

# HORIZONS

Views and Perspectives from  
WEST MICHIGAN  
AVIATION ACADEMY

Winter 2022

## You Are Always Able to Help

Theoretically, we all have 24 hours in each day. However, there are probably very few people who put as much into every one of those hours as Eliana Tucker does!

Let's start with the fact that she chose WMAA because she wanted to be challenged. "I love school," she says. "I'm not interested in aviation, but I'm really fascinated by biomedical engineering. I also like computer science. My brother's WMAA experience showed me that this was where I wanted to be."

But then there's more. Eliana is also an accomplished ballet dancer. "I got into dance when I was in first grade," she recalls. "I was really bad! But I stayed with it, and now it's my passion." Eliana is dancing with the Grand Rapids Junior Ballet this semester, and the time commitment is staggering. "It's a little challenging to fit it all in," Eliana admits. "It's pretty normal for me to leave the house at 7:00am and not get home until 9:00pm, sometimes six or seven days a week. During performances of *The Nutcracker* in December, I was literally trying to study for exams between shows!"

### Volunteering Matters

It would be easy for someone as talented and busy as Eliana to focus solely on herself, but she also has a big heart for serving others. She's on the Youth Action Board for Kids Food Basket, and spends some of her precious free hours there packing lunches for kids. "I got really interested in this organization when I learned how malnutrition can affect a child's IQ and learning ability," she notes. "It's not fair for kids to miss opportunities simply because they don't have food, so I'm doing something about it."

She is a volunteer for her church's children's ministry, and she started a book club at WMAA so that she could share her love of reading with other students. "I have to squeeze reading in before bed, but I love it," she admits. "It's my way of winding down at night."

Eliana appreciates WMAA's emphasis on volunteering. "The graduation requirement made me look into ways to volunteer, but now I do it on my own," she explains. "Math and science are important, but volunteering makes you a well-rounded person. It shows you why you are doing everything else. And I've learned that you're always able to help in some way, no matter what skills you have."

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Kindness, talent and intelligence all come together in Eliana Tucker.



## Why Do We Need Your Support?

You may think that a charter public school receives all the money it needs from the state. And it's true that we do receive a per-pupil stipend to cover traditional high school courses like English, math and history. However, we provide educational opportunities above and beyond what can be found in other high schools. Those opportunities require an investment of approximately \$1,300 per student, per year. That's why we need your support.

Gifts from generous donors who believe in our mission allow us to elevate student experiences in powerful ways, including:

-  Comprehensive aviation program, with three school airplanes, drones, Build a Plane, and much more
-  Competitive VEX robotics teams
-  Cutting-edge courses such as Biomedical Science

## New Opportunities

We continue to evaluate the needs of our students and the ways in which we can help them fully leverage their high school experiences. We have identified two opportunities that we believe will make a lasting impact on our students.

The first is **mental health support**. Students today face a tremendous amount of pressure. Yes, COVID has made it tougher, no doubt. But even prior to the pandemic, the challenges of peer pressure, educational attainment, family life and other factors definitely created a high-stress environment for teenagers. We know that helping students maintain mental health will pay huge dividends for them now and into the future. We would like to partner with our donors to help support our school's full-time mental health specialist.

The second opportunity for donor impact is in our **biomedical engineering program**. This exciting field involves applying the principles and problem-solving techniques of engineering to biology, medicine, and human health. Practitioners must understand bio-electrics (such as how the human heart beats), bio-mechanics (how tissues work together) and the physics of forces and materials. Then they use that knowledge to design human-centered products for a specific market niche.

Biomedical engineering is a relatively new and complex field of study. In fact, it's so new that very few colleges even offer it. WMAA students leaped to embrace this new field of study when we introduced it in 2019. We would like to expand the course offering to include student-led projects. This will give students the chance to identify a specific project to meet a need, and then work with classmates and faculty to design a solution

## Gearing Up for Student Success



90%  
State Funding



10%  
Philanthropy

## Interested in a Tour?

### See What Your Support Can Do!

Learn more about how your support can help our students through an in-person tour. Please visit [wmaafoundation.org](http://wmaafoundation.org) and click About to register online. Upcoming tour dates:

**Thursday, April 21, 2022 | Tuesday, May 24, 2022**

## In Their Words...

Talk to any WMAA student, regardless of why he or she chose WMAA, and you will quickly discern a note of gratitude. Our students understand and appreciate that their high school experiences are exceptional.

*"Having access to the hands-on experiences and other opportunities at WMAA means so much to me. It makes learning so much fun and easier because hands-on learning is crucial for me to understand and learn, even the hard stuff."*

(Savannah Norman)

*"I continue to be blown away by the experiences I get to have here. I cannot think of another school where students get to fly airplanes, build airplanes, and make robots."*

(anonymous student)

*"It means a lot to be able to have a lot of the opportunities that we have at WMAA. For me the most significant is Build a Plane. It's super cool that I'm able to tell people that I helped build a real life plane that actually flies."*

(Drew Delvaux)

*"Hands-on experiences are more effective in learning for me personally and expose me to what it would be like in the real world, especially when thinking about going down the medical route."*

(Luczi Fleming)



# 11th Annual Leaders of Tomorrow Gala

RISING TO SERVE



## Mark Your Calendar!

Our 11th annual *Leaders of Tomorrow Gala* on May 12, 2022 will provide an evening of engagement and inspiration celebrating WMAA's impact on students and our community. You won't want to miss this signature fundraising event!

In support of this year's theme, "Rising to Serve," we're pleased to welcome Vernice "FlyGirl" Armour, America's first Black female combat pilot, former Marine and police officer.

**Visit [wmaafoundation.org](http://wmaafoundation.org) to learn more or register.**

- Influence our 1,000+ attendees through your sponsorship. Sponsorship commitments are due April 11, 2022 for recognition purposes.
- Individual registrations are due April 29, 2022.

**Title Sponsor: Gulfstream Aerospace**



5363 44th St SE  
Grand Rapids MI 49512



## Where Are They Now?

More than 700 students have graduated from WMAA since 2010. We know they've spread out all over the country and into many different career fields, but we don't know how they are impacting the world.

We're inviting our alumni to reconnect and share their stories. Visit [wmaafoundation.org/alumni](http://wmaafoundation.org/alumni) to get involved!

## Connect With Us Online



[wmaafoundation.org](http://wmaafoundation.org)



[fb.com/WestMIAviationAcademy](https://fb.com/WestMIAviationAcademy)



[@wmaafoundation](https://www.instagram.com/wmaafoundation)

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