



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OPENING DAY OF FIRST FLIGHT CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
DESIGNED TO EDUCATE AND INSPIRE YOUTH

Friday, December 12 is a non-ticketed, free day

KILL DEVIL HILLS, NC, (October 31, 2003) – Event organizers have announced plans for the kick-off day for the First Flight Centennial Celebration at Wright Brothers National Memorial on Friday, December 12. Themed “Igniting the Imagination”, this free, non-ticketed day will feature exhibits, speakers and entertainment designed to inspire the next generation of aviators by engaging children of all ages in the power of flight.

The day’s highlights include the Raleigh Boychoir singing the National Anthem at opening ceremonies; a greeting by North Carolina’s First Lady Mary Easley; appearances by Wright Family children; an uplink to the International Space Station provided by NASA; Grammy award-winning pop superstar Michelle Branch on the Main Stage at 1 p.m.; Candy Bomber demonstrations and the Afterburner Youth “Flight Plan for Life” program.

“The First Flight Centennial Celebration is especially excited to announce the programming for our opening day in which we celebrate the eventful first century of aviation and inspire our youth to follow in the footsteps of Wilbur and Orville Wright,” said Kim Sawyer, Program Administrator, North Carolina First Flight Centennial Commission. “We encourage school groups who haven’t done so to make their arrangements now to attend this great day at Wright Brothers National Memorial. They can do this by visiting our website, www.firstflightcentennial.org and then click on the school groups link.”

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First Flight Centennial Celebration Kickoff to Inspire Youth

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The day's opening ceremonies will feature the award-winning Raleigh Boychoir. Founded in 1968, the choir provides a rich musical experience for boys aged nine to fifteen in the greater Raleigh area, with eighty singers making up the three performing and training choirs. The Raleigh Boychoir performs a demanding repertoire from sacred and secular classics, musical theatre, and American folk and patriotic music, and performs 15-20 concerts annually. They have performed at the White House, Carnegie Hall, the World's Fair, the American Choral Directors Association, and Washington National Cathedral. International tours have taken them to Austria, Germany, England, Belgium, The Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy, where they performed for Pope John Paul II. The choir recently toured in Scotland, England and France, with a performance at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

Keith Yoerg, 13, of Edina, Minnesota will represent the Wright Family on December 12. The great-great-grandnephew of Wilbur and Orville Wright has displayed much of his ancestors' scientific prowess and shares their enthusiasm for flight. Keith is an EAA Young Eagle and hopes one day to become an astronaut and qualify for the Mars Mission.

On-site exhibits are filled with interactive activities to educate visitors and engage them in the wonders of flight. Confirmed on-site exhibitors for the six-day celebration include the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); the United States Air Force; the United States Coast Guard; the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA); the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA); the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA); Dare County Schools; the United States Postal Service, and the First Flight Society.

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First Flight Centennial Celebration Kickoff to Inspire Youth

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In addition, the First Flight Centennial Pavilion will feature its current exhibits from NASA, the United States Air Force, The Outer Banks History Center, General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) and North Carolina's First Flight Centennial Commission. The park's Visitor Center will house an exhibit of Wright brothers' artifacts from the Museo Aeronautico Gianni Caproni in Italy. Additional exhibits will be announced as they are confirmed. NASA's uplink to the International Space Station is scheduled for 12 noon.

The 1 p.m. Main Stage Entertainment for the day features pop phenomenon Michelle Branch. The 20-year-old Arizona native has enjoyed great success in her singing career, starting with her acoustic based self-released "Broken Bracelet" in 2000. Her major label debut "The Spirit Room", featuring songs written and performed solely by Branch, sold over 2.5 million records and produced four top-ten hits, and made the Billboard Top 100 list for 82 weeks. Her latest album, "Hotel Paper" was released in June. Branch has toured with Sheryl Crow, the Dixie Chicks, opened for B.B. King, Hanson and Jackson Browne and recently recorded the smash duet "The Game of Love" with Carlos Santana.

Michelle Branch joins the big-name line-up of Main Stage entertainment acts for the First Flight Centennial Celebration that includes The Beach Boys (December 13); The Temptations (December 14); Aaron Tippin (December 15); and Lee Greenwood (December 16).

An historic component of Friday's celebration is the Candy Bomber demonstration, in which Berlin Airlift pilot Lieutenant Gail Halvorsen will recreate his candy drop over Wright Brothers National Memorial. Between the years of 1948 and 1949, Halvorsen was so struck with the friendliness and excitement of the Berlin children that he wanted to do something special for them and to spread a little cheer to their beleaguered times in Berlin during the blockade. Halvorsen decided to start "Operation Little Vittles" by buying all the available candy where he was based, and attaching it to miniature parachutes he made out of cloth strips.

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First Flight Centennial Celebration Kickoff to Inspire Youth

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At the beginning, Lt. Halvorson's friends gave up their rations of candy and gum and also their handkerchiefs to help the cause. The American Confectioners Association sent tons of candy and gum to Westover AFB for processing. Twenty-two schools in Chicopee, Massachusetts converted an old fire station into a "Little Vittles" headquarters. They made parachutes, tied on candy or gum and sent the finished product to Halvorsen at Rhine Main Air Force Base in Germany, and Halvorsen's squadron then air dropped the candy over the city of Berlin (including East Berlin until the Russians told them to stop) to the eagerly waiting children. By January of 1949 they had air dropped more than 250,000 parachutes loaded with candy on the city of Berlin bringing a little joy to the nearly 100,000 children of Berlin during the Russian blockade. News of this also spread to the U.S. government and Lt. Halvorsen was chosen to receive the Cheney Award for the year of 1948.

Afterburner, Inc., a group of men and women fighter pilots who have trained over 2 million executives from Fortune 500 companies on how to execute flawlessly in the workplace will participate in Friday's program with their Flight Plan for Life multimedia presentation at the First Flight Centennial Pavilion. The program, sponsored by Bank of America, shows young people how fighter pilots accelerate the learning process and avoid costly mistakes by keeping the awareness of consequences at the forefront of their minds. A fly-by of the Afterburner jet will take place at the beginning of the event. After several other fly-bys, the jet will land and be on display with one of their fighter pilots.

While December 12 is a non-ticketed day, tickets are still available for December 13-16 for \$10 per day. December 17 is sold out. Information about tickets and other December centennial events is available at www.firstflightcentennial.org. First Flight Centennial Celebration tickets, visit www.wrightbrothers.reserveworld.com, or call (800) 973-7327 or (301) 722-1257 (for callers outside the United States) between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. Eastern standard time.

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