Championing diversity in aviation » For decades, the airline industry has been dominated by men, with scant representation from ethnic minorities.

Drawing from census information, 92.3% of aircraft pilots and flight engineers in the U.S. are white, and 93% are male, reports Data USA. There are studies that show female and minority representation has improved in the past two decades, but the industry’s rapid growth translates to a high demand for talent to fill these and other airline jobs.

Enter JetBlue, which is actively promoting awareness and engagement among females and ethnic minorities through targeted JetBlue Foundation initiatives in Utah and beyond. One such effort is the paradigm-shifting airline’s “Fly Like a Girl” event, which departed its New York City origins for the first time in 2018 to bring the event to Utah. More than 100 Utah girls, ages 8 to 14, joined female JetBlue leaders, pilots, technicians, and inflight and ground crews for an insider’s view of the aviation industry in an afternoon of hands-on engagement activities at Atlantic Aviation. The highlight came when the hangar doors were pulled back to reveal a JetBlue Airbus 320, its entryway open with smiling JetBlue pilots, inflight members, and technicians
More than 100 Utah girls participated in JetBlue’s Salt Lake City “Fly Like a Girl” event in September 2018. An all-female crew gave the participants an insider’s look at aviation jobs, complete with hands-on experiences.

“'I do everything I can to show women and young girls that pursuing a non-traditional career is possible for them.'

— BECKY ROMAN-AMADOR
JETBLUE CAPTAIN

A great starting point is the stem.utah.gov website, where there are several resources, including listings of afterschool and summertime programs throughout the state,” said Dr. Goetz. “We need to increase the number of women role models and really examine our micro- and macro-messaging around STEM pursuits. What we’re facing in the disparity is impacting our innovation, creativity potential and competitiveness.”

Ultimately, increasing any child’s likelihood of STEM engagement comes through providing hands-on, real-life opportunities, encouraging words, and above all, role models.

“It’s so important to be the example that inspires young girls to pursue aviation dreams, especially among minority populations,” Captain Roman-Amador emphasized. “If I could live out my dream, so can they. When I wear my uniform, I wear it as proudly as I can – because when young girls see someone who looks like them, they believe.”

Many thanks to the JetBlue team, Women in Flight group, and Captain Becky Roman-Amador.