

A collage of bald eagles in flight against a blue sky and a canyon landscape. The eagles are shown in various poses, some soaring high and others flying closer to the viewer. The background features a deep canyon with layered rock formations in shades of red, orange, and brown. The overall scene is vibrant and dynamic, capturing the essence of the eagles' natural habitat.

SPRING 2026

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

GATHERING OF EAGLES FOUNDATION

@GOE_FOUNDATION1982



TABLE OF **CONTENTS**

- 02** **EAGLE CLASS 2026**
Meet the Eagles
- 11** **GOE FOUNDATION 2026**
Fundraising Updates
- 12** **SCHOLARSHIPS**
Donations and Sponsorship
- 13** **GOEF SILENT AUCTION**
Access to exclusive memorabilia

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COL (RET) EILEEN COLLINS

Colonel Eileen Collins, US Air Force Retired, is a pioneering aviator whose career redefined the role of women in military and space aviation. After commissioning in 1978, she broke barriers as one of the first women to attend Air Force pilot training at Vance Air Force Base [Oklahoma]. She excelled as a T-38 instructor and a C-141 commander before earning a spot at the elite US Air Force Test Pilot School. Directly following her graduation in Class 89B, NASA selected her for the astronaut program in 1990. Collins quickly made history, becoming the first woman to pilot a Space Shuttle during STS-63 in 1995. In 1999, she reached another milestone as the first female Shuttle Commander for STS-93, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross for her leadership and airmanship, and later commanding the high-stakes "Return to Flight" mission (STS-114) in 2005 after the Columbia disaster. With over 6,750 flight hours and 38 days in space, Collins remains a definitive trailblazer, bridging the gap between the flightline and the stars.

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CW5 (RET) DOUGLAS ENGLN

Chief Warrant Officer Five Douglas Englen, US Army Retired, served a distinguished Army career spanning over 34 years. During this time, he flew more than 7,000 rotary wing flight hours and over 2,500 combat missions during 34 combat deployments in support of US Special Operations Forces and Coalition Partners. As a member of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment "Nightstalkers", he piloted the longest helicopter air assault in military history in 2001 on the first night of the war in Afghanistan, and served as lead Air Planner and pilot for Operation Neptune Spear, the Special Operations raid against Osama bin Laden. His actions have earned him two Silver Stars and three Distinguished Flying Crosses. CW5 Englen retired in 2020 after 34 years of service and his tactical expertise, courage under fire, dedication to the mission, and unwavering leadership have had a lasting impact on military aviation.

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SQ LDR (RET) JOHN PETERS

John Peters, Royal Air Force Retired, is a former Squadron Leader, combat veteran, and internationally respected speaker on leadership, resilience, and human performance. He came to global attention during the First Gulf War in 1991 after being shot down while flying a Tornado GR1 and subsequently held as a prisoner of war for 47 days, an experience that made him a powerful symbol of resilience under extreme adversity. During his RAF career, he served as an instructor pilot and later led Ministry of Defense programs focused on leadership, safety, and human error in aviation. Since leaving the RAF, John has founded a successful international consultancy, authored best-selling books, contributed to award-nominated documentaries, and continues to advise senior leaders across corporate, public, and charitable sectors, translating lessons from combat and captivity into practical insights on performance, trust, and mental well-being.

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FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL



JESSICA COX

Jessica Cox is a trailblazer who has spent her life challenging the limits placed on disability. Born without arms in 1983, she learned to perform everyday tasks with her feet and went on to achieve what many thought impossible—becoming the world's first armless licensed pilot in 2008 and redefining what is possible in aviation. A Taekwondo black belt, psychology graduate, author, and global speaker, Jessica shares her story to encourage resilience, courage, and self-belief, inspiring audiences to challenge limitations and embrace adaptability, leadership, and confidence. Her journey stands as a powerful reminder that determination and creativity can overcome even the greatest barriers.

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FRED HAISE

Fred Haise is a former astronaut best known as the Lunar Module Pilot for Apollo 13. He started out as a United States Marine Corps and Air National Guard fighter pilot, transitioning to NASA as a research pilot before becoming a member of astronaut class five. After the Apollo program, he completed test flights for the upcoming space shuttle program, piloting three free-fall-to-landing flights of the Enterprise. After NASA, he worked as the Vice President of Space Programs and later President of Technical Services for Grumman. After retirement, Fred has continued to contribute to the science community as an advocate for education and exploration. In 2025, Fred gave over 80 talks to students around the world and is heavily involved with the INFINITY Science Center in his home state of Mississippi, inspiring the next generation to look to the stars. He is a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

