



WEST MICHIGAN
AVIATION ACADEMY

For Immediate Release
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Grand Rapids, MI – May 17, 2019: West Michigan Aviation Academy (WMAA) is pleased to host author Keith O'Brien for a discussion and book signing on Tuesday, May 21 at 1:30pm.

"Fly Girls: How Five Daring Women Defied All Odds and Made Aviation History" is the story of five female aviators who fought to compete against men in the high-stakes air races of the 1920s and 30s...and won. "Mr. O'Brien reached out to us and asked if he could visit our school," says George Pavey, Dean of Aviation. "He had heard about us, and specifically about two of our graduates, Tori Gann and Oakley Clay, who are competing in the 2019 Air Race Classic this summer. He thought it would be great to connect the heroes of the 20s and 30s to young women in aviation today, and we agreed with him!"

Women's air racing started in 1929 with the Women's Air Derby. Twenty pilots raced from Santa Monica, CA to Cleveland, OH, site of the National Air Races. The early air races were the "on to" type, with noon and night control stops, and the contestants more or less stayed together. In that manner, weather and flying conditions were practically the same for each entrant and the race officials could release standings to the media after each day of racing. Today's races allow pilots to plan their own routes and timing, and they fly with a handicap based on their plane's speed. The race winner is not known until the last participant finishes.

WMAA was founded in 2010 to help fill the worldwide shortage of pilots and aviation-related specialists. It is a public charter school, open to all students. "We project that by the end of this school year, we will have graduated 81 students with a private pilot license," continues Pavey. "Our student body is approximately two-thirds young men and one-third young ladies. Hundreds of our students have gone into careers in aviation, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and robotics. Our students are excited about the opportunity to pursue high-growth career opportunities beginning in high school."

The book signing is free and open to the public. Author Keith O'Brien will do a brief presentation about his book, and then invite Tori and Oakley to the stage for a Q&A. Books will be available at the event for purchase and signing. WMAA is located at 5363 44th St, on the campus of Gerald R. Ford International Airport.

About West Michigan Aviation Academy: WMAA is a tuition-free public charter high school located on the campus of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. WMAA is the only high school in the nation where a student can earn a private pilot license as part of the high school curriculum. With a curriculum rich in aviation, STEM (science, technology, engineering, math), and robotics, WMAA provides a unique educational opportunity for students to focus specifically on high-growth employment fields during their high school education. This better equips them to pursue higher education or technical degrees, and find employment in their chosen field. Learn more at www.westmichiganaviation.org.

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