SPRING NEWSLETTER

2025-Extra Large Chapter of the Year

AFA Connects with Future Airmen and Guardians

The AFA Advocates to Inspire Military Service (AIMS) program recently engaged Delayed Entry Program recruits in Margate, Florida, providing future Airmen and Guardians with insights into military service, leadership, and career opportunities.

During the session, recruits learned about the diverse paths available through Air and Space Force service, including the career journey of Carol DiBattiste, a member of the D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter who advanced from enlisted Airman to commissioned officer and later served as Under Secretary of the Air Force.

The event encouraged meaningful discussion and highlighted AFA's commitment to supporting and inspiring the next generation of Airmen and Guardians as they prepare to begin their military careers.

Image: New Air Force recruits in the Delayed Enlisted Program (DEP) with Carol DiBattiste in Margate, FL. Photo Credits: Unknown.

Steele Chapter Hosts
Doolittle Raiders Memorial Toast

The Steele Chapter hosted its annual Doolittle Raiders Memorial Toast on April 17, 2026, at Nighthawk Pizza, a Steele Community Partner in Arlington, Va. More than 90 members, guests, and cadets gathered to honor the legacy of the Doolittle Raiders and one of the most daring missions in Air Force history.

Attendees included chapter members, Civil Air Patrol cadets, JROTC students, and members of Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings from the University of Maryland, Howard University, and George Washington University. The event featured guest speaker Col. Matt Coleman, USAF (Ret.), a member of the Doolittle Raider Association Board of Directors, who shared the history and significance of the 1942 raid and its lasting impact on Air Force heritage.

Image: Steele Chapter members, guests and cadets at Nighthawk Pizza to celebrate the 2026 Doolittle Raiders Memorial Toast. Photo Credit: Unknown.

Following his remarks, attendees joined AFA's national livestream and participated in the traditional memorial toast led by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine. The event provided an opportunity for Airmen, Guardians, and cadets to reflect on the courage, teamwork, and determination demonstrated by the Raiders while strengthening connections across generations of aerospace leaders.

Building the Future Force

Showcasing the cadets, mentors, and programs helping shape the next generation of Airmen and Guardians.

Steele Chapter Recognizes CAP Cadet of the Year

The Steele Chapter recognized Cadet Capt. Thomas Williams of the Fredericksburg Composite Squadron as AFA's Civil Air Patrol Cadet of the Year during the squadron's annual awards ceremony on March 30. The award is AFA's highest honor for CAP cadets.

A high school senior, Williams leads a squadron of more than 100 cadets and was recognized for his outstanding leadership, dedication, and service throughout his CAP career. Following college, he plans to serve in the military.

The ceremony also highlighted the Steele Chapter's continued partnership with the squadron. Earlier this year, the chapter provided the unit's CyberPatriot team with a new laptop through its STEM grant program, helping strengthen hands-on learning opportunities for cadets.

The recognition reflects the Steele Chapter's commitment to developing future Airmen, Guardians, and civic leaders through its support of CAP programs across the National Capital Region.

Image: Cadet Captain Thomas Williams and AFA's Steele Chapter Secretary Bob Hill. *Photo Credit: Unknown.*

Steele Chapter Honors Space Force Cadet of the Year

The Steele Chapter recognized Cadet Lt. Col. Giselle Terrazas of the Arlington Career Center Space Force JROTC as AFA's Cadet of the Year during a ceremony on May 12. AFA Virginia State President Mike Maxwell presented the award, which included a medal, certificates, and a cash scholarship.

Terrazas was recognized for her outstanding leadership as squadron commander, helping her unit earn a Distinguished Unit Award, achieve a perfect self-inspection score, and excel at the Virginia State Drill Meet. Following graduation, she plans to attend Virginia Tech, join Air Force ROTC through the Corps of Cadets, and major in computer science.

The recognition reflects the Steele Chapter's continued partnership with one of the nation's few Space Force JROTC units and its commitment to developing future Air and Space Force leaders.

Image: Virginia AFA President Mike Maxwell and Cadet Lt. Col. Giselle Terrazas at the SFJROTC Awards Ceremony, held at the Arlington Career Center on May 12, 2026. Photo Credit: Unknown.

Steele Chapter Honors Future Air Force Leader

The Steele Chapter recognized Cadet Staff Sgt. Jack Gresens of the Challenger 1 Cadet Squadron as AFA's Civil Air Patrol Cadet of the Year during the squadron's annual awards ceremony in April.

A high school sophomore, Gresens was honored for his leadership, character, and service to the cadet program. He credits CAP's diverse and supportive community as one of the most rewarding aspects of his experience and hopes to serve as an Air Force pilot in the future.

