

WEST MICHIGAN AVIATION ACADEMY

FOUNDATION



Winter 2024
Alumni Update

Reconnect with Classmates at the 13TH Annual *Leaders of Tomorrow Gala!*

This is our signature annual fundraiser in support of WMAA programs and students. We've arranged special pricing and extra events for our alumni so that you can celebrate all the great things happening at your alma mater!




Hope Johnson, Class of 2018, speaking at the 2023 Gala.

Leaders of Tomorrow Gala: Thursday, May 9, 2024

WMAA graduates can purchase up to two (2) tickets at the special alumni price of \$100 per ticket. You can mingle with friends during the reception and enjoy the program from your alumni seating area. **Seating is limited, so register soon.** **Registration deadline is April 15, 2024.**



 Register online using the QR code
or visit wmaafoundation.org/alumni

Alumni Event: Friday, May 10, 2024

We invite our alumni Gala attendees to join us for coffee and donuts as you reconnect with WMAA staff and former classmates. You'll also have the chance to tour WMAA and see how we continue to grow.

Registration is easy. When you're registering for the Gala, just check the box that says, "Yes, I would like to attend on May 10!" We'll send out more details in April.

Please Support Your School

You've experienced firsthand the amazing opportunities WMAA offers to students. Donor gifts of all sizes help make those opportunities possible. We welcome and appreciate all gifts. You may give online at wmaafoundation.org/donate, or use the enclosed remittance envelope.

Stay Connected!



Register for updates at wmaafoundation.org/alumni



Follow us on Instagram (@wmaafoundation)



Attend the annual *Leaders of Tomorrow Gala*

Family & Alumni Engagement Committee

Jeff England, WMAA Parent

Larry Fisher, Retired Dean of Students,

WMAA Foundation Board Vice President

Meggan George, Director of Development & Marketing

Taylor Hall, Class of 2020

Dawn Norman, WMAA Parent

Terry Russell, WMAA Parent,

WMAA Foundation Board President

Winston Weibel, Class of 2018



Catching Up With Tori Gann and Justin Teegardin



After graduating in 2015, Tori attended Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City. She earned her ratings and instructed for two years, then signed up with Northern Jet to fly business aviation in 2019. Justin Teegardin, class of 2016, attended Western Michigan University for the same reason, and then logged hours by instructing. He joined Northern Jet in late 2022.

It was an unanticipated surprise to both Tori and Justin when they were able to pilot a flight together on April 26, 2023. “We saw each other on the schedule, but you don’t get to pick your crew,” Justin notes. “I saw an opening for April 26 and decided to fly instead of taking the day off. It was a fantastic surprise to see Tori in the captain’s seat!”

Why Business Aviation?

For Tori, business aviation is about the customer experience. “We serve some of the same customers regularly, but also have many first-time business flyers aboard,” she notes. “I love to make their experience fantastic. Whether I’m taking photos on someone’s first flight, handling bags, doing flight briefings, or flying, I love the interaction and the whole customer experience that we create.”

First Officer Justin Teegardin (L) with Captain Tori Gann (R)

Justin agrees, but is quick to point out the lure of variety as well. “I love the newness of business aviation,” he says. “You’re always flying to different destinations. That means exploring routes and runways and experiencing new challenges.”

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Ben Rich, Class of 2018

We Would Love to Hear From You!



As you may recall, donor support is essential to the incredible opportunities that WMAA provides. More than 1,000 WMAA graduates have spread throughout the country since 2010, pursuing careers and fulfilling the dreams they cultivated while at WMAA. Our donors love to hear how graduates leverage those experiences after high school. Your updates and success stories inspire more gifts, as donors see our graduates pursue fantastic career opportunities in a variety of disciplines.



Josh Nienhaus, Class of 2014

You can help us tell our story through your story. Please visit wmaafoundation.org/alumni to learn about the Alumni Engagement Committee, find updates about former students, and sign up for email updates. If you’re willing to let donors know how you’ve built on your WMAA education, just check the box, “Yes, I’m willing to share my story in WMAA Foundation promotional materials. Please contact me.”



Parker Tyson, Class of 2015

And remember...by connecting with us, you’re also reconnecting to the entire alumni network. As you can see in the story about Tori and Justin above, you just never know when a fellow WMAA student might appear on your career radar. These graduates are fantastic people to know and stay connected with after high school.

Connect and share at wmaafoundation.org/alumni



Garrett Willsea, Class of 2021
(with mom, Holly)



Brian Erhardt, Class of 2014