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CAPT (RET) WILLIAM ROBINSON

Captain William “Bill” Robinson, US Air Force Retired, is the longest-held enlisted Prisoner of War in U.S. military history. He raised his right hand in 1961 and went where the mission demanded, ultimately deploying to Southeast Asia in 1965 as a rescue helicopter crewmember on the HH-43B Huskie, flying into danger for one purpose: that others may live. On 20 September 1965, that purpose became his greatest challenge yet. During a combat rescue attempt for a downed F-105 pilot over Laos, Robinson’s Huskie crashed after taking fire, and the crew was captured. What followed was not a chapter, but an era: 2,703 days of captivity, coercion, isolation, and brutal deprivation that would have broken most people. In 1973, during Operation Homecoming, Bill Robinson returned to the United States after nearly eight years as a POW. Following his release, Robinson received a commission and continued his service to his country. He continued serving, ultimately retiring in 1984 as a captain after 22 years of service. Bill Robinson has spent the last few decades doing what great leaders do: turning suffering into purpose, and reminding every audience that resilience is not a slogan; it is a decision. He has been awarded the Air Force Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star, and two Purple Hearts.

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COL (RET) WIN DEPOORTER

Colonel Win DePoorter, US Air Force Retired, is a distinguished Command Pilot, served 28 years in the U.S. Air Force, accumulating over 6,500 flying hours. Commissioned in 1957, he made aviation history early in his career as the first pilot to successfully survive an ejection using the F-106's complex rocket-propelled ejection seat in 1961. DePoorter is highly renowned for his Vietnam service, where he flew a record 657 combat missions in the A-1 Skyraider and was instrumental in developing "Sandy" search and rescue tactics to provide close air support for helicopter rescue operations. He notably flew 23 search and rescue missions over North Vietnam. Later, he realized his ambition of commanding a fighter squadron, leading the 525th Tactical Fighter Squadron in Germany, before retiring as Vice-Commander of USAF-Civil Air Patrol National Headquarters in 1985. His decorations include two Silver Stars, five Distinguished Flying Crosses, and a Bronze Star.

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COL (RET) JOSEPH PETERBURS

Colonel Joseph Peterburs, US Air Force Retired, served in the U.S. Army Air Corps and U.S. Air Force from 1942 to 1979. He flew 49 combat missions in WWII as a fighter pilot in the P-51 Mustang with the 8th Air Force. He shot down a top German Ace before getting shot down himself and became a POW near Berlin, from which he escaped and spent time fighting with a Russian Tank Unit. He later flew an additional 76 missions during the Korean War and held key Cold War and Vietnam command and operational roles, including assignments with NORAD, NATO, and the Royal Air Force. Over a 36-year career, Peterburs accumulated 4,000 flight hours and is the recipient of two Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts.

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GEN (RET) JACQUELINE VAN OVOST

General Jacqueline Van Ovost, US Air Force Retired, is a trailblazing air mobility and logistics leader whose 36-year career culminated as the 14th Commander of U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM). General Van Ovost is a command pilot and graduate of the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School, having logged more than 4,200 flight hours in over 30 aircraft and previously commanded an air refueling squadron, a flying training wing, the Presidential Airlift Wing, and Air Mobility Command. As commander of USTRANSCOM, she oversaw historic global operations from the Afghanistan evacuation to large-scale support to Ukraine and other partners, embodying innovation, joint teamwork, and the decisive power of mobility.



The Gathering of Eagles Foundation is nearing an exciting milestone in our effort to support youth across Alabama’s River Region. This year, our goal is to raise \$25,000 in scholarships to help local students attend STEM camps that inspire curiosity, innovation, and a passion for aviation and science.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we have already reached more than 80% of our goal. With just a little more support, we can ensure that more students, many of whom might not otherwise have the opportunity, can participate in these transformative programs.

Upcoming sales of this year’s Gathering of Eagles book and commemorative lithograph will also help us close the gap. Every contribution moves us closer to the finish line and invests in the next generation of innovators, aviators, and leaders. Together, we can ensure that opportunity takes flight.



GOE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS



The Gathering of Eagles (GOE) Foundation is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that provides opportunities for Alabama River Region youth who are interested in STEM-related careers through scholarships to Redtails Flight Academy, Space Camp, Civil Air Patrol, and JROTC. Consider donating or sponsoring a scholarship.

LEGACY IN FLIGHT

SILENT AUCTION INCLUDING LIMITED, SIGNED ARTIFACTS FROM
DISTINGUISHED EAGLES AND OTHER UNIQUE ITEMS

This is your opportunity to own a tangible piece of history while simultaneously contributing to the empowerment of future generations. Honoring heritage and supporting progress ensures you play a crucial role in shaping a future as rich and vibrant as the past we all cherish.

YOUR PARTICIPATION

- PRESERVES AVIATION HERITAGE
- HONORS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE
- INVESTS IN THE NEXT GENERATION

SCAN FOR ENTRY TO A CONTINUATION OF LEGACY



**BIDDING IS NOW OPEN AND
CLOSES 6 MAY 8:45PM**