

## Mentors' Work Recognized By Aeronautical Museum

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3/19/2008 - **Los Angeles Air Force Base** -- "A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could," quote from Unknown author. That is exactly what Lt. Col. Ivan Thompson, Space and Missile Systems Center's Directorate of Staff; and Lt. Col. Richard Williams, Developmental Planning Directorate, were recognized for during an award presentation by Tomorrow's Aeronautical Museum in Compton, Calif., March 15.

The Trailblazer Award was given to the two Air Force Reservists for their leadership in the community with specific support to the TAM's youth program, which is a non-profit organization that teaches disadvantaged children to fly planes and helicopters in return for community service.

Colonel Thompson stated that they received this award for the work they had done to help the program overall through generating support with the Tuskegee Airman locally and nationally and trying to build a partnership with TAM and March Air Reserve Base. He also added that the award was given to him for getting the program to Los Angeles Air Force Base right before Jonathan Strickland's historic flight, and for other work nationally to increase the number of minority aviators. (Jonathan Strickland at age 16 is the youngest African-American pilot to solo six airplanes and one helicopter in the same day.)

Receiving the award encouraged him to triple his efforts and give more of his time, mentioned Colonel Thompson. He believes these children are our future Air Force pilots and next generation of Tuskegee Airmen. Colonel Thompson would like to generate greater Air Force support on a national level for this youth program.

Both lieutenant colonels are part of the Air Force Cadet Officer Mentor Action Program, which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, and nonsectarian organization and officially recognized by the Air Force.

"AFCOMAP is an organization that provides mentoring and professional and leadership development to company grade officers and officer candidates (cadets)", he said. "It also has a special emphasis on the mentoring and retention of minority officers and cadets and on encouraging minority youth in the community to consider an Air Force career. Our involvement with TAM is to help these young world-record holding minority aviators consider an Air Force career and provide them with positive role models."

The local Los Angeles AFB Chapter has less than 10 members and has become a super

committee that helps plan base-wide events, interfaces with the CGOC, recruits CGO mentors and provides one-on-one mentoring and professional development advice.

"There are a lot of things that young boys and girls in Compton could be doing instead of preparing to break world flight records," said Colonel Thompson. "For the program to continue, we need role models to continue to inspire these kids to do the positive things they are doing."

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