Through partnerships with local CAP squadrons, mentorship opportunities, and support for programs such as CyberPatriot, the Steele Chapter continues to invest in developing the next generation of Airmen and Guardians.

Image: AFA Steele Chapter Secretary Bob Hill presents the AFA CAP Cadet of the Year to Cadet Jack Gresens. Photo Credit: 1st Lt Cori Bitterman, Challenger 1 CAP Squadron.

Steele Chapter Recognizes CAP Cadet Mentor

The Steele Chapter presented the AFA Civil Air Patrol Cadet of the Year award to Cadet Lt. Col. Samuel Ten of the Burke Composite Squadron during the unit's annual awards ceremony in April.

Ten was recognized for his commitment to developing fellow cadets, helping onboard more than 30 new members in 2025 and teaching over 25 classes on CAP fundamentals and aircrew training. He plans to join the Air Force following graduation.

The award reflects the Steele Chapter's continued partnership with CAP squadrons across Northern Virginia and its commitment to supporting cadet growth, mentorship, and leadership development.

Image: Maj. Julie Demyonovich of the CAP Burke Composite Squadron and Steele Chapter Secretary Bob Hill. Demyonovich accepted the AFA CAP Cadet of the Year Award on behalf of Cadet Lt. Col. Samuel Ten on April 23, 2026. Photo Credit: Doreen Moss.

Steele Chapter Earns

National Recognition at NATCON

The D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter was recognized with the prestigious James A. McDonnell Award for 2025–2026 during the National Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings Conclave (NATCON), held April 3–7 in Dallas, Texas. The award honors outstanding support of Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings programs and recognizes the chapter's partnership with the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt Chapter at George Washington University.

Chapter Secretary Bob Hill accepted the award on behalf of the chapter. The Steele Chapter was recognized for strengthening cadet engagement and professional development while fully integrating Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings members into chapter activities, including the Air Force and Space Force Birthday celebration, the Salute to Arnold Air and Silver Wings event, and the Joint Base Andrews Air Show.

The First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt Chapter also received national recognition for its contributions to the partnership.

Image: Steele Chapter Secretary Bob Hill, and First Lady Chapter Silver Wings Andina Pepshi at the 2025 NATCON. Photo Credit: Gale Hill.

Together, the organizations continue to provide leadership development opportunities and strengthen connections between AFA and the next generation of Airmen and Guardians. The award reflects the Steele Chapter’s ongoing commitment to developing future leaders and advancing AFA’s mission through meaningful cadet engagement and mentorship.

A Commitment to Those Who Serve

The D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter hosted a luncheon for more than 130 Airmen and Guardians from the United States Air Force Honor Guard on April 14 at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. The event provided a hot meal and an opportunity to express appreciation for those who represent the Air Force and Space Force at ceremonies across the nation and around the world.

The luncheon also highlighted the chapter's ongoing commitment to supporting Airmen, Guardians, and their families throughout the National Capital Region.

Image: Chapter President Darian “DJ” Padilla & Steele volunteers serve lunch to Air Force Honor Guard members at JBAB. Photo Credit: Unknown.

Through its partnership with the JBAB Top 3 Council, the chapter has contributed more than $6,000 and over 700 pounds of food to the region's only military community food pantry since 2025. Supported by an AFA United Forces & Families grant and chapter funding, the pantry now serves an average of 20 families each day.

Together, these efforts demonstrate the Steele Chapter's commitment to ensuring Airmen and Guardians know they are valued, supported, and never alone.

Image: Chapter President Darian "DJ" Padilla and Secretary Bob Hill with Airmen and Guardians from USAF Honor Guard. Photo Credit: Unknown.

Steele Chapter Supports

CyberPatriot National Finalists

The Steele Chapter supported the Burke Civil Air Patrol Composite Squadron CyberPatriot team, the “Cyber Monkeys,” as they earned national recognition at the CyberPatriot National Finals in Maryland.

Competing against nearly 4,800 teams nationwide on March 22, the Cyber Monkeys placed 3rd in the All Service Division and 2nd in the Cisco Networking Challenge. The Steele Chapter helped support the team's success through a $1,000 grant that funded a new laptop for training and competition.

CyberPatriot, created by the Air & Space Forces Association, is the nation’s premier youth cyber defense competition. The partnership reflects the Steele Chapter’s ongoing commitment to STEM education, Civil Air Patrol engagement, and developing the next generation of cyber leaders.

CyberPatriot
National Finals Competition

Image: Chapter Secretary Bob Hill; Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Zhang, Cadet Captain Clara Zhang, Cadet Master Sergeant Holden Donohue, Cadet Airman 1st Class Illia Shestiuk, Cadet 1st Lieutenant Taiyo Lloyd, Mike Maxwell, AFA Virginia State President, and his wife, Priscilla Maxwell. Photo Credit: Unknown.

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