aviators.

EDITORIAL MISSION

Contrails magazine highlights the contributions of the LGBTQ aviation community with the belief that visibility and representation matter. The magazine uses imagery and text to encourage members to be proud of their contributions to aviation, while inspiring new readers to join the journey toward a destination of equal, authentic, and respected everywhere. *Contrails* magazine is among a member's chief benefits.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Members contribute to the awareness and safety of LGBTQ people throughout aviation by speaking up at injustice, commenting on plans for the organization, serving on development committees, and educating the public and media. Become a member at ngpa.org/join_now.

HOW TO DONATE

To donate, please visit ngpa.org/ways_to_give or call 1-866-800-6472. For information about bequests, planned gifts, matching gifts, or tax reporting, please e-mail finance@ngpa.org.



QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about your membership, please call +1.866.800.6472 (NGPA) or e-mail membership@ngpa.org.

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CONTRAILS is published quarterly for the members and associates of the NGPA. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily the views of the editors nor those of NGPA members. Membership or advertisement in this publication should not be considered an indication of sexual orientation.



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@ngpa2

#NGPAeverywhere

OUR EDITOR IN CHIEF, THOM BARBOUR, ON THE PASSION OF THOUSANDS.

A total of \$4,000 in scholarship funds were awarded... in 1998. The funds for those scholarships came solely from passionate members who wanted to make aviation (in general) and the aviation industry (specifically) safer for gay and lesbian pilots. Most of these pilot members were in the closet at work and feared losing their careers every day while on the job. Those first two \$2,000 scholarships began a 24-year streak of 131 awards given out solely from member donations. Those first two awards in 1998 became three awards each year (on average) through 2003, four awards each year through 2010 (except for 2007, which had none), and then six awards per year (on average) through 2015. In 2016, member-only donations to the NGPA Education Fund allowed for the disbursement of 15 awards totaling \$41,000. That year, major airlines began offering scholarships as well. Since then, the combined efforts of airlines and NGPA members have continued in the spirit of those first two scholarships, securing a future for LGBTQ+ aviators to be equal, authentic, respected, EVERYWHERE. With the 2022 scholarship cycle, the NGPA is due to surpass \$1 million in scholarships awarded since 1998. What a long way we've come. Take

a look at this issue's feature article highlighting the 2021 recipients and make sure to prepare for the scholarship application window, opening up June 15, 2022. You can learn more about the scholarship program by checking out the "scholarships" page at ngpa.org.

This issue is also when we take a look back at the financial health of the association and look forward to new board members helping to navigate the NGPA on its journey. You can find those updates from the treasurer and board chair on the pages that follow.

AVIATION COLLECTORS ALL CALL

Contrails is currently seeking members who are collectors of aviation memorabilia and ephemera to share stories and images about their collections with readers for a future feature article. If you have something to share, please email publications@ngpa.org or myself at the address below.

 | **Thom Barbour** thom.barbour@ngpa.org

BRIAN GAMBINO ANNOUNCES THE PRESIDENT'S NEW INITIATIVES.

***Wings Over
Iowa lands in
Cedar Rapids
June 3-5...
bringing
visibility
for LGBTQ+
aviators to the
next level.***



There is always a sense of excitement coming off our Palm Springs flagship event and this year is certainly no different. After an incredible reunion in the desert last month, with some of the best weather I have ever witnessed in Palm Springs, I can truly feel the energy of the NGPA family. In PSP, we highlighted many new initiatives for NGPA as we march forward in 2022 and now our volunteer network will work to execute this exciting vision that propels the NGPA into the next 30 years of our history!

From the Ascend mentorship program now available to all of our NGPA membership to the evolution of our NGPA Cares team to focus on member mental health with new initiatives, we have a lot to look forward to in 2022. Concurrently, as in-person events become more concrete, our members can look forward to NGPA's return to pride events, Oshkosh, Provincetown, and our very successful Aviation Inclusion Summit.

We also announced on stage in Palm Springs that the NGPA is launching a NEW flagship event in June, bringing the mission of NGPA into a new community!

Wings Over Iowa (ngpa.org/wings_over_iowa) lands in Cedar Rapids June 3-5, 2022 and will allow the NGPA family to share its passion for aviation with a small-

town community. We are partnering with Cedar Rapids Pride to support and participate in their very first pride parade along with hosting an "aviation block party" at the Cedar Rapids (KCID) airport. Here the local community will get a view into the world of aviation as members show off their personal aircraft alongside local aviation and aerospace businesses encouraging residents to learn to fly, local food vendors, and small businesses. This first-of-its-kind event for the NGPA brings incredible visibility for the LGBTQ+ aviation community and will truly launch us to the next level. I hope you will join us!

The centerpiece of this issue of *Contrails* is our 2021 scholarship winners and their aviation journeys. Please join me in congratulating these outstanding winners and be sure to encourage those you know to be on the lookout for the scholarship application program window opening this summer. We already know it is the BIGGEST single-year financial offering in NGPA's history (and we will pass the \$1M mark of scholarship money awarded) and YOU are all to thank for that! I look forward to seeing you all in Cedar Rapids this June!

 | **Brian Gambino** brian.gambino@ngpa.org

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WHY BOARD CHAIR, STEVE TUSTIN, HOLDS PREPARATION IN HIGH REGARD.

How does one plan in an environment that is so unpredictable? As a pilot, my instructors always taught me to plan with a few contingencies to fall back on, knowing that they will all be revised as conditions change. NGPA's staff and board have taken a similar approach and rolled with the punches as we run a successful nonprofit in the pandemic reality of today. Things are looking pretty good as we continue to follow the strategic plan and mission to build, support, and unite the LGBTQ aviation community around the globe.

Our international message of inclusion has resulted in increased membership and more sponsors seeing the value of our association. We have reinforced our balance sheet by bringing the sustainability fund to an appropriate level to carry us through future downturns. The board continually revisits strategic goals to assure that leadership have a clear road map to guide its vision. And thanks to your support, they have grown NGPA's programs and sponsors to include diversified areas of aviation within general aviation, manufacturing and servicing, business aviation, and air cargo. Together, we are truly fulfilling our role of becoming the voice of LGBTQ people in aviation everywhere.

So, after completing a turbulent yet successful flight through 2021, the board is excited to announce some

changes. First, Kris Krie concludes his board service after playing a vital role as officer and secretary. Kris exemplifies the spirit of service and provided a valuable ally's perspective to the board. To hear Kris' story of how he came to the NGPA is genuinely compelling. If you get the chance, let this faithful ally bend your ear at an event. We thank him for his dedication to our mission.

We welcome two new board members, Jason Isreal and Scott Lebovitz. Jason is a longtime NGPA volunteer, NGPA Scholarship Selection Committee member, and NGPA liaison to the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP). He flies for Alaska Airlines after working for corporate flight departments and on-demand charter operators. Scott Lebovitz has been a dedicated volunteer and chair of the NGPA Allies Committee. He is a pilot for Envoy Airlines and brings his experience in marketing, product development, and general business to the board.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the NGPA strategic plan, governance, or board, please reach out—we welcome your thoughts and perspectives.

 | **Steven Tustin** steven.tustin@ngpa.org

After completing a turbulent yet successful flight through 2021, the board is excited to announce some changes.

JASON Isreal brings his experience as an NGPA volunteer, committee member, and liaison to inform his new position on the NGPA board of directors (right).

FORMER chair of the Allies Committee, Scott Lebovitz draws from his background in marketing and product development (left).

