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EAA’S GATHERING OF EAGLES STRENGTHENS ‘ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING’

Aviation, Hollywood and industry notables team together for youth

EAA AVIATION CENTER, OSHKOSH, Wis. — (Aug. 19, 2009) — Actors Harrison Ford and Cliff Robertson were among aviation enthusiasts and industry leaders who helped make the Experimental Aircraft Association’s Gathering of Eagles fundraiser July 30 a great success. The event’s proceeds of \$1.9 million will benefit EAA’s inspirational and educational programs that introduce young people to aviation, emphasize math and science, and strengthen the future of aviation.

The gala’s theme, “Attitude is Everything,” reflected the camaraderie and enthusiasm of the 1,100 attendees at this sold-out event, held during EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2009. Each year, this unique charitable event brings together leaders of the aviation industry who set aside competitive interests to collaborate on opening the doors to the future for tomorrow’s aviation leaders, engineers, innovators, and pioneers. Also joining this group of corporate leaders are aviation enthusiasts and Hollywood celebrities who share a deep passion for flight.

Three auctions were part of the fundraiser: silent, live and “presidential choice.” They included a winning \$250,000 bid for a custom-made AV-X10 Ford Mustang GT. This one-of-a-kind vehicle, designed specifically as a Ford Motor Company donation to support EAA’s Young Eagles program, was named the “Dearborn Doll” in tribute to the incredible work of top Ford engineers and designers who crafted the car in honor of WWII aircraft. Automotive personalities Jack Roush and Carroll Shelby were in attendance to congratulate the car collector, Tom Gonzales of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., on his top bid.

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In addition, the shoes and jacket worn by US Airways Flight 1549 First Officer Jeff Skiles the day he helped safely land the airliner on the Hudson River were a hot ticket item. The items drew in a generous \$38,000 bid, which was promptly matched by Airbus to double the total. Lunch with Harrison Ford and aviation great Bob Hoover, combined with a flight with airshow great Sean Tucker, brought cheers from the crowd and attracted a bid of \$50,000. Other donated auction items included unique trips, flight experiences, a guitar fashioned from pieces of the famed Red Tail aircraft of the Tuskegee airmen, an artistically mounted jet fan-blade from a General Electric engine, Airbus simulator time, plus artwork, autographed material and an array of aviation items.

In addition to auction items, attendees had the opportunity to match a challenge gift of \$100,000 to “Light the Fire” of imagination in the hearts and minds of our youth. The challenge triggered more than \$300,000 in donations, as individuals and companies pledged to support EAA programs and experiences that annually reach more than 70,000 young people throughout the nation. EAA depends on the generosity of attendees to make youths’ aviation dreams come true. Aviation becomes a tool that promotes learning, motivates achievement, builds personal responsibility, and teaches young people that, in all things, their own attitude and commitment to hard work and charting their course will determine their ability to achieve their goals.

Among the event’s other notable attendees were Bud Anderson, a WWII triple ace; Wil Shriner, famed comedian; Bob Hoover, former air show pilot and US Air Force test pilot; Aaron Tippin, country music artist; and His Royal Highness Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, a member of the Saudi royal family; all of whom helped build the significance and the impact of the night.

EAA embodies the spirit of aviation through the world’s most engaged community of aviation enthusiasts. EAA’s 160,000 members and 1,000 local chapters enjoy the fun and camaraderie of sharing their passion for flying, building and restoring recreational aircraft. For more information on EAA and its programs, call 800-JOIN-EAA (800-564-6322) or go to www.eaa.org.