

APPENDIX B. CASE STUDIES

B.1 Introduction

This appendix presents 10 first-hand accounts of the tremendous impact of and reliance on aviation in West Virginia that goes beyond quantitative economic findings. A diverse group of individuals were invited to share their unique perspectives and experiences regarding aviation in the state. These individuals include military members, business owners, university faculty, medevac operators and more. During one-on-one interviews, individuals shared how airports and aviation in the state have shaped their lives, communities, and the state as a whole. The resulting narratives showcase how West Virginia system airports and the aviation industry continue to support a vibrant economy, new opportunities, and resiliency across the Mountain State.

B.2 Providing Health and Medical Services

System airports support lifesaving and other medical operations across the state. Due to West Virginia's mountainous terrain, airports provide a crucial network of aerial medical emergency response bases to quickly access communities or locations that are difficult to navigate by ground transportation. Not only is air transport used to reach and move patients, but also to transport medical supplies, organs, and doctors and other healthcare professionals to the locations where they are needed.

Separate, but related, the proximity of an airport can highly influence the access and quality of life in a community, which are important factors to attract and retain medical professionals in the state. The case studies presented here highlight the importance of aviation and airports regarding the delivery of health and medical services in West Virginia.

B.2.1 HealthNet Aeromedical Services

Clinton Burley is the CEO and president of HealthNet Aeromedical Services, a 501(c)(3) critical care transport program that operates across West Virginia and contiguous states. This non-profit organization is co-operatively owned by three academic medical centers and operates the company's fleet of 12 helicopters from nine bases: eight in West Virginia and one in Kentucky.

Clinton has been with the program since its inception in 1986 and started his career as a flight paramedic. He served in that role for over a decade before transitioning to the management side of the organization, eventually becoming the CEO in 2011. While his role in the organization has changed, his mission and the mission of the program to improve access to critical care has not.

In West Virginia, HealthNet operates and houses 24/7 emergency response teams from eight bases, located in Beckley, Buckhannon, Huntington, Lewisburg, Millwood, Morgantown, Martinsburg, and Moundsville. Six of these bases are located at airports that provide facilities and services required for the organization's operations. The necessary facilities include a temperature-controlled, well-lit, high ceiling hangar facility, as well as nearby office space and sleeping quarters for the crew. Some airports have built modular office space on their property to serve HealthNet crew needs. In addition to the physical infrastructure requirements, HealthNet's operations rely on the availability of Jet A fuel at each base. Many of the airports from which they operate offer Jet A and receive revenues from fuel sales. HealthNet supplies fuel trucks at airports that don't offer Jet A.

Outside of the very necessary and important benefit of providing critical care access in remote areas, HealthNet also brings economic benefits to a locality, through creation of well-paying jobs and increased local spending. Each HealthNet base has at least 15 employees, many of whom live in or around the airport community, and spend their wages and participate in the local economy. In addition to jobs and spending, HealthNet services can benefit new business development as employers are often more willing to locate (or relocate) their business in an area where there is immediate access to critical health care.

An example of this is the development of The Summit in the remote mountains of Southern West Virginia. The Summit is a world class adventure base developed by the Boy Scouts of America and is used as the site for the National Scout Jamboree and other corporate retreats. The Summit includes on-site hotel, dormitory and camping facilities and attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year who participate in an array of adventure and recreational experiences from zip-lining to canoing, mountaineering, rock-climbing, and more. However, one of the deciding factors in bringing this facility to West Virginia was rapid accessibility to a Level I Trauma Center in the event a guest is injured. To facilitate Level I Trauma Center access, The Summit maintains multiple on-site helicopter landing areas. When large numbers of scouts are on-site, HealthNet donates the availability of an additional helicopter and full crew to provide on-site critical care and transport services.

