



GIRLS CHECK OUT AVIATION CAREERS AT RDU

News / Airlines



The **aviation** industry has a stereotype that's hard to shake: Men become pilots and women become flight attendants.

To get more **girls** interested in flight – and flight-related jobs on the ground – Raleigh-Durham International Airport hosted Girls In Aviation Day on Saturday.

"It's just not the first thing that girls may think of," said Jenn Nash, a pilot and member of Women In Aviation International, which organized similar events around the world from Cameroon to Switzerland.

Women like Nash are a rarity in the cockpit: She says only about 3 percent of commercial airline pilots are female.

Saturday's event gave more than 50 young girls a chance to sit behind the controls of a Civil Air Patrol search plane. They got to try on the uniforms of civilian and military flight roles and hear

from women whose **careers** are in the sky.

Women are also underrepresented in crucial support roles on the ground. Carol Williams gave tours of her workplace, the TAC Air terminal and hangar at RDU's General Aviation division.

TAC Air is a fixed base operator, or FBO, which services and houses private airplanes. It's where celebrities and other wealthy people land when their jets arrive at RDU – an aspect of Williams' job in customer service that had many of the girls impressed.

"We do get to meet and see a lot of famous people that come through here," she told the girls, pointing out a \$65 million jet she said is similar to planes used by singers Taylor Swift and Katy Perry.

The hangar tour included a stop in TAC Air's repair shop, where mechanics were busy installing a new Rolls-Royce engine on a jet.

"There are so many admin jobs" at an FBO, Williams said.

Participants at Girls In Aviation Day also heard from some of the less visible groups in the field. Air traffic controllers and volunteers in the Civil Air Patrol explained their work. The air patrol is the Air Force's civilian auxiliary. In addition to emergency response missions, the Civil Air Patrol offers cadet programs for teens – a starting place for many aspiring pilots.

Saturday marked the first time RDU has hosted the event, and Nash said groups from across the aviation industry were eager to pitch in.

Until the field gets a more equal gender balance, the women of aviation have to work hard, Williams said.

"You have to have a tough skin, because you're competing against 95 percent men," she said. "But we can be anything we want to in aviation."

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