COURTESY OF SCOTT LEBOVITZ



COURTESY OF JASON ISREAL





Steven Tustin, Southwest Captain and NGPA Board Chair and Terry Ryan, Retired Southwest Captain

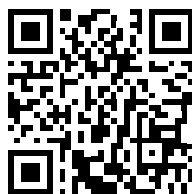
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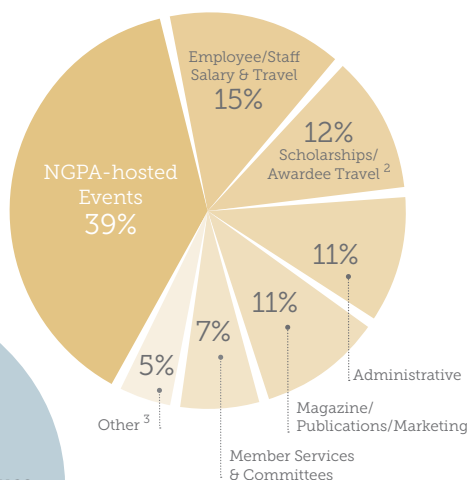
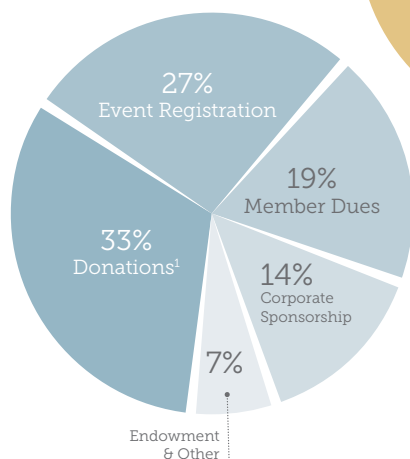


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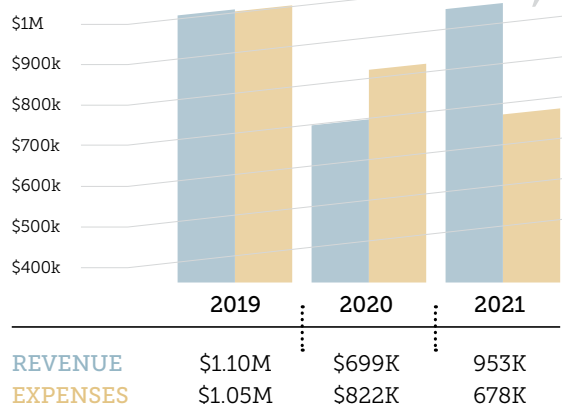
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2021

EXPENSES
REVENUE

2021 was the second year the global pandemic upended lives and plans.

YEAR-TO-YEAR



All financial information contained herein has not been finalized or audited by the NGPA accounting firms as of print date and is subject to change.

REVENUE Dollars in Thousands

Donations ¹	309.8
Event Registration	259.8
Member Dues	183.9
Corporate Sponsorship	135.0
Endowment Income	48.9
Other Income	15.2
TOTAL	952.5

¹ Including restricted and unrestricted donations but not in-kind donations.

EXPENSES Dollars in Thousands

NGPA Events (Expo, WWU, CCC)	266.6
Employee & Staff Contractor Stipend & Travel	99.6
Scholarships/Awardee Travel ²	79.5
Administrative	77.7
NGPA Member Services & Committees	50.4
Magazine/Publications	42.9
Marketing & Promotion	33.8
Non-NGPA events attended (EBACE, OBAP, WAI, etc.)	17.8
Fundraising & Development	4.9
Other Miscellaneous Expenses	4.3
Capital Expense	0.6
Endowment Expense	3.7
TOTAL	677.5

NET INCOME	275.0
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² Does not include type-rating scholarships funded by sponsoring airlines.

³ Non-NGPA events attended, fundraising & development, and other misc. expenses.

ASSETS Dollars in Thousands

as of close of business 12/31/21

Restricted Assets	504.6
Unrestricted Assets	514.0
Accounts Receivable	72.7
Prepaid Expenses	0.4
TOTAL	1,091.7

LIABILITIES Dollars in Thousands

as of close of business 12/31/21

Accounts Payable	57.3
TOTAL	57.3
NET TOTAL	1,034.4

TREASURER'S REVIEW

Greetings from Miami, where I am starting year two as NGPA's board treasurer! I'm a private pilot who joined NGPA in 2017 and the board in 2019. In my work life I'm an operations executive at Nielsen, a global ad tech firm, and in my personal life I'm happily married to my partner of 27 years, Drew Glick (though he might say I'm married to our 1974 Cessna 172M).

As anyone reading this letter knows, 2021 was the second year in which the global pandemic upended our lives and our plans, and NGPA was no exception. The Winter Warm Up presented by United Airlines was canceled but we managed to squeeze in some events over the summer (e.g., Oshkosh) and even held the Cape Cod Classic—both events circumscribed by pandemic-induced restrictions.

The leadership of the NGPA continued to step up during this period, especially our president Brian Gambino. Under his leadership we have hit an all-time high in memberships and we have earned more

corporate sponsorship dollars than ever before. As a result, the NGPA ended the year in robust financial health. As of December 31, 2021: our endowment was at an all-time high of over \$500K; we increased our sustainability fund—money set aside for a rainy day—by \$150K and we had a \$275K surplus (a good portion of which was revenue from Palm Springs registration before expenses, and yet-to-be-paid scholarship awards).

All of this has been possible thanks to the continued support and dedication of members. This past year, we turned a corner and, together, we will make the NGPA even stronger as we continue to keep a close eye on revenue and costs trends in 2022. It's my hope to be able to meet many of you in-person this year at one of our events. In the meantime, feel free to e-mail me.

 | **Alan Miles** alan.miles@ngpa.org

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2021 SCHOLARSHIPS

An inspiring group of scholarship recipients were recognized at this year's Winter Warm Up presented by United Airlines. After receiving a record number of applications, the next generation of pilots are set to take the next steps on their journeys.

Congratulations!



1. NOBI BUNTON

Coradine \$5,000 Flight Instructor

I am so honored to receive the NGPA Coradine flight training scholarship. I could not have achieved this without the support of those surrounding me. At the age of 49, after 30 years as an early childhood educator, I decided to become a professional pilot (following a brief career as a flight attendant). With the support of the NGPA in 2019, I completed my Commercial Multi-Engine Check. Most recently, I earned my Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) Certificate. Receiving the 2021 NGPA Coradine flight training scholarship will allow me to acquire my CFI Instrument Certificate and pursue my dream of becoming an air ambulance pilot. While I pursue a BS in Aeronautical Science at Embry-Riddle, I write lesson plans in preparation for my CFI Instrument Certificate, reigniting my passion for teaching and fostering the next generation of aviators while building hours. Thanks to the generosity of NGPA and Coradine, I am one step closer to being a medevac pilot.

2. TYLOR DEGRAAF

Republic Airways and LIFT Academy \$3,000 Advanced Flight Training

Tylor is currently a senior at The Ohio State University. His love and passion for aviation and the LGBTQ+ community is deep-rooted in his heart. He is currently a flight instructor at the university and hopes to one day take his love for aviation to Delta Air Lines.

3. GWENDOLINE DUNLOP

United Airlines \$5,000 Advanced Flight Training

Gwendoline is a student at the University of Nebraska Omaha working toward her goal of becoming an airline pilot. Her love of flying began as a child when she flew overseas to visit her family in France. She is proud to be a founding member of her university's NGPA chapter, as well as serving as the Women in Aviation chapter president. In her free time, she enjoys sewing and crafting origami jewelry. Gwendoline is extremely thankful for the support she has received from family, friends, her fiancée, and from the NGPA community at large.

4. JACQUELYN EMERY

Alaska Air Group \$2,500 Advanced Flight Training

Jacquelyn is a University of North Dakota student originally from Denver, Colorado and Austin, Texas. She was UND NGPA Chapter president for two years before stepping down to pursue internships at Alaska Air Group and NASA. At Alaska Air Group, she was the sole safety intern for the summer and signed on with Horizon Air in the Pilot Development Program during her time there. At NASA, she worked virtually for Johnson Space Center in the research integration office for the International Space Station. Jacquelyn is honored to be representing Alaska Air Group with this scholarship and is excited to start her job at Horizon Air after graduation.

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5. JEAN HARVEY FAUSTINO*Epic Flight Academy Aircraft Mechanic Full Program*

Harvey is a passionate, aspiring aviator from the Philippines now in Canada. He learned about aviation through his love of physics and planes and taught aviation in the 121 Red Arrows Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron. Harvey has trained with multiple flight schools to work toward his goal of becoming a commercial pilot and aircraft maintenance technician. Harvey is dedicated to owning his first plane to fix and fly around the world. With the help of the NGPA and Epic Flight Academy, Harvey intends to become the well-rounded aircraft technician, instructor, and pilot he dreams to be.