The company also supports the communities in which they are located by providing continuing education opportunities for rural emergency medical services (EMS) agencies that may struggle to access classes and stay current on their skills and strategies. Additionally, the organization engages with local school systems through career events and safety awareness campaigns – particularly during prom season when there is increased concern about the dangers of drinking and driving. HealthNet spreads awareness about the company’s program and the importance of the company’s ability to continue serving their communities through local groups, such as the Rotary Club and Kiwanis organizations.

Mr. Burley expressed the continuing need to support aviation in the state, as local airports are an important piece of the economic development puzzle and are often very unrepresented. HealthNet has been serving rural and remote communities in West Virginia for 35 years, providing critical care transportation to over 90,000 patients. HealthNet could not have this long-lasting and impressive record without the support of local airports and their surrounding communities.

B.2.2 United Hospital Center

Laura Blake is the Director of Physician Services at the United Hospital Center (UHC), in Bridgeport, West Virginia. Her position at UHC is an important one to the community because she is tasked with bringing highly skilled health care professionals to her region. Bringing in quality physicians and health care providers to the Bridgeport community means that UHC can better serve the region’s health care needs.

While Bridgeport is a fairly small community, the local UHC hospital is equipped to serve the entire region, upwards of 300,000 people. The North Central West Virginia Airport supports the operation of UHC through the transport of vital supplies and personnel. Laura understands the value of her community airport and, through her recruitment work, demonstrates how the airport is one of many factors that makes Bridgeport an excellent place to call home.

The Bridgeport area was voted number 16 in the best cities to live in 2019 according to USA Today. This accolade doesn't surprise Laura and it helps her to promote the area to her potential recruits. She remarks that one of the selling points of the community is the North Central West Virginia Airport, adding there aren't many towns in the US where you can access a commercial service airport that connects you to thousands of destinations and not pay for parking. In addition to providing commercial air service to the region, the airport works diligently to maintain and attract the aerospace industry to the area which has contributed to the area's economic vibrancy.

Just like the UHC facility, the airport is a great asset to the community and provides important services to residents and visitors alike.

B.3 Supporting Military Operations

The West Virginia National Guard comprises the West Virginia Army National Guard (WVARNG) and the West Virginia Air National Guard (WVANG), which include more than 60 units and detachments operating in local communities across the state. In 2018, it was reported that more than 4,200 soldiers and 2,150 airmen comprised the West Virginia National Guard. West Virginia's airports support military operations by facilitating training, providing cargo and freight shipment services, and transporting military members to and from their mission assignments.

The WVANG is composed of two units:

- 130th Airlift Wing (C-130H) – operates from Yeager Airport in Charleston
- 167th Airlift Wing (C-17 Globemaster III) – operates from the Eastern West Virginia Regional Airport in Martinsburg

Additionally, the 772nd Troop Command Battalion of the WVARNG operates an aviation unit:

- Company C, 1st Battalion, 150th Aviation Regiment – uses the Wheeling-Ohio County Airport in Wheeling

The following two case studies demonstrate the importance of airport access to military operations – specifically those of the 167th Airlift Wing and the 150th Aviation Regiment of the 772nd Troop Command Battalion.

B.3.1 WVANG - 167th Airlift Wing

Major Domenico and Lieutenant Belfield of the WVANG 167th Airlift Wing (167th AW) in Martinsburg understand the economic value the unit brings to the region. The 167th AW is a large operation supporting over 300 full-time jobs and countless part-time opportunities in Martinsburg and surrounding communities. The 167th AW flies the C-17 Globemaster III for a variety of missions and has been serving in the community for more than 60 years. The unit serves under the motto "Mountaineer Pride Worldwide," showing the unit's commitment to its community and beyond every single day. Based at the Eastern West Virginia Regional Airport, the two entities share a runway and a control tower, and rely on the same aircraft rescue and firefighting (ARFF) personnel. While the 167th AW and the airport have separate fueling facilities there are occasions where those resources are shared too. The 167th AW provides snow removal equipment (SRE) and services through their civil engineering squadron and contributes some funding to support runway maintenance projects conducted by the airport, such as rubber removal and painting.

