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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

2024 Travis AFB Phoenix Spark challenges local high school students

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By Tech. Sgt. Savannah L. Waters

60th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. -- More than 48 students from four local high schools came out to participate in the 2024 Travis AFB Phoenix Spark Challenge during Travis AFB's Wings Over Solano air show and open house March 15, 2024.

This year's challenge was focused on the theme "Glider Design Project." These students were challenged to research, design and prototype an unpowered foam board glider aircraft, and showcase them during the air show.

The Phoenix Spark cell at Travis AFB highlights in their mission statement "innovation of the warfighter, by the warfighter, of the warfighter." According to Spark members, the goal of this event was to foster innovation and experimentation among young students to create a culture of change in the future of STEM career fields.

"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 Brig. Gen. Derek Salmi, 60th Air Mobility Wing commander.

Students launched their gliders in a hangar and presented their research to compete for awards in the categories of Best Flight Duration, Best Flight Distance, Overall Design, Best Research and Overall Top Team.

"We're super excited and the kids thoroughly enjoyed it," said Kelley Birch, Solano County Office of Education college and career readiness director. "It's a great opportunity for students to do something outside of the classroom, showcase their skills and visit the base."

The winning teams were awarded STEM trophies and a certificate of achievement for their accomplishments. After the event, students were given the opportunity to visit static displays and watch aerial performances during the air show and open house.

"I really loved it, it was awesome to talk to people and I learned a lot," said Jewel Johnson, Will C. Wood High School student. "I think the most important part about this is the connections that we're making along the way."

