

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Operation: This *IS* You! takes off with the Canadian Coast Guard

Achieve Anything Foundation launches a new series of hands-on experience events to inspire more women in Aviation, Aerospace, Marine & Defence and other STEM fields



Vancouver, BC - August 21, 2017 – Select females will have the opportunity to see many facets of the Coast Guard at an inaugural experience event. The event will be held at the Coast Guard's Sea Island base at YVR International Airport on Saturday, October 14.

Activities include tours of base duty stations, an interactive search & rescue exercise, dive demonstration, educational games, firehose challenge, and a ride to sea in the hovercraft. For more information on this, and other upcoming events, please visit www.achieveanything.ca

The October 14 event is the first in a series of hands-on experience events

being organized by the Achieve Anything Foundation. These extraordinary events are being hosted by the Coast Guard and other agency and industry partners keen on improving gender diversity within their organizations and promoting opportunities for women in what many still perceive as “non-traditional” fields.

The Canadian Coast Guard operates a fleet of ships, hovercrafts and helicopters to protect the longest coastline of any country worldwide. From assuring Canada's marine safety and security, to protecting marine ecosystems and scientific research, there are many interesting career opportunities available for women. The Coast Guard is mission-ready, operating in nearly all weather conditions, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

“We're excited to participate in this hands-on approach to interest women in the Coast Guard. This IS You! I like that message” says Joanne McNish, Regional Director Fleet, Canadian Coast Guard. *“There are so many options to be a part of coastal history: pilot or repair ships, help mariners in distress, work with search and rescue, environmental response and so much more. Join us October 14th and experience your new career.”*

The Achieve Anything Foundation is a federally incorporated not-for-profit organization with a mission to inspire female future leaders in STEM (science, technology, engineering & math), and STEM-based fields such as Aviation, Aerospace, Marine & Defence.

With the mantra “*From shop floor to top floor*” the foundation employs a unique hands-on approach towards changing perceptions and addressing gender disparity in high tech-fields.

Achieve Anything President, Kirsten Brazier, is delighted to be working with the Coast Guard on this new venture. *“The Coast Guard has been a fantastic champion of our annual airport-based events. I’m excited that with their support we are now able to launch this new series of events in their regular marine environment. As we grow **Operation: This IS You!** we look forward to hands-on events hosted by other agency and industry partners. We can’t expect women to imagine a career they’ve had no connection with. We need to get them sailing, flying, working with tools of the trade and engaging with role models in the technical fields before we can expect real improvements to gender diversity.”*

This hands-on approach has proven very successful for the foundation’s signature event **The Sky’s No Limit – Girls Fly Too!**, held annually during the week of International Women’s Day. Since 2012 the family-friendly, free event has grown from 1,500 to 15,000 participants, with 20,000 expected in 2018.

Events have been supported by the Canadian Coast Guard, RCMP, Canadian Forces, Cadets, Canadian Space Agency, US Air Force, US Navy and other agency, industry and education partners. Special guests have included NASA Astronauts Wendy Lawrence and Heide Stefanyshyn-Piper, the Honourable Harjit Sajjan, Minister of National Defence and the Honourable Judith Guichon, Lieutenant Governor for British Columbia. Free helicopter rides are provided to hundreds of female first-time fliers of all ages to draw the females to the airport and pique their interest in further exploring the many hands-on ground activities. Visit www.girlsfly2.ca for more information.

Purpose:

Out of 25,413 professional pilots in Canada, only 5.8% of them are women. Out of 17,278 aircraft engineers, only 2.3% of them are women. Women account for only 4% of the technical trades and less than 3% of the top command positions in the Canadian Forces.

From the numbers, it would be tempting to conclude that women are either uninterested or unwelcome in these fields. Instead, studies have shown that a common perception persists that Aviation, Aerospace, Marine and Defence are industries reserved for men. From an early age, males and females alike are affected by this perception message, which is continually reinforced by observation (lack of change), media, social media and advertising. The low numbers also mean that most women have no direct family or peer connection to these target industries. Therefore, it is unreasonable to expect gender and cultural diversity to resolve naturally in these fields.

Achieve Anything Foundation’s **Operation: This IS You!, The Sky’s No Limit – Girls Fly Too!** and other events, projects and programs aim to change this perception and awaken new interests by providing females of all ages with fun, interactive, and hands-on introductions into STEM and STEM-based fields.

Brazier is a professional pilot from the Lower Mainland, BC and she holds Airline Transport Ratings for both aeroplanes and helicopters. With 24 years of flying experience, Brazier has enjoyed a diverse career flying across Canada, US and the Caribbean on wheels, floats, skis and skids as well as two-crew operations in both aeroplanes and helicopters.

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