This unit supports its community in a number of impactful ways and drives economic growth

through employment, technical training, and spending. The unit can have anywhere between 300-400 full-time personnel at the base during regular operations whom support the community on a daily basis through spending in the local area. During drill weekends, there can be anywhere from 800 to 900 personnel on the base and local hotels are filled with service members traveling to complete their training. These service members spend money in the local area during their stay, resulting in additional economic activity beyond that generated from staff in full-time positions on the base.

The 167th AW is involved in a number of community outreach events targeted towards aviation enthusiasts, K-12 students, families and employers of airmen, and the general public. Many members of the 167th AW have full-time civilian jobs while still fulfilling their duties with the WVANG. In order to create connections between an individual's civilian life and life with the WVANG, they can participate in a Boss Lift event. This event gives an employer the opportunity to gain important insight into what their employees commitment to the WVANG looks like, creating awareness and building connections with civilians. In addition, the unit hosts a Family Day once a year, where airmen can bring their close friends and family to an open house event at the base.

The unit also targets their outreach efforts to children and students in their community, by bringing early awareness to the promising careers and opportunities with the WVANG. The unit hosts MartinsburgStarBase, which is a Department of Defense science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-oriented program focused on elementary students in the surrounding area. The 167th AW also has established a mentoring program with elementary school students where they send Airmen to engage weekly or bi-weekly with participating students. The mentoring program gives students the opportunity to receive help from Airmen on their schoolwork, discuss issues or challenges they may be having, talk about life lessons, and more. The unit also hosts numerous base tours each year to local school and civic groups.. Education opportunities extend beyond those offered to K-12 students as the WVANG also offers in-state college tuition assistance for service members.

The community outreach and education opportunities highlight just a few ways the 167th Airlift Wing drives economic development through career training and diverse career opportunities. The unit also directly supports the Eastern West Virginia Regional Airport by providing a variety of skilled technicians (such as aircraft mechanics, crew chiefs, engineers, pilots, and more) to support commercial airline, cargo, and corporate aviation ventures if/when needed.

When asked about the most rewarding aspects of their careers in the WVANG, Major Domenico and Lieutenant Belfield shared a similar sentiment on the ability to help others, find creative solutions, and support their fellow Airmen. Moreover, Lieutenant Belfield shared that he grew up this area, he's formed lifelong friendships through the WVANG, and being a part of that tight knit community is an incredibly rewarding aspect of his career. The WVANG may be considered one of West Virginia's "best kept secrets" but as the 167th AW works hard to raise community awareness, more and more people are going to learn about the lifelong opportunities the WVANG can provide and the important role aviation plays in their mission.

WVARNG - Company C, 1st Battalion, 150th Aviation Regiment

The Company C, 1st Battalion is based in Wheeling, West Virginia and is composed of over 100 soldiers ready to support emergencies locally, nationally, and internationally. As part of the larger battalion, the 150th Aviation Regiment responds to natural and man-made disasters utilizing a fleet of UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

Major Dale, the facility commander of the 150th Aviation Regiment, oversees more than 30 full-time guardsmen and numerous other guardsmen who volunteer their time to assist with missions. Major Dale joined the United States Army in 2005 which eventually led him to overseeing Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) operations in West Virginia. Major Dale was recommended by a colleague to apply for flight school as an Army aviator. He decided flight school would present a new challenging opportunity and obtained high enough scores to be designated as a top candidate. Now, Major Dale and the 150th are charged with the important task of maintaining their fleet of Black Hawk helicopters which includes operating the aircraft during emergency response situations, re-fueling, and coordinating aircraft parts, administration, and aircraft maintenance. The 150th frequently utilizes the Wheeling-Ohio County Airport to maintain regiment owned aircraft and conduct trainings. The airport is critical to these operations because it provides air traffic services which are required to safely navigate Black Hawks during winter conditions. Additionally, the airport supplies the 150th with fuel when re-fueling vehicles are not available.

