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Travis Spark Challenge Inspires High School Students

Travis Air Force Base, CA - The 2024 Travis AFB Phoenix Spark Challenge saw an excellent turnout of more than 48 students from Northern California high schools during the Wings Over Solano air show and open house on March 15, 2024. Solano County Office of Education partnered with Travis Air Force Base again this year to connect students with the opportunity to participate in the problem-solving competition held on base.

"We're grateful for the ongoing partnership between Solano County Office of Education and Travis Air Force Base. Together, we're fostering a passion for problem solving and exposing our young people to real-world applications of STEM concepts," commented Solano County Superintendent of Schools Lisette Estrella-Henderson.

This year's challenge, themed "Glider Design Project," aimed to ignite the passion for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) among high school students. Participants were tasked with researching, designing, and prototyping an unpowered foam board glider aircraft, with the goal of achieving flights of 50+ feet when launched by hand from an 8-foot platform.

"This is an incredibly positive event to bring together students across Northern California who are interested in STEM, and really harness their energy, their ideas and their competitive spirit," said U.S. Air Force Brigadier General Derek Salmi, 60th Air Mobility Wing commander.

Students gathered in a hangar to launch their gliders and present their research, competing for awards across a variety of categories. The results of the competition were as follows:

Best Flight Duration: "Flying Bulldogs" from Turlock High School in Turlock Unified School District.

Best Flight Distance: "Fly Boys" from Winters High School in Winters Joint Unified School District.

Best Research: Tie between "TuCanDolt" of Winters High School from Winters Joint Unified School and "Wildcat Aviation" from Will C. Wood High School in Vacaville Unified School District.

Overall Design: "The Wrong Brothers" from Winters High School in Winters Joint Unified School District.

Overall Top Team: "Flying Bulldogs" from Turlock High School in Turlock Unified School District.

The Travis Spark Challenge not only showcased the talent and innovation of high school students but also provided them with a platform to apply their knowledge in practical settings. The event fostered collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among the participants, setting the stage for their future endeavors in STEM fields.

Solano County Office of Education extends gratitude to all participants, coaches, and volunteers who contributed to the success of the 2024 Travis AFB Phoenix Spark Challenge.

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