6 KYLE FITZSIMMONS*NGPA \$10,000 Private*

Kyle is a sophomore at Western Michigan University from Charlotte, North Carolina. He joined the Western Michigan University chapter of the NGPA to promote diversity within the aviation industry and advocate for inclusion wherever possible. Kyle aspires to be an airline pilot and is excited to continue his aviation studies at Western Michigan University.

7. STEPHAN JANSEN VAN VUUREN*Republic Airways and LIFT Academy \$3,000 Advanced Flight Training*

Stephan, originally from South Africa, is a junior at Western Michigan University, double majoring in aviation flight science and aviation management & operations. Stephan also works at the College of Aviation as a CFI. Keen to join the NGPA, Stephan joined the executive board (secretary) of WMU's NGPA chapter in his first semester and was instrumental in planning and executing WMU's first collegiate aviation diversity and inclusion summit, Flight Deck Pride. He currently serves as president of the WMU chapter working to increase their influence and strategic partnerships. His scholarship award will help with his multi-engine add-on this spring.

8. HARLEY JIANG*NGPA \$6000 Commercial Pilot*

Harley is a University of North Dakota senior, majoring in commercial aviation and specializing in business aviation. He grew up in Shanghai, China, and Los Angeles. Harley was a fashion design major before switching his career path to aviation after visiting the Boeing factory in Seattle. To promote diversity and inclusion within aviation, he helped found the first collegiate chapter of the Professional Asian Pilots Association (PAPA). He has dedicated his time to promoting the UND's NGPA

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8.



chapter, as a historian, through social media planning, photographing, and graphic designing. Harley understands that there are still many issues facing LGBTQ+ people in the aviation industry, thus he would love to do everything he can to make a difference. Inducted into United Airlines' Aviate program, his goal is to fly a B787 around the world and take his family to places they've never dreamed of going.

9. RENE KASSIE*Buttgenbach Foundation \$10,000 Private Pilot*

Rene is a first generation Canadian from the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa). She lived and worked in New Zealand before settling in Canada. Her long held dream of becoming a pilot materialized in 2020 when she took her first flight. She is currently completing her Private Pilot License with an end goal of becoming a commercial pilot and building a career as a humanitarian pilot. Through her journey of aviation and beyond, Rene is committed to uplifting and advocating for immigrant and refugee communities.

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9.



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In-ear	Configuration	Around-ear
FAA TSO and E/TSO-C139a	Certification	FAA TSO and E/TSO-C139
✓	Military-grade durability	✓
✓	Bluetooth® audio streaming	✓
✓	Five-year warranty	✓

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NGPA

10.



10. BRITTNEY KUPEC
Solairus Aviation \$5,000
Advanced Flight Training

Brittney lives in Anchorage, Alaska and loves exploring the last frontier and working as a CFI. She began taking flight lessons for fun in 2019 and, after getting completely hooked, she decided on flying as a career. Besides aviation, she is passionate about civic engagement, the outdoors, and her doggo, Jackson.

11. LEVI MCKENZIE
PSA Airlines \$3,000
Advanced Flight Training

Levi's passion for aviation began in his small hometown in Texas. That passion runs in his family, with a flight attendant mother and sister. Ever since his discovery flight, he's never wanted to land and dreams to fly with his mom and sister one day.

12. VALARIE MEYER
Steven Moore \$6000 NGPA Advocacy

Valarie is an aspiring professional pilot from Wisconsin. Her passion for aviation began in high school, where she helped assemble an experimental aircraft. She is pursuing a degree in aviation flight and management at Southern Illinois University and is active with several community organizations and SIU's NGPA chapter. After graduation, she aims to be a corporate pilot and flight instructor for underprivileged youth.

13. MIGUEL MARÍA MOORE
Envoy Air \$5,000 Aircraft Mechanic

Miguel was born in the province of Misiones, Argentina, and grew up in Buenos Aires. In 2021, he obtained his undergraduate degree in aerospace engineering at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, and is currently working on his master's degree with a focus on structures and materials at that same university. His dream is to work for an airplane manufacturer as a structural/design engineer and contribute to the future of aviation. When he is not studying, he enjoys playing the piano, taking photographs, swimming, and riding roller coasters.

14. SAGE NELSON
Piedmont Airlines \$5,000
Advanced Flight Training

Sage, 19, attends school in her home state of Arizona and is pursuing a degree in airway sciences—flight emphasis. Beyond her passion for aviation and weather, she loves traveling, exploring different cultures, and trying new foods. She thrives in a competitive environment, enjoys playing all sports, and volunteers as a coach for a local high school badminton team. Her goal is to work as a major airline pilot.

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15. DAVID NYAMBURA

*Alaska Air Group \$2,500
Advanced Flight Training*

David grew up in Nairobi, Kenya and fell in love with airplanes as a child. His dream to fly was reinforced at high school assemblies—one of which had a Kenya Airways captain talking to students about a career as a pilot. David encourages others to pursue their aerospace dreams even if those dreams seem too big at first. He is currently a senior pursuing his bachelor's degree in aeronautical science at Green River College. His ultimate passion is to fly left seat in a wide body such as the B773.

16. GABRIELLE OLIVARES

PSA Airlines \$1,000 Aircraft Mechanic

Gabrielle was raised by a single mother and has five siblings. After graduating high school, she enrolled at the Aviation Institute of Maintenance where she learned how jet aircraft systems work. Now, Gabrielle currently works as an aircraft mechanic on semi private jets, loving every part of her job! She plans to become a lead technician.

17. SADE ROBERTS

*Cage Marshall Consulting \$2,500
Higher Education*

Sade is a 22-year old aspiring pilot from Vancouver, British Columbia. She is currently enrolled at Mount Allison University & Moncton Flight College, pursuing a double major in aviation and mathematics so that she may complete her bachelor's degree and flight training simultaneously. After three years of academics, she was excited to start flight training this past January! Besides her goal of flying commercially, she loves working with children as the assistant director at Camp Eureka on Gambier Island, in the Howe Sound.

18. DEVIN RODRIGUES

*FedEx \$5,000 Advanced Flight Training and
David Charlebois Memorial*

Devin is a California-born aviator who recently completed seven years of service in the U.S. Navy as a quartermaster, responsible for the safe navigation of his ship. He completed most of his aviation training at California Aeronautical University, where he is also a CFI. He has dreamed of becoming an international wide body captain ever since taking his first flight (SFO > LHR) in 2006. Devin joined the NGPA in 2018 and currently serves as the local NGPA chapter leader for San Diego's Lindbergh Flyers.

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**19. BIJAN SHAIBANI**

Netflix \$5,000 Multi-Engine Rating

Bijan is a pilot from the San Francisco Bay Area residing in southern Florida. Bijan began their interest in planes and aerospace as a child flying on family vacations. They decided to pursue aviation professionally through their hobby of skydiving and eventually completed their Bachelor of Science degree in aeronautics at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU), where Bijan served as president of the campus NGPA chapter and attained their commercial pilot license. Bijan continued their flight education to become a certificated flight instructor.

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21.

20. ASHLEIGH N. SUTER

PSA Airlines \$1,000 Aircraft Mechanic

Ashleigh is a queer ace girl with a lifelong passion for all things aviation who grew up volunteering around KLAL and Sun n Fun since the age of 13. She graduated from Central Florida Aerospace Academy and is currently in A&P school at Triviss Technical College. She is restoring a Preceptor Ultra Pup (an experimental mini J-3) that she'd like to finish her private certificate with. Originally, she wanted to fly commercial and/or for NOAA, but life and financial struggles convinced her to change heading towards A&P when opportunity knocked. Restoring antique and experimental aircraft with EAA people made her love working on planes as much as flying them.

21. MANI THACKERAY

Flex Air & Piedmont Airline Private Pilot Training

Mani is a first generation immigrant who came to the United States from India at the age of 7. His biggest inspiration for pursuing a career in aviation is his grandfather, who was a flight engineer for Air India. He is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in marketing management from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Mani is also pursuing his goal of getting his private pilot license and hopes to work for American Airlines.