Guardsmen of the 150th who pilot Black Hawk helicopters average over 1,200 flight hours annually depending on the types of missions for which they are deployed. These guardsmen are also required to clock almost 100 hours of flight training each year to prepare for response including emergency operations, and operations at night and during extreme inclement weather. The 150th frequently supports the community in Wheeling and residents in other parts of West Virginia in times of flooding, major blizzards, and other emergency situations. They have been deployed in the past to conduct wellness checks and bring supplies to residents during snowstorms, supply water to residents who have lost utility services, bring supplies to communities which are unable to access goods due to bridge washout, and rescue individuals from the rivers of West Virginia.

The 150th recently began training for aerial firefighting operations due to drought conditions around the state and possibilities for wildfires to occur locally. The 150th oversees bambi bucket training, a bucket that can hold 600 gallons of water specifically for firefighting operations. Although their firefighting unit isn't large, Major Dale and members of the 150th responded to the national call for help during the 2020 California wildfires, a series of wildfires in northern California which ravaged the state for several months. Major Dale and three other guardsmen flew 50 hours in the course of 24 days to support firefighting operations in California. They, and units from Arizona, Wisconsin, Iowa, and many other states joined the California National Guard to cooperatively gain control over the fires. Major Dale and members of the 150th prepared aircraft to conduct initial attacks, cooled fires utilizing helicopters, and scouted to ensure fires had been completely extinguished.

Major Dale spoke about the importance of the 150th's operations in West Virginia. Over 30 soldiers in the 150th Aviation Regiment and over 100 soldiers in the 1st Battalion are part of the community's fabric and are ready at all times to respond in any kind of event. Guardsmen live and work within the community and also train tirelessly to respond to emergencies day or night, near and far.

B.4 Attracting the Aerospace Industry to West Virginia

West Virginia's economy has historically been heavily steeped in the energy industry. In recent years, the aerospace industry has seen continual growth around the state. According to the 2019 Aerospace Industry Report published by the West Virginia Development Office, the existing aerospace industry in the state supports 4,000 jobs, \$201 million in payroll, and has a total economic impact of \$1.325 billion. Due to these tremendous impacts, it is especially important for the state to continue seeking out opportunities that attract new aviation businesses and diversify the economy.

B.4.1 Mid-Atlantic Aerospace Complex (MAAC)

Tracy Miller, President of the Mid-Atlantic Aerospace Complex (MAAC), may know, better than most, the strong connection between aviation and economic development. Her years of work and dedication at the MAAC give her a firsthand understanding of the impact that aerospace and manufacturing industries can bring to a community. An integral component of the MAAC's success in attracting some of the biggest names in the aviation and aerospace industry is the location of the MAAC at the North Central West Virginia Airport. The MAAC is home to operations for Pratt & Whitney Engine Services, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries -Regional Jet (MHIRJ)¹, and Aurora Flight Sciences of WV – A Boeing Company, among others. Operation of these businesses benefit from access to a runway and flat terrain to expand their physical operations.

The North Central West Virginia Airport provides this needed infrastructure and works hand in hand with the MAAC to attract and maintain a variety of aerospace businesses. The mission of the MAAC is to advance West Virginia's state and regional economy through the advancement and procurement of aerospace industry firms.

Aerospace industry jobs include a range of highly skilled positions in Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-certified aviation maintenance, manufacturing, engineering, research, and more. The move toward aerospace industry growth is a strategic effort supported by the state to diversify the state economy and reduce reliance on coal, oil, and other resource extraction industries. The aerospace industry has great growth potential due to advancements in technology and a need for new innovative solutions for transportation and shipping. The MAAC brings great growth potential and economic benefits not only to the surrounding communities, but to the broader population of the region and state.

