WINTER NEWSLETTER

2025 Extra-Large Chapter of the Year

One Mission

A Growing Steele Chapter Community

As we share our Winter Quarterly Newsletter, we'd like to warmly welcome the many new members who have recently joined our community and thank our longtime members for their continued support.

Our chapter has grown significantly — from approximately **6,000 members in 2025 to more than 8,330 members today**, reflecting the success of AFA's Mission Membership initiative, which has helped expand AFA's reach to **350,000+ members worldwide.**

The D.W. Steele Sr. Memorial Chapter remains AFA's largest chapter, actively advancing AFA's core missions of **Advocacy, Education, and Support** on behalf of Airmen, Guardians, and their families.

As a member, you'll receive our quarterly newsletters, mission updates, and opportunities to stay informed, attend events, and get involved locally.

Thank you for being part of the Air & Space Forces Association community. We hope you enjoy this edition of our Winter Newsletter.

Aim High & Semper Supra!

Darian "DJ" Padilla

Darian Padilla

President, D.W. Steele Sr. Memorial Chapter
National Capital Region & Northern Virginia

Steele Chapter Hosts

Financial Readiness Bootcamp for Future Officers

AFA's D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter hosted its second annual Financial Readiness Bootcamp on February 23, 2026, at Nighthawk Pizza, a Steele Community Partner in Arlington, Va. The event welcomed 50 cadets from Arnold Air and Silver Wings chapters at the University of Maryland, Howard University, and George Washington University.

Brig. Gen. Jimmy Canlas, USAF (Ret.), Executive Director of Arnold Air & Silver Wings, attended alongside Steele members, reinforcing ties with cadet leadership. The workshop was led by Chapter Secretary Bob Hill, whose career spans more than 25 years in the Air Force and 24 years as a financial advisor. He covered key topics including military pay and allowances, SGLI, TRICARE, the Thrift Savings Plan, budgeting, and responsible credit use.

Cadets were highly engaged, asking detailed questions and sharing takeaways about investing early and managing debt. Canlas praised the initiative, noting he wished he had a similar opportunity as a cadet. Hill emphasized that financial readiness enables future officers to focus on mission success and leadership. The chapter looks forward to continuing this partnership to strengthen financial readiness among the next generation of Airmen and Guardians.

Image: Arnold Air & Silver Wings cadets at the Financial Readiness Bootcamp hosted by AFA's D.W. Steele Chapter in Arlington, Va. Photo Credit: Unknown

In Action

Across Steele

A look at recent milestones, service, and accomplishments that reflect the strength, dedication, and mission focus of our chapter community.

Steele Chapter Member Tim Tanbonliong Receives AFA Medal of Merit

Master Sgt. Tim Tanbonliong, U.S. Space Force, and a longtime Steele Chapter member, was awarded the AFA Medal of Merit on March 7 for exceptional service supporting the Association's mission during 2024–2025. Virginia AFA President Mike Maxwell presented the award at the Virginia AFA Executive Committee meeting at the AFA Operations Center in Arlington.

As Virginia AFA Secretary, Tanbonliong strengthened statewide communication and coordination, helping keep five chapters and more than 10,000 members informed on programs and initiatives. A Life Member of AFA and Master Sergeant assigned to Fort Belvoir, his leadership continues to advance collaboration and support the Association's mission. Steele members are proud to recognize his achievements and honored to count him among the "Guardians of Steele."

Image: Virginia AFA President Maxwell presents the AFA Medal of Merit to Tanbonliong, during the Virginia AFA Executive Committee meeting. Photo Credit: Bob Hill.

Assistant Secretary Rich Anderson Addresses Virginia AFA Leaders

Virginia AFA leaders gathered March 7, at the Association's national Operations Center in Arlington for the quarterly Executive Committee meeting to review programs and initiatives supporting Airmen, Guardians, and aerospace education across the Commonwealth.

That evening, The Honorable Rich Anderson, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, served as the featured speaker. A retired USAF Colonel, former National Commander of Civil Air Patrol, and former Virginia legislator, Anderson assumed his current role in September 2025. An AFA Life Member and Steele Chapter member for more than 25 years, he discussed recruiting and retaining future Airmen and Guardians, the value of strong community partnerships, and AFA's role in strengthening public understanding of the Air Force and Space Force mission.

