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Valley Youth-based Aviation Initiative gets a \$180,000 Lift

Wood Next Fund provides generous grant to Next Generation Aviation Academy

Fresno, Calif.—Next Generation Aviation Academy, an initiative focused on utilizing best practices and innovations to train the next generation of aviation professionals from communities of color and low-income neighborhoods within the San Joaquin Valley, has received a \$180,000 grant from the Wood Next Fund.

Next Generation Aviation Academy is one of 19 Fresno DRIVE (Developing the Region's Inclusive and Vibrant Economy) initiatives. Fresno DRIVE is a 10-year community-wide investment plan, supported by the Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) and involving hundreds of non-profit and civic leaders, to develop a prosperous and inclusive economy for the residents of the greater Fresno region.

"Next Generation Aviation Academy is both developing a critical workforce pipeline for the aviation industry and helping open doors for underrepresented youth that would otherwise not be possible," said Nancy Chan, Director, Wood Next Fund. "Wood Next is excited to partner with this initiative to provide much needed resources to help support these ongoing efforts."

The Academy is led by New Vision Aviation, a nonprofit dedicated to providing residents and youth from disadvantaged communities in the Valley with the opportunity to experience flight and train for aviation careers. Founded in 2018 by Joseph Oldham, who serves as president of the all-volunteer organization, and based at Chandler Airport



in Southwest Fresno, New Vision has already had a big impact on youth in the community by providing first-hand aviation experiences and mentorship.

"The incredible donation from Wood Next Fund will allow our program to have the essential tools and additional resources we need to increase training for unrepresented youth from our communities of color," said Joseph Oldham. "It will help to open doors to aviation careers for those that have dreams of flight but had previously thought those dreams were out of reach."

The Next Generation initiative is working to implement an end-to-end continuum of early child, young adult, and adult programs, to allow low-income and students of color with exposure and access to the aviation industry, and robust supports for placement in attractive aviation careers, which includes roles as pilots, maintenance technicians, air traffic controllers, airline managers, flight crews, military careers and operations staff.

"The aviation industry has a critical and growing shortage of trained professionals to fill the needs of the industry over the next 20 years," Oldham said. "Boeing estimates that there will be a shortage of over 760,000 pilots globally in the next two decades and about the same number of maintenance technicians."

The three-phase program is organized by three age groups, ranging from ages 8 to 19. The youngest students are first introduced with flight simulator training, advancing to glider flight training once they are 13 years old. Private pilot training is the final phase of the program offered to 16 to 19-year-olds. Because gliders are considered simple to operate, the Federal Aviation Administration allows students to solo at age 14, requiring only a 10-hour flight minimum for certification.

Through Fresno County Transportation Authority's Sustainable Aviation Project, New Vision Aviation has \$90,000 in funding available to be disbursed in \$2,000 increments to provide glider pilot training to qualifying youth in Fresno County. With a glider certification, youth may then advance and become certified to train, allowing for opportunities to earn money by serving as glider instructors. It is also a first step toward commercial pilot certification.

"Receiving a glider pilot certification means that the Federal Aviation Administration is certifying that you are qualified to fly a glider safely and responsibly to protect yourself and the general public," Oldham said. "It says you have learned and proven that you have the skills and good decision making to join the ranks of great aviation pioneers that have gone before you such as the Wright brothers, Lindbergh, and graduates of the United States Air Force Academy."

Once students have completed these steps and exhibit a dedication to pursuing a career in aviation, their names will be provided to major airlines for potential sponsorships toward training for private pilot and commercial pilot certification.



"I will take this opportunity to learn to operate and fly planes to my best ability and to be great in this field, stated 12-year-old New Vision Aviation student Sammy Taylor. "In doing so, I will show others that anything is possible if someone believes in you and you put your best effort."

About the Central Valley Community Foundation

The Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) has been a trusted partner in philanthropy in the Central Valley for more than 50 years. Its mission is to connect capital and communities for a just and thriving Central Valley. As the only nationally-accredited community foundation serving the six-county Central San Joaquin Valley, CVCF attracts investment and deploys resources to solve persistent economic, environmental, and social challenges in the Central Valley.

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About Fresno DRIVE

The Fresno DRIVE Initiative (Developing the Region's Inclusive and Vibrant Economy) is a 10-year community investment plan drafted with input from a 300-person steering committee representing over 150 organizations in the Greater Fresno Region. The comprehensive plan identified a portfolio of investable initiatives aimed at increasing economic mobility and addressing racial disparities. The plan is comprised of 19 initiatives in three sectors: economic development, human capital and neighborhood development. The Urban Institute's 2018 research on economic mobility in California's largest cities revealed that Fresno ranks 59th out of 59 for economic and racial disparity.

www.FresnoDRIVE.org | Follow @FresnoDrive on Facebook

About Wood Next Fund

Wood Next Fund is the philanthropy of tech innovator Anthony Wood and his wife Susan. In collaboration with the Fund's director Nancy Chan, their philanthropic efforts are guided by their overall mission to support the human spirit, advance human progress, and remove obstacles to a fulfilling life. The Fund's priorities include mental health and related issues, scientific and biomedical research, and economic opportunity with a focus on addressing the root causes of poverty.

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