AVFUEL HONORS AVIATORS WITH ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

News / Business aviation, Maintenance / Trainings

Avfuel Corporation proudly announces its 27th scholarship class, awarding $5,500 in funds to individuals pursuing careers and advancements in aviation.In total, one AVTRIP scholarship recipient and three Avfuel Pilot-in-Training Scholarship recipients were selected from the 2025 applicant pool: Amber Mielke, Andrea Ritter, Cooper Donaghy and Jacob Gentile.

Amber Mielke from Rockford, Michigan, received the AVTRIP scholarship worth $2,000. Mielke has spent eight years building a diverse aviation career as an FAA-certified A&P mechanic with Inspection Authorization and private pilot with an Instrument Rating. Having recently surpassed 250 flight hours, she is preparing for her commercial pilot checkride and plans to use the scholarship funds for training at Clear2Aviate where she's working toward both her commercial

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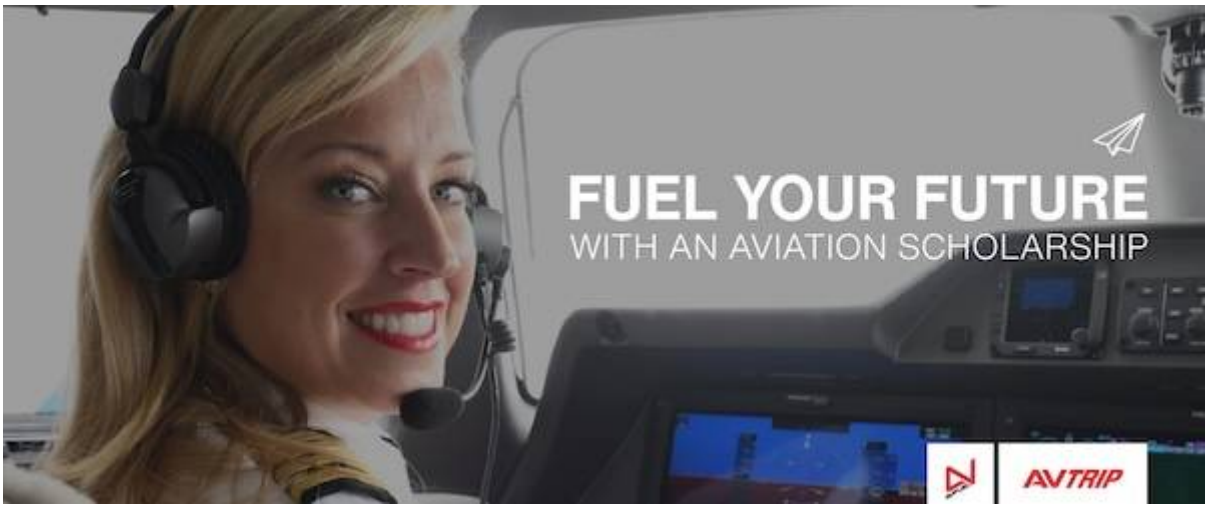
pilot and certified flight instructor certificates. Mielke's long-term goal is to become a seaplane fishing guide in Alaska and operate her own aviation maintenance business, growing from a skilled mechanic and pilot to a multifaceted aviation professional.

Andrea Ritter, $1,500 Pilot-in-Training Scholarship recipient, will use her funds to attend Flex Air. Ritter is a student pilot training at Flex Air in Manhattan, Kansas. Raised just north of Philadelphia, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Physics from the University of Texas at Dallas before transitioning into the aviation industry with aspirations for an airline career. "Though I still love physics, looking into my future on that path never filled me with the excitement I felt when I first considered a life as an airline pilot," said Ritter. With this award, Ritter will advance her flight training while working toward her instrument rating. She hopes to one day be a mentor to young women in aviation.



Cooper Donaghy of Lexington, South Carolina, is the recipient of a $1,000 Pilot-in-Training Scholarship. Donaghy grew up near Columbia Metropolitan Airport where early visits to watch aircraft take off and land sparked a lasting interest in aviation, and years of hands-on exploration through flight instruction and simulators. Donaghy will apply the scholarship funds toward a career in aviation, advancing a lifelong goal of becoming a commercial helicopter pilot in law enforcement. Donaghy said with this scholarship, "I would be able to give back to my community, help keep the people in my area safe and be able to do my dream job at the same time."

Jacob Gentile of Staunton, Virginia, is the recipient of a $1,000 Pilot-in-Training Scholarship. Gentile was born in California and spent his childhood traveling the world as part of an Air Force family. His passion for aviation took shape through air shows and stories shared by his father. Gentile is currently a high school senior pursuing his private pilot license, and will use the scholarship funds to continue his training at Eagles Nest Flight Services. His ultimate goal is to become a commercial airline pilot while also flying for the Air National Guard. Gentile said, "Ultimately, my focus on education isn't just about my career; it's about giving back by building a strong community and ensuring the industry's success for years to come."

These four AVTRIP and Avfuel Pilot-in-Training Scholarships are in addition to another $30,000 awarded in 2025 as part of the Sheltair & Avfuel: Future Takes Flight Scholarship Program, which provided $5,000 scholarships to six aviators.

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Applications for the 2026 AVTRIP and Avfuel Pilot-In-Training Scholarships open March 1. The 2026 Sheltair & Avfuel: Future Takes Flight Scholarship applications are currently available on Avfuel's website. To read more about these opportunities and apply, please visit Avfuel.com/scholarships.

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