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PRESS RELEASE

## Abbotsford Event Sets World Precedent – 1741 Females Fly Free

**Over 9,800 participants attend hands-on aviation & aerospace discovery event for women**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For the third time in four years **The Sky's No Limit – Girls Fly Too!** annual aviation and aerospace outreach events have set a new worldwide precedent for the largest outreach event of its kind ever held.

*April 12, 2015* – On March 7-8, 2015 over 9,800 females and their families from around Southwestern BC and beyond gathered at the Abbotsford International Airport for an exciting free outreach event. Among many unique attractions was the opportunity to experience the thrill of flying - females of all ages who hadn't flown in a small aircraft before were invited to register in advance for a free helicopter ride.

Participants were excited to meet NASA astronaut and US Navy helicopter pilot (ret) Wendy Lawrence and ply her with questions about her incredible accomplishments and space experiences. Other distinguished guests included the Honourable Judith Guichon, Lieutenant Governor for British Columbia; Mr. Mark Warawa, Member of Parliament for Langley; the Honourable Rich Coleman, Deputy Premier for BC; the Honourable Michael de Jong, Minister of Finance; Councillor Brenda Falk, City of Abbotsford.

While many female participants were initially drawn to the event by the prospect of a free flight, the real mission of discovery was found in the hangar and on the flight line static display. Participants were able to climb through the various civilian and non-civilian aircraft and ask questions of the flight and maintenance crews. Joining many other commercial and general aviation exhibitors, the Canadian Coast Guard, Royal Canadian Air Force, Royal Canadian Air Cadets and RCMP attended with aircraft, crews and recruiters.

Fun aviation, aerospace and space activities abounded - event exhibitors were encouraged to be creative and employ hands-on learning activities to inspire and educate participants.

An immersive space experience, riveting a real aircraft, learning how downed aircraft are found by search and rescue crews, flight simulators, air traffic control simulators, live ATC radar feed to the YVR Airport, the dismantling of aircraft engines and rotor heads, lockwiring fasteners and a tactile examination of various aircraft structures were included among the cool activities.

The entire event was free, thanks to community-minded partners such as the University of the Fraser Valley, Carson Air Group, Teck Construction, YVR International Airport, Berts Electric, Island Air Express, Province of BC – Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and other community and industry partners.



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**The Sky's No Limit – Girls Fly Too!**, annual events are part of an outreach initiative founded by BC pilot Kirsten Brazier in 2012. Brazier, a fixed-wing and helicopter pilot, is on a mission to share her passion for aviation and energize more females to discover the amazing opportunities available to them in aviation, aerospace and space. “From shop floor to top floor we’re inspiring future leaders!” Brazier exclaims.

Out of 24,505 professional pilots in Canada, only 1,356 of them are women. Out of 19,601 aircraft engineers, only 560 of them are women. Less than 3% of the technical positions in the Royal Canadian Air Force, such as pilot or maintenance technician, are held by women.

Brazier believes it’s a simple perception barrier holding women back from pursuing aviation and aerospace trades. “It would be easy to conclude that women are unwelcome in these fields. Instead, studies have shown that a common perception persists that aviation and aerospace careers are reserved for men,” Brazier said. “Since society observes mostly men employed in these fields, this perception is reinforced.”

**The Sky's No Limit – Girls Fly Too!** outreach initiatives are focused on achieving gender balance in aviation and aerospace by developing mentoring partnerships with industry, establishing leadership activities, public education and the popular annual hands-on outreach events.

“The majority of our target female audience have no experience with, or exposure to aviation. Before we can engage and inspire females with the limitless opportunities available in aviation, aerospace and space, we must first attract them to the airport and grab their attention,” said Brazier. “We can think of no better way to do this than by taking them flying for the first time – the first flight experience is so incredible we just have to share it!”

“We welcome all ages to our events because it’s never too late to spark an interest in the many facets of aviation, aerospace and space.”

To date **The Sky's No Limit – Girls Fly Too!** annual events have directly touched the lives of over 19,600 participants, both male and female, and 4,106 females of all ages have experienced the magic of first flight in a small aircraft. Events, including the introductory flights are always free to ensure there are no barriers to participation – thanks to the support of industry and community partners.

Brazier is a professional pilot from the Lower Mainland, BC and she holds Airline Transport Ratings for both aeroplanes and helicopters. With over 20 years of flying experience, Brazier has enjoyed a diverse career flying across Canada, US and the Caribbean on wheels, floats, skis and skids as well as two-crew operations in both aeroplanes and helicopters.

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