



**Contact: Cassandra Bosco**  
**202-415-2798**  
**cbosco@naa.aero**

## **NAA Announces Barrington Irving as Recipient of the Brewer Trophy for Aviation Education**

Arlington, Virginia, September 23, 2013 – The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) announced today that Barrington Irving will be the recipient of the Frank G. Brewer Trophy for Aviation Education. The Brewer Trophy is presented annually for “...significant contributions of enduring value to aerospace education in the United States.”

Jonathan Gaffney, President and CEO of the National Aeronautic Association and Chairman of the Selection Committee, said “Barrington Irving’s inspirational story combined with his passion and dedication to aviation education is apparent in all he has done. He truly reflects the spirit of the Brewer Trophy.”

Barrington Irving was raised in Miami's inner city, surrounded by crime, poverty, and failing schools. He beat the odds, however, to become the youngest person and only African American ever to fly solo around the world. He built a plane himself, made his historic flight, graduated Magna Cum Laude from an aeronautical science program, and founded a dynamic educational non-profit – all before the age of 28.

His message for kids: *"The only thing that separates you from CEOs in corner offices or scientists in labs is determination, hard work, and a passion for what you want to achieve. The only person who can stop you from doing something great is you. Even if no one believes in your dream, you have to pursue it."*

The moment of inspiration for Irving came at age 15 while working in his parent's bookstore. One of their customers, a Jamaican born professional pilot, asked Irving if he'd ever thought about becoming a pilot. *"I told him I didn't think I was smart enough; but the next day he gave me the chance to sit in the cockpit of the commercial airplane he flew, and just like that I was hooked. There are probably millions of kids out there like me who find science and exploration amazing, but lack the confidence or opportunity to take the next step."*

To follow his dream, Irving turned down a full football scholarship to the University of Florida. Instead, he washed airplanes to earn money for flight school and increased his flying skills by practicing at home on a flight simulator video game.

Then another dream took hold: flying solo around the world. He faced more than 50 rejections for sponsorship before convincing several manufacturers to donate individual aircraft components. He orchestrated the assembly of the plane from the donated parts and took off with no weather radar, no de-icing system, and just thirty dollars in his pocket. *"I like to do things people say I can't do."* After 97 days, 26 stops, and dozens of thunderstorms, monsoons, snowstorms, and sandstorms, he touched down to a roaring crowd in Miami.

Irving's non-profit, Experience Aviation, aims to boost the numbers of youth in aviation and other science and math related careers. Middle and high school students attend summer and after-school programs tackling hands-on robotics projects, flight simulator challenges, and field trips to major industries and corporations. In his 'Build and Soar' program, 60 students from failing schools built an airplane from scratch in just ten weeks and then watched Irving pilot it into the clouds.

Irving's next endeavor will transform a jet into a flying classroom that will circle the globe sharing science, technology, engineering, math, geography, culture, and history. The web-based experience will make it easy for kids to participate at home and school, voting on everything from where Irving should make a fuel stop to what local food he should sample. He plans to call classrooms from the cockpit; broadcast live video from 45,000 feet; blog with students; collect atmospheric data; communicate with the International Space Station; and wear a NASA body suit that transmits his heart rate, blood pressure, and other vital signs.

Among Barrington's many accolades is a 2007 Congressional Resolution acknowledging his historic achievement and his pioneering work in the field of aviation education. A Magna Cum Laude graduate of Florida Memorial University, he is also the recipient of the highest honor given by the Florida State Senate, the Medallion of Excellence.

Members of the Brewer Trophy Selection Committee were: Frank G. Brewer III, President, Brewer Trophy Aviation Education Association; Shelly Simi, Jeppesen; and former Brewer Trophy recipients Carolyn Williamson (UAA – 2008), Debbie Gallaway (2004) and Phil Woodruff (2003). Jonathan Gaffney served as the Committee Chairman.

The award will be presented at the NAA Fall Awards Banquet on Tuesday, November 12 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.***

# # #