

# ADVANTAGE

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A photographic series by  
Dereck and Beverly Joubert

### **A Leader's Evolution**

Embraer unveils the next generation  
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Northern Morocco: A journey  
of place, people and history



# TURNING INSPIRATION INTO ENTRY

The aviation industry faces a critical workforce shortage, but a powerful partnership between the Embraer Foundation, the DreamLaunch Tour and AviationStart is changing how young people discover and enter careers in aviation



For many students, aviation is something they admire from a distance: airplanes overhead, uniforms in terminals, a sense of mystery about how anyone gets started. The Embraer Foundation is helping change that narrative by partnering with the DreamLaunch Tour and AviationStart, two initiatives designed to meet students early, spark curiosity and then provide clear, achievable pathways into aviation careers.

## What is DreamLaunch?

The DreamLaunch Tour is a nationwide, FAA-endorsed aviation workforce development program designed to inspire middle school, high school and early college students to explore aviation careers and understand their first concrete step into the industry. Since launching in 2005, DreamLaunch has grown into the largest aviation workforce-development tour in the country, anchoring more than **1,000 events** and reaching over **68,000 students** nationwide.

“DreamLaunch is about making aviation real,” said Jamail Larkins, Founder of AviationStart. “Students don’t just hear that careers exist. They see the airplanes, meet the professionals and walk away knowing exactly what their first step is.”

This mission was recently brought to life in Dallas-Fort Worth at the Commemorative Air Force’s National Aviation Education Center. Surrounded by historic World War II aircraft, including one of only two flying B-29s in the world, hundreds of students were immersed in aviation’s past while learning how to build its future. The event featured dynamic presentations outlining career opportunities, available scholarships and legitimate pathways into roles such as pilot, aircraft maintenance technician, engineer, and air traffic controller.

By engaging directly with flight schools, A&P programs and potential employers, including Embraer’s Fort Worth MRO facility, students were able to transform abstract inspiration into a tangible career roadmap.

## From inspiration to action: AviationStart

If DreamLaunch ignites interest, AviationStart ensures that momentum doesn’t fade. Created as a follow-on to the Tour, AviationStart serves as the digital entry point for aspiring aviation professionals across all career paths—not just pilots. The platform provides access to millions of dollars in scholarships, step-by-step career roadmaps, training guidance, and a comprehensive resource library designed to help students navigate aviation more efficiently and affordably.

This support addresses a critical challenge. Aviation training is notoriously difficult to navigate alone, with pilot training often cited as having washout rates approaching **80%** due to financial barriers, poor school selection and costly missteps. Similar challenges exist across maintenance, airport operations and technical careers.

“AviationStart is designed to eliminate trial and error,” Larkins explained. “It gives students the kind of insight most people only gain after years in the industry, helping them save money, make smarter decisions and stay on track from day one.”

## Real results, real stories

The results are already measurable. In less than seven months, more than **14,000 self-identified aspiring aviation professionals** have registered on AviationStart, with growth continuing at approximately **2,000 new students** each month. The platform has scaled to the point that it has replaced the FAA’s former official scholarship recommendation and is now listed as a recommended supplemental resource by organizations including NBAA, GAMA, AMA, and OBAP.

Equally powerful are the individual success stories. One such example is John Hill, who attended a DreamLaunch event in Leesburg, Virginia, while still in high school. Within weeks, he secured a job at his local FBO, began gaining airport experience, and ultimately became a pilot.

“DreamLaunch was the first time I understood how to actually get involved in aviation,” Hill later shared. “It gave me clarity and confidence.”

## Why partnerships matter now

Partnerships like the Embraer Foundation’s are especially critical at a time when the aviation industry faces a looming workforce gap.

“At the Embraer Foundation, we believe that meaningful industry partnerships are the key to inspiring the next generation of aviation leaders. Our collaboration with AviationStart and the DreamLaunch Tour, alongside the National Aviation Hall of Fame, has created an incredible platform to engage youth, ignite curiosity, and provide hands-on experiences that open doors to careers in aviation. By combining resources, expertise, and a shared vision, we’re not just educating students, we’re empowering them to dream big, pursue their passions, and envision themselves as future innovators in this dynamic industry,” said Monica Newman McCluney, Head of U.S. Corporate Social Responsibility & the Embraer Foundation.

According to CAE’s workforce forecast, **83%** of today’s aviation mechanics and nearly half of all pilots are expected to exit the industry within the next decade. Meanwhile, aviation remains complex, expensive and intimidating for newcomers competing against countless other career options.

“Partnerships like Embraer’s help turn interest into entry and entry into careers,” Larkins said. “That’s exactly what the industry needs to secure its future workforce. Prestige alone isn’t enough to sustain the future workforce; students need clarity, access and a path they can actually follow.”

Looking ahead, the mission is scaling even further. AviationStart is now being embedded within the National Aviation Hall of Fame’s educational curriculum, reaching more than **6,000 classrooms** nationwide and extending the DreamLaunch mission into a long-term, sustainable pipeline. Together, the Embraer Foundation, DreamLaunch and AviationStart are helping ensure that more students don’t just dream about aviation—they enter it, thrive in it and help secure the industry’s future. ◀



Opposite: As Founder of AviationStart, Jamail Larkins leads a platform that serves as the digital entry point for aspiring aviation professionals

Left: The DreamLaunch Tour is a nationwide program inspiring middle, high school and early college students to explore aviation careers

WORDS Jeanna Wood. IMAGES Courtesy of AviationStart.