Image: Rich Anderson speaking at the Virginia AFA Quarterly Executive Committee. Photo Credit: Bob Hill

Steele Chapter Strengthens Families at JBAB

The Steele Chapter continues to strengthen its partnership with the Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling (JBAB) Top III Council to support military families facing food insecurity. With initial seed funding from AFA's United Forces & Families program, the JBAB Food Pantry stocked its first shelves and officially opened in June 2025 with ongoing chapter support.

Additional grants, matched chapter funds, member donations, e-letters, and social media outreach have helped expand the pantry's reach. The need remains significant, with volunteers reporting increased demand during periods of financial strain. Now recognized as official Chapter Wingmen, the JBAB Food Pantry and Top III partnership demonstrates how sustained teamwork and compassion can turn small investments into meaningful support for Airmen, Guardians, and their families.

Image: L to R: Senior Master Sgt. Jacquelyn Gausemel, President JBAB Top III Council; Bob Hill, Steele Chapter Secretary; Megan Rowley, Pantry Volunteer and Steele Chapter VP for Military Family Matters; at the JBAB Food Pantry. Photo Credit: Unknown.

Steele Chapter Honors & Awards CCAF Graduates

On January 9, the Steele Chapter joined more than 90 Airmen and Guardians at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling (JBAB) to celebrate their graduation from the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), recognizing academic achievements earned while balancing demanding operational responsibilities.

Chapter Secretary Bob Hill presented two $750 Pitsenbarger Awards to Staff Sgt. Justin Fatum (Pentagon) and Staff Sgt. Joshua Myers (Joint Base Andrews), with Tech Sgt. Joshua Fritsch-Monzel accepting on their behalf. Named for Medal of Honor recipient Airman William H. Pitsenbarger, the awards support educational excellence. Since the program's inception, AFA has awarded more than $2.5 million to more than 6,000 Airmen and Guardians.

Image: Steele Chapter Secretary Bob Hill (left) presents two AFA Pitsenbarger Awards to Tech Sgt. Joshua Fritsch-Monzel, who accepted on behalf of recipients unable to attend the January 9, 2026 CCAF graduation at JBAB. Photo Credit: USAF Photo.

Steele Supporter Gavin "Mac" MacAloon Named AFA Member of the Year

Gavin "Mac" MacAloon, a longtime leader and dedicated supporter of the Steele Chapter, was recently honored as AFA's 2025 Member of the Year at the National Convention. A Life member of AFA since 1984, Mac has served in numerous national leadership roles, including Vice Chair of the Board for Field Operations, and continues to contribute as a Board Emeritus member.

A retired USAF Master Air Battle Manager with more than 2,800 flight hours, Mac built a distinguished career in command and control, ISR, and defense acquisition. His selection as Member of the Year recognizes decades of impactful leadership, professional excellence, and steadfast service to the Air & Space Forces Association.

Image/Photo Credit: Headshot *of Gavin "Mac" MacAloon from the 2025 AFA National Convention Program.*

Steele Chapter Supports Arnold Air Regional Conclave

The Arnold Air Society's Andrew D. Turner Squadron at Howard University hosted its annual Regional Conclave the weekend of November 15, bringing together cadets and students from squadrons and Silver Wings chapters across the Mid-Atlantic for leadership development, fellowship, and professional growth.

AFA's D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter supported the event with a donation and attended the awards dinner, where Chapter leaders met with the next generation of Air and Space Force leaders. Lt. Gen. David A. Deptula, USAF (Ret.), Dean of AFA's Mitchell Institute, delivered the keynote address, emphasizing the importance of readiness, modernization, and the enduring strength of Air Force Core Values in shaping the future of national defense.

Image: Arnold Air Society Squadron with Steele President Padilla, Secretary Hill and Gale Hill. Photo Credit: Claudine Martinez.

Steele Chapter Celebrates Air Force and Space Force Birthdays

More than 100 Airmen, Guardians, cadets, and community partners gathered at Nighthawk Pizza, a valued Community Partner, for a first-of-its-kind joint celebration of the Air Force and Space Force birthdays. The event honored the founding of the independent U.S. Air Force on September 18, 1947, and the establishment of the U.S. Space Force on December 20, 2019.