22. AMORY TILLINGHAST-RABY

NGPA \$6000 Instrument Rating

Amory is currently a senior at Brown University working towards a degree in applied mathematics. Originally from New York City, he learned to fly at Walter J. Koladza airport in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Getting his private pilot certificate profoundly changed his life and he can't wait to start his instrument training this spring. He hopes to complete his commercial certification by summer. Amory has plans to work as a humanitarian aid bush pilot before starting a career in aerospace engineering.

23. ERIC TOPOLE

Flex Air Initial Flight Instructor (CFI) Training

Although Eric got an engineering degree, sitting behind a desk didn't seem to fulfill his need for adventure. This is what brought him into the aviation industry. He took a job as a flight attendant at American Airlines, which got his sense of adventure fulfilled, and now wants more responsibility. He decided to go on a discovery flight

22.



23.



and hasn't looked back. He plans to get back to American as soon as possible using his new found passion for flying.

24. DAVID WHITE, JR.

PSA Airlines \$1,000 Aircraft Mechanic

David's dream to fly began in early childhood, flying inter-island as an unaccompanied minor to visit his grandparents in Hilo (ITO). His mother would also take him to watch planes at Lihue Airport (LIH). Currently at Hawaiian Airlines, David is working toward his Associate in Science degree, majoring in aeronautics, at Honolulu Community College. David plans on specializing in the avionics sector, with a larger goal to become a supervisor/lead within that department. He believes that in order to be a great supervisor/lead you must first put in the hard work and time. This is his chance as a first-generation college student, and he doesn't plan on wasting it.

25. DAVID YANCHINOV

NGPA \$6000 Higher Education

David is a refugee from Uzbekistan living in exile. He has dreamt about being in the aviation industry since childhood. Based on his excellent academic success and perfect entrance exam, he was awarded a full scholarship and stipend and earned a bachelor's degree from Tashkent State Aviation Institute in 2008 (GPA 3.79). In 2013, his dreams crashed after he was persecuted for his sexual orientation. David was forced to leave his homeland, family, and friends. He fled to the neighboring country of Kyrgyzstan where he joined the LGBTIQ+ organization and worked as a human rights defender for three years. David has lived in the USA for the past five years. During this time he was encouraged by family, friends, and a lovely husband to return to aviation. David successfully completed the A&P program and got his aircraft mechanic license. Now his goal is to get his MS degree in aircraft maintenance technology. David hopes that his life story can help inspire others faced with injustice, discrimination, and violence to keep fighting and never give up.



24.



25.





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SWINGING FOR THE FENCES

There is an old adage in baseball that you can't always hit a home run, but through multiple tactics, you can create runs and thus win games.

by **MARK CHESLOW**

Advocacy Editor, *Contrails Magazine*
NGPA member since 2014

For the LGBTQ+ community, the "home run" has been the Equality Act, a bill in Congress that, if passed, would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, federally funded programs, credit, and jury service. We have written about and referenced the Equality Act over the years. However, there are nearly two dozen pieces of LGBTQ+ legislation in various stages of becoming law. Now let's not delude ourselves. Many of these bills have the same hurdles that the Equality Act has, but by chipping away or "bundling" legislation it is possible to get bits and pieces passed. Here then are some of the more significant bills and their impact on our community.

(H.R.3485) GLOBAL RESPECT ACT

This bill passed the House in February and has moved on to the Senate's Committee of Foreign Relations. The bill would impose visa-blocking sanctions on foreign persons responsible for, or complicit in, violating the human rights of individuals due to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics. The bill sets up framework for both presidential and state department oversight and reporting. The speaker of the house, Nancy Pelosi, said this after the bipartisan vote, "Tragically, thousands of LGBTQ individuals are subjected to attack, harassment, arrest and murder every year, suffering under state-sanctioned discrimination and an alarming surge of violence. Yet, those responsible all too often act with impunity, never facing consequences for their crimes. The Global Respect Act will help counter that injustice, barring offenders from entering the United States, gathering new data on anti-LGBTQ human rights violations and holding perpetrators accountable, including through additional sanctions. Let us salute Congressman David Cicilline for his tireless work advancing this critical legislation—and for bringing to our caucus and the Congress a resolute voice for respect, equality and dignity."

(H.R.2687) CUSTOMER NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT

This bill has renewed importance after the result of the Masterpiece Cakeshop LTD v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission verdict. If you remember, this was the case where a baker refused to bake a wedding cake for a same-sex couple due to religious beliefs. They

found in favor of the baker not on religious grounds, but because the Colorado Civil Rights Commission was overly disrespectful in their handling of the issue and overreaching their mandate. The bill's goal is to update the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in public accommodation. It would expand the definition of public accommodation to include places that provide exhibitions, recreation, exercise, amusement, gatherings, or displays and establishments that provide goods, services, or programs and transportation services. Very importantly, the bill would prohibit using the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) of 1993 to discriminate against the protected class.

(H.R.1450) DO NO HARM ACT

Currently in committee in the House, the bill clarifies RFRA as protecting religious freedom as long as it does not inflict harm on another. The original intent was to prohibit the government from substantially burdening a person's exercise of religion. As an example, the government could not pass a law that people of the Jewish faith must change their day of sabbath to Sunday to more align with the Christian faith. Unfortunately, several states have rewritten their RFRAs to add the individual as a source of burden thus allowing a person to discriminate against another person based on religious belief. This bill specifically states that RFRA is inapplicable to laws that protect against discrimination and equal opportunity as well as laws that protect wages, compensation, benefits and leave. The bill would also protect laws that provide access to information, referrals, provision, or coverage when it applies to any healthcare item or service. It also states that if a person is to assert a RFRA claim then the government (not an individual) must be a party in the judicial proceeding.

(S.1791) EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY ACT

This bill was introduced in the Senate and is currently in the Finance Committee. In the United States, there are over 400,000 children in foster care. 1 in 3 children in foster care identify as LGBTQ. There are still many states that legally allow turning away qualified LGBTQ homes even though those parents are seven times more likely than heterosexual couples to foster or adopt. For those children, there are higher incidents of mistreatment and negative outcomes when it comes to both physical and mental health due to inappropriate placement.

The bill would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, or religion within any child welfare program or agency that receives federal funding. It also includes a provision that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) must establish a National Resource Center on safety, well-being, placement stability and permanency for LGBTQ children and youth involved

**You can't always
hit a home run,
but through
multiple
tactics, you can
generate runs
and win games.**

continues on page 22

The Envoy Air logo, featuring the word "envoy" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font with a small red swoosh above the "y".

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SWINGING*continued from page 20*

with child welfare services. Once again, RFRA cannot be used to challenge this bill if it were to become law. There is also a mechanism to have the Government Accountability Office report to Congress on state compliance.

(H.R.4286)**FAIR AND EQUAL HOUSING ACT OF 2021**

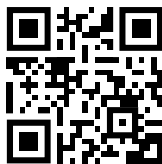
The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited discrimination in the sale, rental, or financing of a property based on race, religion, national origin, sex, handicap, and familial status. The Fair and Equal Housing Act is a bipartisan bill introduced in the House and currently in the Judiciary Committee. It would include sexual orientation and gender identity, either actual or perceived, to the list of protected characteristics.

When introducing the bill, Rep. Schneider (IL) said in a press release, "No American should face discrimination finding a home because of who they are or who they love, yet the majority of states still have no laws prohibiting housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. I am proud to lead this long overdue bipartisan bill to extend federal protections to ensure all LGBTQ individuals and same-sex couples can access housing without prejudice. I am also pleased that these important housing protections were incorporated into the Equality Act, and I look forward to voting on this anti-discrimination package soon."

(H.R.1981) / (S.2242)**PROHIBITION OF MEDICAID FUNDING FOR CONVERSION THERAPY ACT / THERAPEUTIC FRAUD PREVENTION ACT OF 2021**

These two bills would begin to reign in the damaging practice of conversion therapy. Long-debunked theories of being able to change one's sexuality still persist in certain communities. H.R. 1981 would prohibit taxpayer funds to be utilized in conversion therapy and S.2242 would classify the provision and advertising of conversion therapy for monetary compensation as fraud.

Of course, a home run would be great and many legislators have not given up on the Equality Act. We got marriage equality and employment victories through the courts but we remain vulnerable in housing, adoption, public accommodation, etc. Whether you believe the filibuster, hyper partisanship, or simply the status quo are preventing the Equality Act from rounding the bases, many players are stepping up to the plate to get it there one run at a time. 