Tracy, and others at the MAAC, work hard to spread the word across the state that the aerospace industry is strong and here to stay so that the broader West Virginia population better understands the value of this industry to their community. The MAAC has formed close regional partnerships, works with the West Virginia Development Office, and collaborates with higher education facilities across the state. These outreach efforts do more than communicate the benefits of the thriving aerospace industry - they demonstrate to local residents a range of aviation career opportunities that exist in the state. Tracy noted that outreach to schools (K-12 and beyond) is one of the most important factors in supporting the aerospace business because there is a high demand for very niche skills, often requiring FAA certification. The local colleges, Pierpont Community & Technical College and Fairmont State University, support advanced aerospace and aviation trades through Part 147 and Part 141 certification programs, respectively. Programs such as these, and outreach

¹ Formerly a Bombardier Facility

to students in a K-12 setting, will only further the aerospace industry growth in West Virginia as more students become aware and excited by the opportunities that exist for them locally.

Tracy looks back with pride and a great sense of accomplishment as she acknowledges the progress the MAAC has made and the benefits it has contributed since its establishment. Not only is there more exposure to the industry, and more people becoming engaged and aware, there are growing numbers of women in aviation, aerospace, and STEM fields in general. Aviation and aerospace have a long history in West Virginia, and Tracy and other industry professionals know the future of this industry is bright. Those working in this industry and involved in growing it know that they can fly higher together, and the MAAC is committed to that journey.

B.4.2 Pratt & Whitney Engine Services

Pratt & Whitney is a global aerospace company that contributes to the design, manufacturing, and service of aircraft engines and auxiliary power units. Nearly 30 percent of the world's mainline passenger aircraft fleet is powered by a Pratt & Whitney product. As such, Pratt & Whitney's impact on the global aviation industry is significant.

The company's location near the North Central Regional Airport in Bridgeport, West Virginia focuses mainly on engine maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) services, particularly for turboprop and turbofan engines. As part of the MAAC, the engine services they provide are for a range of aircraft, from small commuter aircraft to larger regional jets. Pratt & Whitney has a diverse client base that includes both private and government contracts. Their Bridgeport facility relies heavily on the North Central West Virginia Airport for convenient transportation options and where possible, Pratt & Whitney will work closely with other on-airport tenants for different services.

Tim Tucker, General Manager of the Bridgeport Pratt & Whitney location, noted it is easy to see the company's commitment to advancing the aviation industry and supporting the growth of the community. The Bridgeport location employs almost 400 staff, with approximately 30 percent at retirement age. While this points to an incredibly experienced and tenured staff, many with over 20 years of experience, it also indicates there is growing need for the next generation of aerospace employees.

Tim is well aware of this impending employee demographic change and the company is working diligently within the community to attract new staff. Thankfully, there are numerous connections within the community to promote careers in aerospace and aviation at the high school and college level. Aviation programs are being implemented into Harrison County high schools' curriculum, focusing on aerodynamics and exposing youth in the community to the strong opportunities in the industry. As noted in the previous study, the local colleges, Pierpont Community & Technical College and Fairmont State University, support advanced aerospace and aviation trades through Part 147 and Part 141 certification programs, respectively. Pratt & Whitney offers internship programs which accepts students from both schools and many of the internships translate into full-time career opportunities.

Pratt & Whitney's community involvement doesn't stop at education. The company works closely with the local Emerging Leaders Group, the Chamber of Commerce, and subcontract services from local businesses to bolster local and regional economic growth. The company also gives back to their community with food drives and other charitable events.

Tim sees the strong future of the aerospace and aviation industry because aviation has always been about growth and untapped possibilities. He notes that the very existence of this industry is a testament to the idea that if we can think it, we can achieve it. The opportunities in West Virginia for strong and impactful careers in aerospace and aviation are almost endless. Those interested in a career in aviation will know that West Virginia, particularly North Central West Virginia, is the place to come and achieve those aspirations. Opportunities like these help maintain a strong, local work force, keeping jobs in West Virginia and growing a strong economy that is focused on the future of aerospace science and technology.

