



## Blue Sky Educational Foundation

### Fact Sheet

#### About

Blue Sky Educational Foundation (BSEF), in partnership with like-minded individuals and organizations, uses aviation experiences to inspire young people to consider careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and to promote aerospace leadership.

By partnering with some of the nation's largest and most prestigious aviation groups, BSEF is able to provide scholarships to promising students and give them opportunities to learn the passion of flight first-hand.

#### Scholarships

BSEF's main scholarship program offers students the opportunity to attend the EAA Air Academy summer camps.

The Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) hosts a variety of summer academies in Oshkosh, Wisconsin that coincide with AirVenture Oshkosh, the famous fly-in that attracts over 10,000 aircraft from all over the world. As BSEF's key program, the EAA Air Academy introduces young people to all aspects of aviation, including airplane rides. BSEF provides scholarships to the following EAA programs:

**EAA Young Eagle Air Academy (Ages 12-13)** – The EAA Young Eagle camp is designed as an introduction to the wonderful world of aviation. This new program will use small group activities and close counselor relationships to present the basics of flight in a “science camp” format that is a unique combination of fun and discovery.

**EAA Basic Air Academy (Ages 14-15)** – The EAA Basic Air Academy is the next exciting step through the world of aviation. Each “hands-on” activity is developed for the intermediate student. Activities include classroom and media presentations, specialized laboratory activities and aviation-related demonstrations.

**EAA Advanced Air Academy (Ages 16-18)** – The EAA Advanced Air Academy provides an atmosphere where mature students become totally immersed in the world of flight. Ground instruction and introductory recreation flight experiences highlight this action-packed camp. It combines “in-the-air” and “on-the-ground” hands-on activities. The camp also includes full participation in EAA AirVenture Oshkosh.

**EAA Advanced Air Academy/SportAir (Ages 16-19)** – The EAA Air Academy/SportAir camp provides an opportunity for mature students to become totally immersed in the world of flight. The camp focuses on aircraft construction, primarily composite and fabric techniques. Ground instruction and introductory recreation flight experiences also highlight the meaningful camp.

[www.blueskyfoundation.org](http://www.blueskyfoundation.org)



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why was Blue Sky Educational Foundation (BSEF) founded?**

Blue Sky Educational Foundation was founded to inspire young people toward careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) by providing them opportunities to experience aviation excitement first-hand. By partnering with like-minded individuals and organizations, Blue Sky offers scholarship opportunities to students who would otherwise be unable to attend aviation-focused camps and receive STEM education. Blue Sky also promotes STEM education in schools through the Aim Higher program.

### **What does BSEF provide that other organizations don't?**

Blue Sky Educational Foundation is unique in that it supports STEM education both in the classroom and "in the field" through aviation organizations and summer camps, such as the EAA Flight Academy. Blue Sky provides exciting aviation experiences that boost students' exposure to STEM learning and kindle lifelong aviation interest.

### **What programs does BSEF sponsor?**

Blue Sky Educational Foundation directly sponsors the EAA Flight Academy and the Aim Higher education curriculum. Blue Sky is gradually rolling out the programs into additional schools and regions across the nation. Students interested in applying for scholarships to organizations that are not directly sponsored by Blue Sky should contact those organizations directly.

### **In what cities or states are BSEF programs available?**

Currently, Blue Sky Educational Foundation awards scholarships in North Texas and Taos, New Mexico. The Aim Higher curriculum has been implemented in middle schools in both Florida and Taos, New Mexico. The EAA Flight Academy takes place in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

### **How many students have you supported with past scholarships and where are they from?**

To date, Blue Sky Educational Foundation has sponsored nearly 100 students to attend the EAA Flight Academy. Sponsored students have come from all areas of the United States.

### **How does a student get selected to participate in the summer camps?**

Students are selected for scholarships based upon their letters of application in addition to letters of recommendation from teachers and administrators. Students interested in applying for scholarships should submit written requests and recommendations to Lee Siudzinski at [Lee@BlueSkyFoundation.org](mailto:Lee@BlueSkyFoundation.org). Physical letters can be mailed to 100 North Main, #609 Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901.

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## **Frequently Asked Questions Continued**

### **What is the connection between aviation and STEM learning?**

Science, technology, engineering and math are essential to the advancement of society; however they are often daunting and/or “unpopular” subjects in school. By introducing students to STEM through aviation, Blue Sky Educational Foundation hopes young minds will be captivated by the imagination and excitement of flights and transfer their passion into other STEM focus areas, both in the classroom and in their careers.

### **Have any prior scholarship students gone on to pursue aviation or other STEM-related careers?**

Many students who have been sponsored by the founders of Blue Sky Educational Foundation have gone on to pursue STEM in college and in their careers. For example, students have studied subjects such as physics and aerospace engineering at universities, and many go on to become EAA members themselves.

### **When will BSEF extend the Aim Higher program to other schools?**

Blue Sky is currently working with additional school districts in New Mexico and Texas specifically. We will continue to post news and updates on our BSEF News Page.

### **Is BSEF seeking donations from other individuals and/or groups?**

Blue Sky welcomes donations from all individuals and interest groups. All donations go directly to student scholarships. Upon receiving donations, we evaluate student needs and allocate the resources accordingly. If you have any further questions about the donation process or how BSEF handles donations, please contact Lee Siudzinski at [Lee@BlueSkyFoundation.org](mailto:Lee@BlueSkyFoundation.org).

## **Leadership**

### **Founder – Jim Thompson**

Aviation has held particular interest for Jim Thompson for many years. He began supporting aviation through his family foundation about six years ago. Through his philanthropic experiences, they concluded that a foundation focused on connecting young students with aviation could yield efficient and satisfactory outcomes for students, donors, schools and organizations.

Jim flew his first solo flight in a glider when he was 14 years old and his passion for aviation continues to thrive. He remains excited to foster a love of flying in students as well.

Jim is president and CEO of ORIX USA and is responsible for managing ORIX Corporation’s operations in the United States. Jim also serves as the president of ORIX Foundation, which provides basic needs to children and families in the communities where ORIX USA employees live and work.

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### **Executive Director – Lee Siudzinski**

An aviation enthusiast and seasoned education professional, Lee Siudzinski serves as Blue Sky Educational Foundation’s executive director. In this role, Lee is responsible for day-to-day operations, including donor relations, student relations and the management of funds.

Prior to BSEF, Lee worked as the superintendent for two Wisconsin school districts. During that time, Lee also directed education outreach and student scholarships to EAA, where he met and worked with Jim and Angela Thompson. At EAA, Lee helped fund and open an elementary aviation charter school in Oshkosh, and he continues to be involved as an educational consultant for the school.

Lee has held his commercial pilot’s license for many years, and he flies his Cherokee 180 on a regular basis.

### **Contact Blue Sky Educational Foundation**

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### **Social Media**

Twitter – @BSEFoundation

### **Communication Contacts**

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