READ ON

The development of this article started with a search on the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) website. If you would like to get their comprehensive list of federal legislation and links to legislators, scan the QR code.

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THE GREAT WET NORTH

If at first you can't succeed, hang in there for more favorable circumstances.

by **JOHN LINDSAY**
NGPA member since 2018

Rene Sanche is a waterbomber pilot, rancher, father, advocate, and gay. His path to becoming a pilot in Canada's north, coming to terms with his sexuality, and coming out in an industry where the culture hasn't always been friendly to queer pilots are all parts of what make him the success he is today.

A proud member of the Canadian chapter of NGPA, Rene, 42, is out and proud at home, work, and daily life. But that hasn't always been the case. He feared that coming out would hinder his career progression and cause strife between him and his colleagues. For Rene, those fears were heightened because of the type of flying he does. Rene is a bush pilot. He spent the early part of his career in Canada's north – a vast, cold, unforgiving yet beautiful part of the country where attitudes toward members of the LGBTQ community may not always be as progressive as we would all like. He found that homophobic comments and attitudes were common on the flight deck and a norm in the daily life of the hyper-masculine North. Rene has triumphed over adversity and has a very successful career. He is now able to be his true and authentic self at home and in the cockpit.

THE BUG

Rene has been around airplanes and aviation his entire life. His dad owned a Cherokee 140, and then a Cessna 185 on amphibious, which meant he spent much of his formative years with his dad going on fly-in camping and fishing trips. Much of this time was spent in Northern Manitoba, true bush country where lakes abound and the fish are plentiful. This is where he caught "the aviation bug," and he knew he was destined to a career in aviation.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Rene's piloting career almost didn't take off. Tragically, Rene's first hurdle was losing his father in an aviation accident when he was 16. But, because of his love of flying and especially the joys of flying with his father, Rene knew he still needed to be a pilot. When he began flight training, he was met with a second, and seemingly insurmountable hurdle: he failed his Category 1 medical and was diagnosed with colour blindness. Rene would not be able to be a commercial pilot.

Instead of letting these devastating setbacks drive him away from aviation, Rene enrolled in a two-year Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (AME) diploma program at Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary. If he couldn't be a pilot, he'd be involved in aviation in a different role.

Fate once again intervened on his plans, this time in a positive way. While finishing the second year of the



MIKE BIDEN



CAPTAIN RENE SANCHE

Rene's piloting career almost didn't take off.

TANKER 44 drops retardant down a ridge line to protect structures during the Thomas Creek wildfire near Okanagan Falls, BC, Canada (above) and Rene stands in front of a CV-580 the day the town of Lytton burned down in British Columbia (left).

AME program, Transport Canada updated the vision standards for pilots by introducing the Farnsworth d-15 panel test as an approved alternative should a candidate be unable to pass the pseudoisochromatic plate test. Rene passed the Farnsworth test with flying colours (pun most definitely intended), and this paved the way to him being able to obtain his Category 1 Medical and becoming a pilot.

Rene began his piloting career in earnest by taking weekend flying lessons while continuing his AME education. His dedication and strong work ethic meant he was up to the challenge of concurrently completing both intensive training programs. He completed his Commercial Multi IFR licences and began his career as a pilot—spending time in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories as a bush pilot and AME, and as a medevac pilot in Northern Manitoba before joining Calm Air where, at the age of 27, he became the youngest HS748 captain in company history.

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GREAT WET NORTH

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Living in fear of being passed up for promotion due to your orientation or a lifestyle that has zero impact on your ability to perform your duties is in the past.

In 2014, Rene joined Conair as a waterbomber pilot and spent the past several seasons fighting fires across western Canada, including 2016's infamous Fort McMurray fire which saw parts of the city burnt.

COMING OUT

Rene was ready to come out to his family, friends, and co-workers in the summer of 2017. The fears he had early in his career—career progression stalling, being passed over for opportunities because he was gay, and negative relationships with coworkers and bosses—didn't materialize. He was amazed by how much support he received from everyone at Conair, and the provincial government agencies. He credits the camaraderie that exists between flight and ground crews, and the culture at both Conair and government agencies, for making his coming out process such a positive one. He recalls one impactful moment:

I remember walking down the hall of the provincial air tanker base, being asked to step into the Provincial Air Tanker Coordination Officer (PATCO) office. I was nervous but was greeted by the PATCO with "I am proud of you! You have the biggest set around here and I have the utmost respect for you, I support you 120% and I suspect everyone else here does as well. If they don't, they can find the door!" I was speechless and it took everything I had not to cry at that moment.

Rene lived in the closet for 38 years, but he wants others to know that it's okay to come out, even in an industry like aerial firefighting or as a bush pilot. He has become an advocate for LGBTQ youth and supports LGBTQ youth mental health initiatives. He has authored an upcoming book which shares his story so that others may feel comfortable coming out and

living their authentic lives. "It's okay to be out, to be yourself in this industry which many may perceive as macho and intimidating for members of the LGBTQ community," he says. As a role model and mentor, Rene hopes to positively impact the lives of others in a similar situation as he experienced for 18 years of his career. "If one person looks at me and says, 'if he can do it, I can do it,' then I've made a difference," he says.

What made you determined to be a strong advocate for LGBTQ youth initiatives and youth in aviation?

I never want someone to have to hide who they are so they can succeed at something they love. Living in fear of being passed up for promotion due to your orientation or a lifestyle that has zero impact on your ability to perform your duties is in the past. I want everyone to know it is possible, there is life after coming out, and I'm proof.

You're raising twins. Have you always wanted kids?

Yes, I have two girls who are 8, going on 30. I knew that I wouldn't be conceiving children the traditional way, so I decided to go through the adoption process. I was told the process could take more than 10 years for a single, gay man, if it happens at all. At that point, I started to investigate surrogacy.

What is the process for surrogacy?

After doing a lot of research, I decided to go the route of gestational surrogacy—a donor egg was fertilized with my sperm and implanted in a surrogate to carry to term. The surrogate mother has no DNA connection to the child. In my case, two eggs were implanted, giving a 44% chance of producing one child. Both stuck! Now I have two beautiful daughters.

You're a waterbomber pilot, or aerial firefighter. Tell us about your job.

I started work for Conair in the spring of 2014. We have seasonal firefighting contracts throughout western and northern Canada, Alaska, and Australia. We also go anywhere else we're needed. Currently, I'm based at home in the right seat on the Conair 580. I've also worked in the spare role as captain on the Conair 580 and spent four seasons as captain on the Fire Boss.

You battled the Fort McMurray fire in 2016.**What was that like for you?**

We were called out on May 1 and spent three weeks battling that fire. That was my first season on the Fire Boss. We first landed with the intention of fueling and grabbing lunch. Before we finished fueling, fire was halfway down the runway and we had to get airborne before the airport burnt. One of the most memorable moments from that time is burnt into my memory, pun intended. There was a lady running from her car, doors open and child in arms, in the middle of the highway as our team of formation Fire Bosses dropped loads of water and foam along the ditch in an attempt to keep the southern highway open. That road was one of only two ways out of town for the fleeing 80,000 citizens.



CAPTAIN RENE SANCHEZ

RENE on a walk around at Penticton Air Tanker Base.

continues on page 38

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YOU DON'T NEED TO ASK PERMISSION TO DO THE RIGHT THING

The journey to becoming a female chief pilot and how to use your powers for good. A discussion on current issues facing our industry.

by **HANNA FOWLER**

Co-chair, NGPA Women's Committee
NGPA member since 2018

Women's Committee leaders sat down with a Base Chief Pilot to discuss airline careers, being an ally in an evolving industry, and issues impacting our crew members. Together they shed some light on the ways this time of unprecedented growth in aviation may pave the way to a more inclusive future.

How did you get started in aviation?

I am a third generation pilot who set out to do *anything* other than flying. Halfway through college I realized I had been fighting against something that I really enjoyed doing, joined a ground school, and was at Embry-Riddle Prescott by fall. Shortly after college, I moved to Beijing and taught a ground school—taking students at square one, like “what is an aileron.” Teaching in the classroom setting was a great experience, but I eventually came back to the states and was a flight instructor in Arizona for a while. After doing that for a few hundred hours, I moved to Puerto Rico and flew Beech 1900s around the islands to get the rest of my time before applying to a regional.