B.4.3 Helicopter Powerline Services

Helicopter Powerline Services is an industry leader in helicopter powerline construction, aerial sawing, and right-of-way management based at the Mercer County Airport in Bluefield, West Virginia. The company provides services across the state and outside of the state (typically working east of the Mississippi River) with work recently conducted in both Wisconsin and Connecticut. While their services are wide ranging, they primarily work in right-of-way clearing and powerline services.

Adam Hayhurst, the lead airframe and powerplant (A&P) mechanic at Helicopter Powerline Services, says the relationship between the company and the Mercer County Airport is strong, and both rely on each other in different ways. Being able to set up their business at an airport allows Helicopter Powerline Services to maintain their FAA Part 133 certification, which requires that this type of business have an airport as their base of operations. Additionally, the airport provides office facilities and hangar space to accommodate their fleet of three helicopters and future plans to include twin-engine aircraft with heavier load capacities. In return, the airport benefits from having a successful aviation company through lease payments and fuel sales. The airport's ability to provide the facilities and services needed by Helicopter Powerline Services also may attract other businesses to the airport that require similar accommodations.

Being involved in the industry it is easy for Adam to see the benefits the airport and airport tenants bring to the community. When possible, Adam hires locally, providing well-paying jobs to the community which spurs spending in the region. Moreover, Helicopter Powerline Services is committed to educating local students about the great opportunities in aviation-related industries.

Adams says that finding this career opportunity for himself was a blessing. He was able to learn an in-demand technical skill that allows him to work closely with a team, have autonomy over his career, and support his family. As such, having the opportunity to better educate youth on the possibilities in aviation careers has been incredibly important to him. While the work can be challenging at times, it is very rewarding. Adam enjoys working closely with the other members of his team, which include a pilot, the fuel truck driver, a mechanic, and several linemen.

There are many rewarding aspects about his job, noting "...the ability to identify, assess, and resolve a mechanical issue requires close attention to detail and a great level of skill and is very rewarding work. You get to see the results of your hard work." For example, he noted that he was recently out of town on a job site when the helicopter was having an issue starting. Adam had to quickly assess and resolve the issue so that the job could be completed successfully and within the necessary time frame. In that moment he was not only responsible for the crew's ability to complete the job, but he was responsible for their safety as well. He noted that solving problems and ensuring his team's safety makes the job rewarding and valuable.

Adam understands that the community may not always see the value of their local airport, or understand the opportunities that exist within the industry, but he and others are committed to spreading the word about how valuable their local airport is, and the importance of aviation in the state.

B.5 Inspiring New Aviation Professionals

As previously noted, the aerospace industry in West Virginia is growing rapidly due to the availability of a skilled workforce, concentration of repair facilities, and strategic development efforts. To support this growth, new aviation professionals must be prepared to enter a workforce that demands highly-skilled and highly-qualified individuals. West Virginia continues to prepare for increased demands for aviation professionals through the expansion of higher educational opportunities, national recruitment, and encouraged of people of all ages to consider a future in the industry.

B.5.1 Marshall University - Division of Aviation

Marshall's Division of Aviation anticipates offering two degree programs: a Bachelor of Science degree in Commercial Pilot: Fixed-Wing through the Bill Noe Flight School; and an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S) degree in Aviation Maintenance in cooperation with Mountwest Community and Technical College and the Robert C. Byrd Institute (RCBI). The proposed curricula for both degrees will prepare students with the educational foundation and the hands-on technical experience to be successful in their future aviation careers.

On August 13th, 2020, ground was broken to construct the new Marshall University Bill Noe Flight School at Yeager Airport in Charleston. The brand-new facilities include a 10,000-square-foot classroom and hangars to house the school's aircraft fleet. The school will initially offer an FAA certified Part 141 pilot school, with new students anticipated to take their classes at the facility in the fall of 2021. Students going into the FAA certified commercial pilot training program will benefit from the real-life expertise of aviation professionals in the industry, gain invaluable hands-on experience, and will leave the program well-trained for their future career. Through the program, students will have access to cutting-edge technology, such as a state-of-the-art flight simulator and multiple aircraft to earn the flight hours necessary to become a commercial pilot. Students will graduate from the program as certified commercial pilots with their instrument flight rating and have the potential to enter the workforce as commercial pilots, flight instructors, private pilots, and more.

