

For Immediate Release

Contact: Mary Van Buren
(386) 226-6525
mary.van.buren@erau.edu

Record-Breaking Aviator to Speak on Flying Scholarships for the Disabled

Daytona Beach, Fla., May 3, 2006 – At age 50, when most people are slowing down a bit and thinking about retirement, music educator Polly Vacher took on a new challenge. In 1994 the Englishwoman learned to fly, and within 10 years she completed two record-breaking flights around the world, one in 2001 and the other in 2003-2004.

Piloting a Piper Dakota, the Englishwoman became the first person to fly solo around the world and land on all seven continents, a journey of 60,000 nautical miles in 357 days. She also set records as the first woman to fly solo over the North Pole and Antarctica in a single-engine aircraft.

Vacher will speak at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University on Tuesday, May 16, about her two epic “Wings Around the World” flights and the mission that propelled them: raising awareness and donations for Flying Scholarships for the Disabled (FSD), a charitable organization that helps disabled people discover their true potential through the mental and physical stimulation of learning to fly a light aircraft. So far, Vacher has raised \$570,000 for FSD. Her many sponsors include Jeppesen, Lycoming, and Shell Aviation.

Her presentation is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. in the Miller Instructional Center auditorium at Embry-Riddle’s Daytona Beach campus. Admission is free, with donations for FSD gratefully accepted.

The event is sponsored by Embry-Riddle and the Brig. Gen. James R. McCarthy chapter of the Air Force Association. “The College of Aviation is honored to host such a fascinating aviation personality,” says Dr. Tim Brady, dean of Embry-Riddle’s College of Aviation. “Her presentation promises to be stimulating.”

Attending Vacher’s presentation will be Ormond Beach teenager Dylan Sawchuk, a junior at Seabreeze High School in Daytona Beach who knows firsthand the fulfillment of becoming a pilot, despite being disabled, through the generosity of others. With the help of the Experimental Aviation Association’s Chapter 288 in Daytona Beach, the 17-year-old learned how to fly, soloed last year, and hopes to become the first person with spina bifida to earn a private pilot’s license in the United States.

“I’m flying two to three times a week, and right now I’m building up experience for a cross-country flight,” Dylan says. “I’ve loved aviation since the age of 4, when I looked up into the sky at an airplane.”

He was introduced to aviation through the EAA’s Young Eagles program, in which EAA members use their own planes to give free flights to kids ages 7 to 17. At his high school, Dylan is enrolled in the Aviation and Aerospace Technology Academy. Next, he hopes to attend Embry-Riddle to pursue his dream of becoming an aviation software designer or an air traffic controller.

For more information on Polly Vacher’s presentation or the EAA Young Eagles program, contact Steve Wood of the EAA at (386) 760-1674 or sprucepilot@aol.com.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, the world’s largest, fully accredited university specializing in aviation and aerospace, offers more than 30 degree programs and educates more than 32,000 students annually in undergraduate and graduate programs at residential campuses in Prescott, Ariz., and Daytona Beach, Fla., through the Extended Campus at more than 130 centers in the United States, Canada, Europe, and the Middle East, and through distance learning.