Who was your most influential role model/mentor?

I have been fortunate to have many mentors, although I did not realize that they were at the time. My Dad is a black man, so I grew up seeing a person of color in a pilot's uniform every day. There was never this notion that I couldn't do it, which I think was really important. Growing up, I was surrounded by people interested in me as a person and in my career. There were people who cared and were willing to put in the time and effort to help me succeed, whatever path I chose. They introduced me to options that I didn't know existed which ultimately helped me end up where I am today.

In your opinion, is mentorship crucial to a person's success? Why or why not?

It is. Without that support you may end up somewhere entirely different. I know a woman who was interested in becoming a pilot, but her father told her that “women don't fly.” As a result, she pursued another career entirely and I'm not sure she's at peace with that decision.

What advice would you give someone deciding to pursue aviation as a career and choosing a path that is right for them?

The best advice I can give is to meet as many people as you can, ask as many questions as you can. What I see in my job now is a disconnect between expectations

There was never this notion that I couldn't do it, which I think was really important.



COURTESY OF KISA AND FAMILY

and reality. People finally make it to the airlines and it doesn't live up to what they thought it would be. The more people you meet, questions you ask, stories you hear, the more realistic your expectations will be. There are many ways to get started. I have heard from people that they would start hanging out around airports, meeting people, and asking questions. I also think this is the goal of most pathway/cadet/mentor programs—to reach out to people and help them figure out what path is best for them, which may not be the airlines at all. There are so many jobs out there in aviation and the best way to find them all is through other people who have done them.

What is one of your favorite/best/happiest memories in your career?

I was flying in Puerto Rico into the St. Maarten airport where you see videos of people on the beach getting knocked over by jet blast. Granted, I wasn't in anything big enough to knock anyone over but it was still a really cool, bucket list experience.

In your opinion, what role does diversity and inclusion play in shaping the future of the industry?

Diversity, to me, is representation. Representation

continues on page 30



COURTESY OF KISA AND FAMILY

KISA and her son enjoying family time on a day off (above) and Kisa with the mighty Beech 1900 in Puerto Rico.



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a year where we
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PERMISSION

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from all types of people brings in ideas. Instead of continuing down a path that isn't working, having those different ideas and strategies lead to innovation, increased quality of life, and increased efficiency. When you live in an echo chamber, all it does is reinforce bad ideas.

Companies have announced programs aimed at hiring individuals from diverse backgrounds, primarily women and people of color. Some people feel this compromises safety if hiring is based solely on these traits. What would you say to those people?

We need to hire the best possible people. We want the safest, most intelligent pilots. And I don't believe that people are being hired solely for those traits you mention. If that were true, we would be seeing much higher rates of wash out in training. So clearly we are hiring the correct people, they simply come in different packages. Which is what these initiatives are really about.

Does diverse leadership play a role in achieving these hiring goals?

Diverse leadership promotes connection with people who don't fit the historical demographic. People can see themselves represented in the industry in positions to which they may aspire. They see someone they can count on for support, and in that way I think it promotes trust—which is huge. You know that you have someone in your corner.

We see members of the LGBTQ+ aviation community who do not feel their identity is celebrated. As a leader, what does it mean to you to be an ally?

It means I have the ability to empathize and be willing to try and see things from other points of view, to see what challenges LGBTQ+ pilots face and what they're trying to achieve. To always be willing to stand shoulder-to-shoulder and ensure they are able to achieve their goals in the same way others do.

Would you share a time that you defended someone experiencing discrimination and how you handled that situation?

I have seen a lot of crew members mistreated by other crew members. At the time, I didn't feel like there was much I could do so I did what I could. I tried to redirect the conversation, or distract them from the person they were attacking to, at least, stop what was happening in that moment. I tried to support the victim without creating a rift with the person I sat next to in the cockpit. The worst part of these situations was we felt like management didn't really listen. There were multiple times that something was reported and nothing happened. This was at a different, much smaller company than where I am now, but it made the people being mistreated feel like they needed to be silent, and that they couldn't make complaints. Now that I'm in management I realize that anyone can make a complaint and we will go to great lengths for results. But as a first officer, it definitely felt hard to speak up to a captain who was much older and had a lot of experience. That lack of empowerment was a big challenge for me.

If you could influence one industry-wide policy change that you believe would make the biggest impact, what would it be?

There is a saying in aviation that we are not paid to fly airplanes, we are paid to ruin our personal lives. So from a quality of life standpoint: part-time lines. This is not only a women issue, but also a parent issue. Too often, people have to leave or quit to manage their family life. And, as a regional first officer, it's not uncommon for your partner to be the person who makes more money, meaning you have to be the one to make sacrifices.

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Does this create a retention issue? Is this part of the problem we're experiencing in the pilot shortage?

I think it is more of an attraction issue than a retention issue. If you have a person who is STEM-minded and they can either become a regional first officer, with all of the personal and financial challenges that come with that, or simply buy a plane while making much more money doing something else, why wouldn't they choose that?

In your opinion, why is the percentage of female pilots still quite low? Only 9% of total pilots, and only 4.7% of total airline transport pilots in the United States in 2021 according to the FAA civil airmen statistics.

To add to that, approximately 2% of captains are women. With each level we advance, the percentage decreases.

I think it is the result of many reasons. Discouragement is a big one, like the woman who was told "women don't

fly." Lack of representation is another reason. If you walk through an airport and the majority of people you see in uniform are men you will never have that "that could be me" inspiration. You don't see many women doing it, or hear them making PAs, or have many greeting passengers aboard planes. Hostile attitudes play a role and may turn off a desire to pursue a career, even if you are perfectly capable. Contracts are majority written by and for childless men, or men with partners who can stay home. Female pilots tend to be single moms or part of a two-parent working household. Which is yet another reason for diverse leadership both in management and unions, people fight for things important to them. If you don't have representation, no one is fighting for your goals. 🦋

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The NGPA Transgender Committee is pleased to invite our trans and non-binary members, their partners and families, to a weekend retreat in the mountains of Colorado. Join us in Denver for an intimate weekend together as trans folk. United Airlines has graciously extended an invitation for us to visit their Denver training center on Saturday. That evening, we will retire to the mountains for a private dinner followed by self-paced hiking and conversation. This event is free to attend with transportation provided to and from the airport and venues. Please join us as we serve our trans and nonbinary membership with this unique retreat.





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ALASKA

Alaska Flyers [Anchorage]
alaskafters@ngpa.org

ARIZONA

Cactus Flyers [Phoenix]
cactusflyers@ngpa.org

CALIFORNIA

Capital City Aviators [Sacramento]
capitalcityaviators@ngpa.org

- ▼ Golden Gate Flyers [San Francisco]
wildblue@goldengateflyers.org
- Lindbergh Flyers [San Diego]
lindberghflyers@ngpa.org

- ▼ Unusual Attitudes
info@unusualattitudes.org

COLORADO

Mile-High Flyers [Denver]
milehighflyers@ngpa.org

FLORIDA

Citrus Wings [Orlando]
citruswings@ngpa.org

Mach1 Flyers [South Florida]
mach1flyers@ngpa.org

Tampa Flyers
tampaflyers@ngpa.org

River City Flyers [Jacksonville]
rivercityflyers@ngpa.org

GEORGIA

Stick and Rudder [Atlanta]
stickandrudder@ngpa.org

ILLINOIS

Windy City Flyers [Chicago]
windycityflyers@ngpa.org

LOUISIANA

Big Easy Flyers [New Orleans]
bigeasyflyers@ngpa.org

MINNESOTA

Twin City Flyers [Minneapolis/St. Paul]
twincityflyers@ngpa.org

MISSOURI

Heartland Flyers [Kansas City]
heartlandflyers@ngpa.org

St. Louie Flyers [St. Louis]
stlouieflyers@ngpa.org

NEW ENGLAND

Yankee Flyers [ME/NH/VT/MA/CT/RI]
yankeeflyers@ngpa.org

NEW YORK

Gotham Flyers [NYC]
gothamflyers@ngpa.org

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Queen City Flyers [Charlotte]
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Arch City Aviators [Columbus]
archcityaviators@ngpa.org

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libertyflyers@ngpa.org

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San Juan Flyers
sanjuanflyers@ngpa.org

TEXAS

Gulf Coast Flyers [Houston]
gulfcoastflyers@ngpa.org

DFW Metroplex Flyers [Dallas/Fort Worth]
dfwmetroplexflyers@ngpa.org

UTAH

Wasatch Wings [Salt Lake City]
wasatchwings@ngpa.org

WASHINGTON

- ▼ Cascade Flyers [Seattle]
cascadeflyers@ngpa.org

WASHINGTON D.C.

