



**Contact: Cassandro Bosco
202-415-2798**

AVIATION PIONEER FRAN BERA TO RECEIVE 2011 KATHARINE WRIGHT AWARD

Washington, DC, June 30, 2011 – The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) announced that Fran Bera will receive the prestigious Katharine Wright Award for “a lifetime working in aviation, setting records, and mentoring young people; at 86, she is still flying and encouraging young pilots to attain their aviation goals.”

This award is presented annually to a woman who has contributed to the success of others, or made a personal contribution to the advancement of the art, sport and science of aviation and space flight over an extended period of time. The award was named in honor of Orville and Wilbur Wright’s sister, Katharine, who was a crucial supporter of her brothers’ timeless work in the development of the first airplane.

"The Katherine Wright Trophy is a very important acknowledgement of the role that women have assumed in the aviation and aerospace industry in America, and Fran Bera is a much deserved recipient of this great honor," said NAA President and CEO Jonathan Gaffney.

"Fran has broken through every ceiling imaginable to become an icon for all women who pursue an interest in aviation," noted 99s President Susan Larson. "The 99s is so proud that she is a 62-year member."

Bera began flying in 1940 at the age of 16 and has been flying continuously ever since. Going on to advanced ratings, including her Airline Transport Pilot license, Fran was one of the first women in the 1940s to be designated as a Federal Aviation Agency Pilot Examiner, a role which continued for more than 25 years during which time she had licensed over 3,000 pilots.

With more than 25,000 hours, Fran has been a chief pilot for various aviation firms, a charter pilot, flight operations manager, and has owned and operated her own flight school and aircraft sales business.

In the 1960s, Fran was asked to participate in a week long testing program of potential women astronauts. She also is a record-setting air race pilot.

Fran has a long list of awards and accolades, including induction into the Women In Aviation Pioneer Hall of Fame, the International hall of Fame, the 99s Award of Achievement and the NAA 2006 Elder Statesman of Aviation award.

In addition to Gaffney and Larson, members of the Selection Committee included Mary Miller, Signature Flight Support; Lisa Piccione, National Business Aviation Association; Shelly Simi, Jeppesen, and Bill Garvey, Business and Commercial Aviation Magazine.

The award will be presented at the NAA Fall Awards Banquet on Monday, November 7, 2011, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia.

The National Aeronautic Association is a non-profit, membership organization devoted to fostering America's aerospace leadership and promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States.

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