

San Antonio ACE Camp 2007

San Antonio youth were treated to an exciting ACE Camp, which was held July 16-21, the camp was sponsored by individuals and locally based corporations.

The San Antonio Library designated one of its branches to be the site for the ACE classroom. This provided a convenient location for students that lived in various sections of the city. The conference room of the library made it convenient to research the various assigned aviation topics discussed during the classroom sessions.

The San Antonio ACE program is designed around the concept of classroom activities and guest lecturers during the morning hours. Late mornings and afternoons are used for travel to the many aviation- related facilities around the city.

The 2007 camp visited many exciting locations. One such location was a day-long experience at Randolph Air Force Base invited by the commander of Air Education and Training Command (AETC). There the students were treated to briefings regarding the mission of AETC. They toured various operational and maintenance facilities around the base including the reconstituted 99th Training Squadron; The Red Tails. This squadron named for the Tuskegee Airmen serves also as a museum of remembrance for the famed Black aviators.

The ACE students were permitted to have lunch at the base dining facility where they had the opportunity to discuss the careers of the young airmen not far removed in age from them. Other tours included visits to corporate flight departments, international airport control tower and radar facilities, airport fire house, airline ramp operations area, and aviation maintenance training schools. Guest speakers included pilots of foreign airlines, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officials, airport directors, and airport police representatives.

The ACE camp introduced various aspects of aviation by way of tours, guest speakers and individual research. The San Antonio Police Helicopter Detail hosted the students at their facility to discuss aviation's role in law enforcement and the career opportunities available. On this "helicopter day" they visited the facility that conducted helicopter operations for the various television stations as well as the local helicopter ambulance service that serves the city and surrounding areas. These visits and others were all conducted from the standpoint of introducing aviation as a career choice. Speakers addressed how they came to be in their part of aviation and encouraged the students to consider the same.

The San Antonio ACE Camp is restricted to a relatively small number of students due to the limited number of volunteers to act as staff. The camp, however, is highly sought after by many more than can be accommodated. Each year, students from other cities in Texas and other states come to San Antonio with their families in order to attend the camp if selected. Another reason for this is the knowledge that San Antonio is rich in aviation facilities and the camp affords the opportunity to see most of them.

The 2008 San Antonio ACE Camp will be held July 14-19. We welcome any OBAP members to come and join us. One of the highlights of this year's camp will be the participation by the students in the NASA sponsored Challenger Learning Center. As mentioned before, this camp is supported entirely by donated funds. We feel it is only fair that the local communities act to support their own youth. We encourage other ACE camps to do the same.

Calvin L. Allen, Director
San Antonio ACE Camp
Captain, Delta Airlines