The Aviation Maintenance program offered by Marshall University in partnership with the Mountwest Community and Technical College and the RCBI will be headquartered at the Huntington Tri-State/Milton J Anderson Field with classes starting in the spring of 2022. Pending FAA Part 147 Certification, this program will serve southern West Virginia and the Tri-State region. Administered by RCBI, the program will train students for careers as airframe and powerplant (A&P) mechanics for the commercial and general aviation industry. To bridge the gap between traditional aviation education and emerging technologies, the program will partner with key industry players such as Snap-On Tools, Composite Education Services, and the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) to stress additional certifications in structural sheet metal, avionics and composite materials—areas identified by industry partners as having a critical need. Officials expect the program to serve as an economic catalyst by producing the highly

skilled workforce required by the AEROready-certified region (AEROready means the 16 primary counties served by the program have the existing infrastructure to support new aerospace development). This 18-month program will emphasize the development of transferable skills that also equip students for jobs in other vibrant regional industry sectors such as automotive, maritime, oil and gas, and renewable energy.

Pilots and skilled maintenance technicians are in great demand and there is overwhelming interest in these degree programs. Marshall's Division of Aviation is working with national airlines and regional aviation maintenance and technology companies to develop training that addresses the specific needs of the aviation industry while also building workforce pipelines for graduates. As the mix of industries in West Virginia continues to transform, Marshall University is developing a workforce necessary to advance the aviation industry. As an integral community resource, Marshall University has a responsibility to support the economic vitality in the state. The aviation school can act as an essential catalyst to a vibrant economy.

B.5.2 HQ Aero Management Inc.

HQ Aero Management Inc. (HQ Aero) connects aviation and aerospace industries across West Virginia with the most highly-qualified individuals. HQ Aero provides aviation staffing and recruitment services to businesses with a mission to match them with exceptional aviation professionals. Ron Eagle is the President of HQ Aero and has witnessed the company grow alongside the aviation industry that he supports.

Ron's experience in aviation started with avionics maintenance on fighter jet aircraft during his time in the military which took him across the globe. As a native West Virginian, he was offered an opportunity to return home to work at Bombardier in Bridgeport. Ron stated that he found there was a real need to connect aviation and aerospace organizations with the right individuals and he did just that.

In 2000, HQ Aero began offering their expertise in aviation to satisfy the dual purposes of offsetting the ebbs and flows of aviation staffing and helping to employ the skilled individuals at the right organizations. Due to their success, HQ Aero has expanded into larger facilities located at the North Central West Virginia Airport in Bridgeport, West Virginia and opened a second office in Oviedo, Florida. Ron states that the need for their services are going to continue to be in high demand as more investment is being made to attract more aviation opportunities in West Virginia. HQ Aero has helped the growth of the aviation industry cluster located at the MAAC as their company recruits certified professionals from across the U.S. Ron stated that HQ Aero's operations are complimented by the local aviation school and offer a huge benefit to attracting new businesses to the Mountain State. "When [economic development offices] are recruiting new companies to the state, many organizations ask about the available workforce. These offices would be able to tell them that not only does the state have schools that produce high-quality workers, but we also have a company that connects them with a qualified workforce from across the US."

There is some cause for concern about the future of aviation, Ron states. "There is a pilot and manpower shortage in the industry due to retirement. This is a huge detriment to the industry because those years of expertise and experience is lost when they retire and that knowledge is not passed down [to the next generation of professionals]. Aviation schools are seeing an increase in enrollment, but there are not enough schools to support meeting this need."