Lt. Gen. Burt Field, USAF (Ret.), AFA President & CEO, delivered the keynote address, reflecting on heritage, teamwork, and resilience through powerful stories of service. The evening featured traditional elements such as a saber cake-cutting ceremony performed by the oldest and youngest active-duty members present, symbolizing the passing of knowledge between generations.

The chapter also presented a $2,000 donation to support Civil Air Patrol cyber teams and collected more than 100 pounds of food and cash contributions to assist military families facing food insecurity. Chapter President Darian "DJ" Padilla closed the program by affirming the celebration will become an annual tradition.

Image Credits: Courtesy of Bob Hill.

Educating the Next Generation

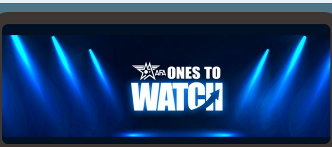
Steele Chapter Supports STEM at Arlington Career Center

More than 200 students explored careers in aviation, aerospace, and military service during the Career & Technical Education Expo held February 25 at the Arlington Career Center. The event was led by Tony Frazier, Aviation Technology Instructor, Virginia AFA Teacher of the Year, and Steele Chapter Vice President for Aerospace Education.

The Steele Chapter participated alongside aviation and military professionals, including an F-16 pilot, recruiters from the 317th Recruiting Squadron, air traffic controllers, commercial pilots from major airlines, and Boeing maintenance specialists. Chapter members spoke with students about Air Force and Space Force career paths, aerospace professions, and AFA scholarship opportunities, with several expressing interest in future service.

The expo highlighted the impact of strong partnerships among educators, industry leaders, recruiters, and AFA volunteers in inspiring the next generation of Airmen, Guardians, and aerospace professionals while advancing AFA's mission of education and outreach.

Image: Secretary Bob Hill speaks to a student at the Career and Technical Education Expo. Photo Credit: Unknown.



Innovation Spotlight

The Air & Space Forces Association has introduced **Ones to Watch**, a new recognition initiative focused on highlighting emerging small and mid-size companies driving meaningful innovation in airpower, spacepower, and national defense.

Companies selected through a competitive review led by AFA's Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies will receive expanded visibility across AFA channels, including features in *Air & Space Forces Magazine* and recognition at major AFA events.

The program is designed to elevate promising innovators, strengthen connections across the defense community, and support continued momentum at critical stages of company growth.

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Steele Chapter Educator Tony Frazier Earns National Recognition for STEM Leadership

The Steele Chapter is proud to recognize Tony Frazier, our Vice President for Aerospace Education and the Virginia AFA Teacher of the Year, for two significant national honors that highlight his outstanding leadership in STEM education and commitment to developing the next generation of Airmen, Guardians, and aerospace professionals.

Tony was recently selected as a national recipient of the Best-in-Class Award from the Pete & Thomas Foundation, powered by Toyota Motor Corporation. This highly competitive grant recognizes exceptional educators and students across the United States. Tony was chosen as one of only five public school teachers nationwide to receive the award and the accompanying $5,000 professional development grant. The recognition honors educators who demonstrate educational excellence, instructional leadership, and a deep commitment to student success. The grant will allow Tony to further expand innovative classroom instruction and strengthen career-connected learning opportunities for his students.

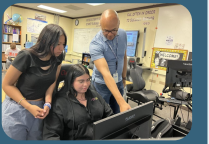

Image: Tony Frazier teaches two of his students. Photo Credit: Unknown.

Tony was also chosen as a 2026 Fellow in the STEM Teacher Leadership Academy, sponsored by the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR). He was chosen as one of approximately 20 K-12 STEM educators in the National Capital Region, designated to participate in this competitive professional development program. The academy focuses on inquiry-based STEM instruction, interdisciplinary learning, and exposure to basic scientific research. Participants collaborate with scientists, engineers, and museum specialists while exploring innovative approaches to STEM education. The program includes 40 hours of advanced professional development and a $1,000 stipend, enabling participants to apply new instructional strategies that enhance student learning and expand STEM opportunities in their classrooms.

Tony's leadership in aerospace education continues to make a major impact on students across Northern Virginia and directly supports the AFA's mission to educate and advocate for aerospace power and inspire future generations.

As Virginia's AFA Teacher of the Year, Tony will soon compete for national recognition, and the Steele Chapter proudly stands behind him as he represents both Virginia and our chapter on the national stage.

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