Out on the Runway
outontherunway@ngpa.org

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Flyers
wisconsinflyers@ngpa.org

INTERNATIONAL

NGPA AUSTRALIA

Australia Flyers [Sydney]
australiaflyers@ngpa.org

NGPA CANADA

Canada Flyers [Toronto]
canadaflyers@ngpa.org

- ▼ Canadian Aviation Pride
aviationpride.ca

NGPA EUROPE/UK

Continental Europe Flyers
ngpaeurope@ngpa.org

SPECIAL INTEREST

MILITARY OF NGPA

Military Members only
military@ngpa.org

TRANSGENDER/ NON-BINARY OF NGPA

Transgender/Non-binary members only
transgender@ngpa.org

WOMEN OF NGPA

Women members only
women@ngpa.org

UNIVERSITY & FLIGHT SCHOOLS

Embry-Riddle Prescott
Embry-Riddle Daytona
Kent State University
Ohio State University
Polk State College University
Purdue University
Southern Illinois University
University of North Dakota
University of Oklahoma
Western Michigan University

▼ Affiliates

ON FACEBOOK

Every NGPA chapter has a group presence by name on Facebook with info on monthly meet-ups, special events, milestones, updates, and more.

NO FACEBOOK?

ngpa.org/chaptersignup

Members can join local chapters through the NGPA website. Sign up with a chapter in the city where you live and/or cities you visit frequently to receive event updates by email or text.

STARTUP & SUPPORT

chapters@ngpa.org

Have you felt disconnected from the NGPA when not at a flagship event? Do you want to start a chapter in your school/city/country? Do you need more support for an existing chapter? The NGPA support committee can help with needed resources for event planning, promotion, advice, and financing.

UPCOMING & RECENT CHAPTER EVENTS

- PRIDE Berlin: JUL 21-23 (EUR/UK)
- PRIDE London: JUL 1 (EUR/UK)
- PRIDE Houston: JUN 25 (Houston)
- EBACE Booth & Meet-up: MAY 23-25 (EUR/UK)
- Glamping Trip: MAY 20-22 (Dallas/Ft. Worth)
- AERO Friedrichshafen: APR 27-30 (EUR/UK)
- Bunnies on the Bayou: April 17 (Houston)
- Monthly Dinner: MAR 8 (Dallas/Ft. Worth)
- HARS Museum Tour: FEB 18 (Australia)
- Moorabbin Air Museum: JAN 14 (Australia)
- Bowling Night: JAN 8 (Chicago)



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34/ **Contact Us!**

Member Resources

NGPA members bring their expertise to provide some important benefits of membership. Take advantage to get involved and/or find answers to your questions.

ADVOCACY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

aac@ngpa.org

The AAC works to proactively fight homophobia and transphobia in aviation, on and off the job.

AEROMEDICAL SUPPORT

medical@ngpa.org

A strictly confidential peer-to-peer program to answer medical questions and provide support at the e-mail address above.

NGPA members can also solicit free advice through the Aviation Medicine Advisory Service at: aviationmedicine.com

Click on *Consult an AMAS physician > Corporate and Partnership Member* to fill out the confidential questionnaire. Make sure "NGPA" is selected from the "My Organization is" drop-down box.

ALLY ENGAGEMENT

allies@ngpa.org

The NGPA welcomes straight allies, family, and friends into membership. Get involved!

ASCEND (Mentorship)

ngpa.org/mentorship
mentorship@ngpa.org

EXPANDED! Our mentor program holds a vast pool of experience for all members. Sign up as a skilled mentor or aspiring mentee!

CHAPTER SUPPORT

chapters@ngpa.org

Support, resources, and community building for all NGPA chapters.

COUNSELING & STRESS MANAGEMENT

ngpacares@ngpa.org

A strictly confidential peer-to-peer support program designed to manage and mitigate the acute stress associated with incidents, accidents, grief, or trauma.

DEVELOPMENT

development@ngpa.org

Answers to questions & guidance to support NGPA with a gift or pledge.

EVENTS

events@ngpa.org

Info about our national events (Winter Warm Up, Cape Cod Classic, EAA AirVenture, OBAP, WAI, pride, etc.) including advertising/sponsorship.

FINANCE

finance@ngpa.org

Support related to member payments, personal donations, company matching programs, tax reporting, etc.

GOVERNANCE

governance@ngpa.org

Handling the NGPA's bylaws and serving on the Board of Directors.

MEDIA RELATIONS

media@ngpa.org

Media/advertising inquiries and the main point of contact for industry and the general public.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

membership@ngpa.org

NGPA member services including account information, renewals, the flight deck program, etc.

NGPA FAMILY

family@ngpa.org

Sharing with current and prospective LGBTQ+ parents and parents of LGBTQ+ youth with aviation goals.

PUBLICATIONS

publications@ngpa.org

Editorial and general inquiries about *Contrails* magazine

Archives: ngpa.org/publications

SCHOLARSHIPS

scholarships@ngpa.org

Financial assistance for those pursuing personal and professional aviation goals.

TRANSGENDER/ NON-BINARY RESOURCES

transgender@ngpa.org

Support, guidance, mentorship, and advocacy for our transgender and non-binary members.

UNIVERSITIES & SCHOOLS

learn2fly@ngpa.org

For those interested in beginning or actively training for aviation careers, or training for all certifications.

WEBSITE

ngpa.org

Members-only resources including a directory, CFI connect, job search tools, homophobia reporting, etc.

WOMEN OF NGPA

women@ngpa.org

Support with education, advocacy, outreach, activities, and networking.

VOLUNTEERING

volunteer@ngpa.org

It takes a substantial investment of volunteer hours to fulfill our leadership role in the aviation community. Reach out today!

VOLUNTEERS FOR RECOVERY (VFR)

vfr@ngpa.org

Strictly confidential assistance for those with questions about substance abuse, addiction, and recovery.



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WHAT A DRAG

Because the best drag is all about excess.

by **THOM BARBOUR**
Editor in Chief, *Contrails Magazine*
NGPA member since 2020

Attendees of this year's Winter Warm Up presented by United Airlines were treated to a drag show like none other—Kit “Mama Bear” Warfield dragging an aircraft at Signature Flight Support in Palm Springs, CA. The idea to drag (not pull, darlings) a Cirrus jet to raise funds for the NGPA was the brainchild of PJ Glassey, a physical trainer and flight student of Kit's in the early 2000s. By 2008, Kit was working out twice a week as PJ's client at X Gym in Kirkland, WA. Her longevity with X Gym is a product of evolution and constantly switching up her routine. Motivating clients is what a good trainer knows to do so when Kit mentioned to PJ that she was looking forward to the 2022 NGPA winter event, PJ, a strong ally of the LGBTQ community, connected the dots of Kit's physical abilities with a plane drag fundraiser. Kit thought the idea was fantastic and knew there was “nothing to it but to do it.” She first ran the idea past her wife, Nancy, who puts 100% of her trust in PJ (or “Peanut”) to not let Kit get injured. With Nancy's full support, Kit reached out to the Palm Springs event planners, got the okay to move forward, and sent out feelers through the Cascade Flyers, NGPA's affiliate chapter in the Pacific Northwest, looking for someone who might have a plane to pull. Together, PJ and Kit upped her overall fitness routine to engage with the friction sled (a 200 lb. piece of equipment dragged across carpet at gyms nationwide) to further develop her leg strength. As her strength increased, the sled was loaded with one trainer, then two trainers, then swapped out entirely for a 5,000 lb. monster Jeep, then a Ford Ranger, a Tesla, and finally (because the best drag is all about excess) an 8,000 lb. “train” consisting of both the Jeep and Ranger chained together. The roof of a nearby parking structure was the practice field for the vehicle pulls. Kit monitored her sessions using a Fitbit and, generally, donned a bright red harness to drag the vehicles about 50 yds. before pivoting and returning the same distance. She did this multiple times per session for months in anticipation of dragging an actual aircraft in Palm Springs. All of this hard work meant one thing—she really needed an aircraft.

