



Steele Chapter Sets the Pace

National Awards Highlight a Year of Impact

The D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter was recognized with multiple **national and state-level honors** in fall 2025, reflecting a year of exceptional impact across the National Capital Region and Northern Virginia.

At the AFA National Convention on September 20, the Steele Chapter was named AFA Extra-Large Chapter of the Year and received several **Exceptional Service Awards (ESAs)**.

These included recognition for the **top Communications Program in the Association**, led by **Nicole Chin, VP for Communications**, highlighting the chapter's quarterly newsletter, *AFA in Action* articles, refreshed website, social media outreach, and all-member communications. The chapter also earned ESAs for its expanding partnerships with Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings, including a Financial Readiness Bootcamp, and for its leadership in Advocates Inspiring Military Service (AIMS). Through AIMS, the chapter partnered with the 317th Recruiting Squadron to co-host the first-ever Air Force and Space Force Joint Enlistment Ceremony.



Steele Chapter President Darian "DJ" Padilla.
Photo Credit: Bob Hill.



L to R: Jim Lauducci, Bob Hill, Jim Hannam, Tony Frazier and Johnny Almond. Photo Credit: Unknown.

Additional **individual national awards** were presented at the **Virginia AFA Executive Committee meeting** on November 1. **Tyler Johnson** received the **Medal of Merit** for leading the *Salute to Service* reception honoring the Air Force's 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year. **Tim Tanbonlong**, Virginia AFA Secretary, was also awarded the **Medal of Merit** for his service to the state organization. **Bob Hill**, Steele Chapter Secretary, received an **ESA** for his leadership advancing AIMS in partnership with the 317th Recruiting Squadron, while **Adrian Zollinger** received an **ESA** for his leadership as the squadron commander and for coordinating the unit's partnership with the Steele Chapter. **Lloyd Swede**, VP of the Steele Chapter, received an **individual ESA** for his leadership in revitalizing the chapter—efforts that directly contributed to its selection as **National Extra-Large Chapter of the Year**.

These recognitions reflect the dedication of Steele Chapter members and partners working together in support of Airmen, Guardians, and their families. Thank you for your continued support.

Latest News

Steele Chapter Honors 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year



The 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year for 2025 at AFA's Air, Space & Cyber Conference in National Harbor, Md. Photo Credit: Jud McCrehin, Air & Space Forces Association.

The chapter hosted its Salute to Service event on September 23, continuing AFA's recognition of the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year following the Air, Space & Cyber Conference. The event connected honorees with senior Air Force and AFA leaders—including Assistant Secretary Rich Anderson—and raised funds to expand STEM education programs in Northern Virginia.

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Steele Chapter Hosts Leadership Event for Cadets with Former CMSAF Bass

The chapter hosted its annual Leadership and Salute to Arnold Air event on October 29 in Arlington, VA, connecting cadets, students, and recruiters with senior Air Force leaders, including former CMSAF JoAnne Bass. The program emphasized leadership development, strengthened ties with Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings, and included a \$2,000 grant to the JBAB Top III Association alongside a food drive supporting the JBAB Food Pantry.



L to R: Arnold Air Society Executive Director Jimmy Canlas; retired Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force #19 JoAnne Bass; and students from Arnold Air Society. The group met on October 29 at Nighthawk Pizza in Arlington, Va., for the AFA D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter's annual "Leadership and Salute to Arnold Air" event. Photo Credit: Unknown.

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Steele Chapter Expands Cadet Horizons at Air, Space & Cyber Conference



Photo L-R: Mike Maxwell, Virginia AFA President; Scott Dierlam, SF-JROTC Senior Instructor; SF-JROTC cadets; Bob Hill, Steele Chapter Secretary. Photo Credit: Unknown Airman.

Space Force JROTC cadets from Arlington, VA, gained firsthand exposure to aerospace and national defense at AFA's 2025 Air, Space & Cyber Conference. The Steele Chapter supported nine cadets from the Arlington Career Center, reinforcing an ongoing partnership focused on cadet leadership development and future aerospace careers.

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AFA Member Richard Anderson Confirmed as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force

Sworn in at the AFA National Convention, Col. (Ret.) Richard L. Anderson brings more than 30 years of active-duty experience as a missileer and senior staff officer to his role as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. A lifetime AFA member, he is part of the D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter and served as a Virginia delegate at the convention.



Rich Anderson swears in as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs during a ceremony at the Pentagon on October 6, 2025. Photo Credit: USAF.

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Steele Chapter Expands Cadet Horizons at Air, Space & Cyber Conference



Arnold Air Society cadets pose for a photo with Bob Hill, Chapter Secretary of AFA's D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter, at JBA's 2025 Air Show. Courtesy photo. Photo Credit: Unknown Airman.

The chapter supported the Virginia AFA tent at the Joint Base Andrews Air Show, engaging with more than 150,000 attendees to share AFA's mission of advocacy, education, and support. Chapter volunteers—alongside Arnold Air Society cadets, national AFA staff, and partner chapters—connected with the public, strengthened partnerships, and advanced future STEM outreach initiatives in Northern Virginia.

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Heritage in Action

The Coffey Family's Service Spans Four Generations

The Coffey family represents a four-generation legacy of service to the U.S. Air Force and the broader Air and Space Forces. Maj. Ben "Irish" Coffey, an F-15E Strike Eagle pilot and Chief of Air Staff at the 48th Fighter Wing, exemplified that legacy during Iran's April 2024 drone and missile attack on Israel. Despite a weapons malfunction, Coffey and his weapons systems officer, Capt. Lacie Hester, flew two combat sorties, intercepted six drones, and remained in the fight until the assault ended. For his extraordinary heroism, Coffey received the Silver Star.

The historic mission was later highlighted in the U.S. Air Force documentary *Dangerous Game* and discussed by Coffey at AFA's 2025 Air, Space & Cyber Conference.



The Coffey lineage of service dates back to the Army Air Corps and continues today across military and civilian roles within the Department of the Air Force. Irish's father, retired Col. Ben "Whiz" Coffey, dedicated more than three decades to the Air Force mission and has been a longtime leader and supporter of the Air & Space Forces Association (AFA).

Together, Whiz and Irish are Life Members of AFA, reflecting a multigenerational commitment to service, leadership, and advocacy. The Coffey family's enduring partnership with AFA highlights the organization's role in connecting generations, preserving heritage, and inspiring future Airmen and Guardians to Aim High.