

LOCAL KIDS WILL LEARN TO FLY ON WINGS THEY BUILT THEMSELVES

STEM Aerospace Project Reaches Major Milestone, is Creating the Next Generation of Pilots & Engineers

PACOIMA, CA – September 1, 2022 Two months ahead of schedule, local Valley kids and their parents have successfully built both wings of an airplane that they will eventually learn to fly in. These high school-age kids are getting a rare hands-on education and real-world experience in how airplanes work - starting them on a pathway toward high-flying careers in aerospace. The intent is to give these teens the fundamental knowledge and skills to become tomorrow's engineers, mechanics, aerospace project managers, aircraft assembly workers, and commercial/military pilots.

Project: JACKPOT (Joint Aircraft Construction for Kids, Parents, Opportunities, and Training) provides ten volunteer aviation experts that guide and mentor kids and their parents to build **The Spirit of Los Angeles**, a two-seat airplane they will learn to fly. The hands-on aircraft construction project teaches a wide range of mechanical skills, metal fabrication, riveting, assembly, engine & electronic systems integration, etc. They'll assemble hundreds of parts and pieces that come together to become a machine that can fly, learning what all those parts and pieces do along the way.

"Live above average... Rise above earth" is the project's tagline, encouraging Northeast Valley kids to achieve both.

One of the program's supporters, City Council candidate and former Neighborhood Council leader **Elisa Avalos**, explains part of the magic; "It's like that great scene in the first 'Karate Kid' movie, where the kid thinks he's painting a house and sanding the floor, but he's actually learning Karate moves. These kids think they're having fun building an airplane, but they're learning engineering, mechanics, craftsmanship, working out problems as a team, and putting in hard work to create something worthwhile. They're not just building an airplane, they're building the skills for a better future."

Zenith Aircraft has supplied thousands of aircraft kits for hobbyists around the world. Company president **Sebastien Heintz** has been a generous supporter of the program, saying "The wings for Project: JACKPOT was completed by these kids in less than a year... that's amazing because they first had to learn about all the parts, fasteners, rivets, tools and materials before they actually put it all together. We were surprised they were ready for the next part so soon, but we're making sure they get the fuselage kit without delay to keep the kids learning and moving forward."



Zenith Aircraft 750 Cruiser

Many of the participants come from lower-income families and racial/demographic backgrounds that are under-represented in aviation, aerospace, and engineering. Without youth development programs like this, many would be headed toward a lifetime of lower educational outcomes and earning potential. JACKPOT's lead instructor **Bill Berle** is resolute about how his program (and Whiteman Airport's *five other youth aviation programs*) will change lives, asking parents; "Kids involved with aviation are the ones who stay **in** school and **out** of jail... the ones who are on track instead of on crack... doing good instead of doing time. Which life do you want your kids to have?"

Project: JACKPOT is seeking participants, sponsors, and supporters to complete The Spirit of Los Angeles. Donations are tax-deductible. For more information contact EAA Chapter 40 San Fernando Valley, www.eachapter40.com, or Director of Development Bill Berle at (818) 634-9762

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