Enter long-term NGPA member Don Phillips. Don heard about Kit's need for a plane and generously offered his 4,800 lb. Cirrus jet to the cause. She couldn't believe that Don's generosity would make her quest a reality—and the plane was already parked in Palm Springs! Arrangements were made to have the plane brought to the Saturday luncheon site and parked on the ramp in front of the hangar. Midway through lunch, Kit would harness up, someone would announce the fundraiser about to happen, donations would be texted, and the jet would be dragged to thunderous applause.

On the morning of her big debut, Kit did a trial run with the plane in a different area of the airport. There was a slight incline that made her nervous since even the smallest change in terrain can make a huge difference with resistance and her ability to drag the aircraft unassisted. She took to FaceTime for a once over with PJ back in Washington. They both surveyed the landscape and aircraft and strategized the afternoon's activity. She also received a tip from NGPA board chair Steve Tustin: move the plane 4–6 inches before the drag begins to



THOM BARBOUR



KIT WARFIELD

THOM BARBOUR

(top to bottom) **DRAGGING** a 4,800 lb. Cirrus while members cheer her on, Kit and her longtime trainer PJ, Kit shows her harness and NGPA pride before taking center stage at Signature Flight Support in Palm Springs.

eliminate the flattened area of the tires touching the tarmac. With the best and the brightest helping, nothing could stop Kit from achieving her goal.

Unfortunately, Don's Cirrus was mistakenly parked inside the NGPA luncheon hangar after practice. It was nestled behind the buffet tables that were set up behind 25 tables and 250 chairs awaiting attendees. With less than 30 minutes before the 400-attendee luncheon began, all that setup had to be moved and reset so the plane could be towed onto the ramp and put in place—a lot of activity that was completed mere moments before the first bus arrived with hungry guests. When the time finally came for Kit to take center stage, she donned her red harness with tow rope, clipped onto the Cirrus, and got into position. Nancy stood close to record the moment. Folks texted donations and scrambled for a view of the first-ever jet drag in NGPA history. She dug into the tarmac with the rock climbing shoes she purchased for their gripping ability, leaned and lowered her body. As Survivor's “Eye of the Tiger” began to play, Kit slowly started to move her arms, digging in and lowering her body even more...and the plane inched forward. She kept an internal cadence that aligned her breathing, footsteps and arm movements. Her legs extended slowly at first but now gained momentum. Don sat behind the yoke of the Cirrus to guide the plane if needed but the momentum, the effort, the energy was all Kit's. She recalls that her muscle memory was fully engaged and everything about the drag felt right. This was not a friction sled or anything close in size or weight to that with which she had trained. But her body recognized the motion, remembered the tension, and comfortably adapted. She heard cheers of “Mama Bear!” that faded as her adrenaline kicked in and concentration took over. Steve Tustin says, “the symbolism of Kit pulling that airplane was not lost on me and left me a little choked up. That airplane represented her NGPA family. And with that strong Mama Bear heart, she showed us how to support each other when she picked up the rope and brought us along with her.” In all, Kit dragged the plane the length of the hangar twice, pivoting at each end. Surely, she could have gone two more laps, she thought, but the drag was over, and it ended as it began, with everyone surrounding her and cheering on their Mama Bear.

WATCH...



PLANE DRAG



TRAINING



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GREAT WET NORTH

continued from page 26



SKAHA Creek wildfire: closing the fire in and protecting homes and Penticton airport (above). 2021 Spring training in the CV580 cockpit in Abbotsford (right).

What are the most challenging aspects of your job?

Going from 0-100, from comfortably sitting on a couch to the hold short lines in 10 minutes, in a heartbeat is challenging. Arriving at a scene where “life and property” are at risk, with multiple aircraft on site, and coordinating a response is challenging. Everyone is taking in information at lightning speeds while fire blazes forward. But, I would have to say the most challenging is knowing when to slow things down and when to say, “NO!” The moment those words are muttered, it is supported, and an all stop occurs. That allows the fight to be fought another day!

With so much going on, and so many aircraft in the area, how is it all coordinated to ensure safety?

We are directed where to go by an incident commander (IC) on the ground and Air Attack Officer (AAO) aboard a Birddog aircraft. The AAO is a fire behaviour specialist. The IC tells the Birddog what they need, and the AAO and Birddog pilot coordinate the aircraft to make it all happen safely.

What if the fire zone is inside a control zone?

ATC basically relinquishes control of the firefighting aircraft to the Birddog. They shut down the airspace until a canceling NOTAM (Notice to Air Missions) is issued by PATC (Provincial Air Tanker Center) to NavCanada. They may accommodate commercial and medevac traffic by allowing entries into the airspace via certain routes. When this happens, they communicate with the working Birddog to protect our airspace, aircraft, and ability to safely perform duties.

It sounds like a complex job for the Birddog and AAO.

It is! They’re not only responsible for making sure bombers drop water or retardant where it needs to be, but also coordinating the aircraft. They stack aircraft at 500-foot intervals starting at 2500 feet and clear the tankers for their runs. The working tanker will be



Before we finished fueling, fire was coming halfway down the runway and we had to get airborne before the airport burnt.

cleared for the run, and the Birddog will either lead them in or formate from behind, and give them exit instructions. Those exit instructions clear the next tanker in, dropping all tankers in the “stack” by 500 feet so #2 tanker becomes the working tanker at the base of the “stack.” It’s like an aerial ballet.

There’s a lot of potential for things to go wrong.

Everyone is professional. There’s no ‘macho’ when it comes to doing what we do. If things start to get hairy, or little “gotchas” start to happen, we call it a day. We spend so much time together as a group, so we get to know each other’s flying, personalities, and nature. If something is off with someone we usually know. We have each other’s backs.

Speaking of flight safety in high-stress, potentially dangerous situations, do you feel that a culture where phrases such as “that’s so gay” are commonly thrown around negatively impacts flight safety?

It’s the nail in the coffin of Crew Resource Management (CRM). Being able to communicate on any flight deck is a matter of life or death. If you can communicate with the crew member about their language, do so at an appropriate time. State your feelings. If you don’t feel comfortable speaking up to that crew member, please communicate with your chief pilot; they are there to support you and protect the aircraft and the lives they put you (captain or not) in charge of. A hostile flight deck spells disaster so it is our job as part of the LGBTQ community to educate and pave the way no matter the difficulties we go through ourselves so the next generation can have a safer workplace and good CRM.

You are passionate about making a difference in the lives of LGBTQ youth and members of the aviation community. How can readers follow your progress?

As a child, I never had access to mental health resources. I believe it is one of the major reasons it took so long for me to live my truth. My goal is to empower those in pursuit of authenticity and send the message that “if I can do it, you can do it better” and earlier! By telling my story, I hope it reaches someone who needs to hear it, and that it helps them realize there is no reason to live in the dark without support. 🏳️‍🌈



TIK TOK

INSTAGRAM

FACEBOOK

Rene is in the process of launching a clothing company, Bearwest Gear (www.bearwest.ca). Proceeds from the sale of each item will be directed to the Bearwest Foundation to aid in confidential mental health resources for LGBTQ youth, allowing them access to unbiased support without repercussion. Donation links can be found on the website. You can also reach him directly via his Instagram page or Facebook Messenger. Let him know that you are with the NGPA and be patient, as sometimes it takes a few days to answer questions.

John Lindsay is a paramedic and 2020 NGPA scholarship recipient. He recently completed his flight training and is in search of that elusive first flying job!

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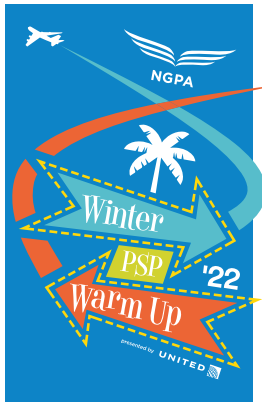


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