To generate new interest in aviation careers and warrant new investment in aviation-related higher education, Ron suggests bringing back airshows to the community. “Airshows can increase the demand to join this workforce. We need to ask how we influence the younger generation and how do we get them involved? The last airshow [at the North Central West Virginia Airport] was in 2001 and drew huge crowds. This was a huge benefit for the community, and it showed them different aircraft and the possibility and range of careers in aviation.” HQ Aero works in partnership with the local aviation school to showcase different aviation professions to school-aged children and get them interested in pursuing aviation in the future.

In terms of how aviation influences his day-to-day life, Ron indicated that the most rewarding part of being in the industry is that he gets to essentially “...help people find a home [in West Virginia], gain employment, and be happy, while always keeping the customer supplied and mission-ready.” He believed that the community recognizes the importance of airports and aviation through their experiences using airports for travel, but if they viewed the other aspects such as labor force and jobs, people might find the true value in how they impact the economy.

B.5.3 Bart Rogers - Airshow Organizer and Historian

Bart Rogers is the resident air show organizer and historian at the Eastern West Virginia Regional Airport - Shepherd Field in Martinsburg. Bart’s colorful past stems from his incredible passion for aviation. He light-heartedly attributes his passions to getting “bit by the aviation bug” when he joined the industry as a pilot for the United States Navy. After flying for the military, Bart returned home to West Virginia and worked at the fixed-base operator (FBO) at the North Central West Virginia Airport as a corporate pilot. During his time there, he and his brother dreamed of owning and operating their own FBO and went to tour the existing facilities at Eastern West Virginia Regional Airport - Shepherd Field. The pair fell in love with the airport, but ultimately decided against purchasing the FBO. Years later, Bart returned to the Martinsburg area to earn his degree at Shepherd College and has contributed much to the community since.

Bart served for 25 years as a Metals Conservator (an individual who works to preserve historic and/or rare metal objects such as coins, badges, tool, etc.) for the United States National Park Service. As a Metals Conservator his duties included creating collection management plans (specific programs to preserve a collection of historic items for display or storage) for different Park Service facilities. In conjunction with his love for aviation, his experience in collection management and 15 years as a volunteer for the West Virginia Civil Air Patrol, made Bart a well-known and well-respected authority for aviation history in the state. He has since lent his expertise on a number of exhibits and aviation museums in the state including the existing museum of aviation history at the Eastern West Virginia Regional Airport - Shepherd Field.

Currently, Bart can be found working on a new aviation library that will be featured at the airport. In the beginning, Bart shared his treasure trove of aviation books by installing five bookshelves in the existing pilot’s lounge. Due to its popularity and an acquisition of an even larger collection, the project has taken on a life of its own with a dedicated facility at the airport. His ultimate vision for the library is for it to become a community resource where other passionate individuals can learn more about different aspects of aviation. Eventually, his hope is that the library will not only attract like-minded people, but younger members of the community interested in aviation. He envisions school tours and partnerships will inspire a new generation of aviation professionals and will become an homage to the airport’s early days when it also served as an aviation outreach center

in the 1920's for the community.

Bart's enthusiasm for cultivating the airport's value as a community resource doesn't end there. He has served as a volunteer coordinator for a number of air shows at the airport in the past. His first experience putting on an air show was during the airport's 80th birthday where he coordinated with the local chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) and organized speakers to celebrate the huge milestone at the airport.

Bart animatedly spoke about how air shows should be a requirement at airports due to their huge community impact, "...people love airports and airplanes - all the noise and the dust - they love all of it." He noted that they work in coordination with the West Virginia Air National Guard and most of the proceeds go to benefit the United Way. He noted, "It's a great fundraiser and we have got to get back to doing more air shows." Not only do air shows bring a community together, they inspire people in the community and empower them to want to pursue a lifelong career in aviation.

He states that with the development in the area, the airport serves as a huge community resource in an economic sense. He expressed that some people realize there's an airport in their community, but it brings so much in terms of economic activity for the region.