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## Bolden to help kids soar, honor Tuskegee Airman

By Helaine Williams

This article was published January 11, 2015 at 2:22 a.m.



PHOTO BY SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE  
 Terence Bolden, president of the nonprofit Milton P. Crenshaw Aviation Training Academy, here with nephew Phillip Johnson, 9, says getting the academy off the ground has had its challenges but has benefited from "a solid online database of contacts who have supported us to get up and going."



Terence Bolden, president of the Milton P. Crenshaw Aviation Training Academy, shakes hands with Crenshaw the man, who served as primary flight instru...

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Terence Bolden isn't one to take the easy path.

He wheels and deals on a global scale as chief executive officer of TLB Enterprises Group Holding, a company designed to aid small and medium-size companies with growth and global business operations, and of SebaiCMET,

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a wave energy company (that's ocean waves, or tidal energy). Both are headquartered in the United Arab Emirates, where Bolden has lived for the last three years.

Still, the former Little Rock resident and Allport native has a presence in Little Rock -- he's president of the Milton P. Crenshaw Aviation Training Academy. It's an upstart after-school program that would give young students a jump-start in the kind of education and tutoring necessary to succeed in the aviation and aerospace fields. Bolden and other adults would bring the means and the funding; kids would bring the opportunity and determination.

He's spearheading the academy's third awards banquet and 96th Birthday Celebration honoring Crenshaw on Saturday at Philander Smith College.

Award recipients this year will include the late Marlon D. Green, an El Dorado native and Continental Airlines pilot whose 1957-63 court battle with the company helped end racial bias in hiring in the passenger airline industry. Green will be the posthumous recipient of the Courage in Aviation Award. (Green died in 2009. Accepting the award will be Green's brother Allen of Little Rock.)

Other awards to be given include the Milton P. Crenshaw Lifetime Achievement Award, the Milton P. Crenshaw Aviation Training Academy Community Partnership Award, and the Willie C. Smith Aviation Service Award.

#### COME FLY WITH US

Getting the word out about the academy, and gaining partnerships for it, has been "a huge challenge," Bolden says. "As a grassroots organization working strictly with volunteers and through our board, it is tough." Their one advantage is that the name Milton P. Crenshaw carries a high Q score in the capital city.

(Crenshaw, who now lives in Atlanta with his daughter, is too frail to attend this year's event. He will visit by Internet video conference.)

The academy operates with the help of 10 volunteers and is currently seeking a paid, part-time program coordinator.

Bolden's biggest challenge managing these operations is the time-zone difference between Little Rock and Abu Dhabi, which is 10 hours ahead the during winter months. So he devotes very late, or very early hours to working with volunteers, committee members, support staff and the board and, like Crenshaw this Saturday, often "meets" by video conferencing.

After a 14-month delay in getting its nonprofit status due to red tape, the academy is finally taking flight, to use a fitting phrase. It now has a partnership with the Little Rock School District's Cloverdale Aerospace Technology Conversion Charter Middle School, helping mentor young people in its aerospace program. It's also developing a weekend Aviation Awareness Program that will begin in February or March and lead into its five-week Summer Aviation Program, Bolden says. The academy will then expand its after-school engagement with Cloverdale in the fall while continuing its weekend program.

The training academy "can help fill the gap for students going to [John L. McClellan Magnet High School] in the future who will lose direct access to aviation programs," he says.

#### THE FIRST EIGHT

The academy has organized much of the structure, intake forms, recruitment process and other aspects of the weekend Aviation Awareness Program, and is now in the process of recruiting its first eight cadets. Those first eight cadets, sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders, will be selected from the Cloverdale aerospace program through a combined team from Cloverdale and the academy.

If all goes well, cadets will advance from the weekend program into a groundbreaking after-school program for students in the ninth through 12th grades that will begin in spring next year. The cadets can start taking flying lessons at age 16, Bolden says.

The academy is also seeking volunteers to sign up for the after-school and weekend programs. A

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number of volunteers have already signed on, but "we need much more help," Bolden says.

The academy recently received a small grant to this end. And not a moment too soon, it seems. Aerospace corporation Boeing Co. has estimated that 460,000 new pilots would be needed between now and 2031. But Bolden cites articles that indicate the number of pilots needed in the future may be larger still.

"The world is now truly globally connected, and economic success is linked in a way that demands increased air travel," he says.

Third annual Awards Banquet and 96th Birthday Celebration honoring Crenshaw, 7 p.m. Saturday, Kendall Nugent Center of Philander Smith College, 900 Daisy Gatson Bates Drive in Little Rock. Tickets: \$25 in advance; \$35 at the door. Remaining tickets are very limited. Call Tami East at (501) 831-8984. or email teast3@comcast.net. For more information about the academy, visit mpcata.org.

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