

U.S. Air Force Academy receives largest gift for Character and Leadership Development in school history

Colorado Springs, Colo. – July 26, 2011 – The United States Air Force Academy Endowment is pleased to announce, on behalf of the Air Force Academy, the largest single gift for character and leadership development in the institution’s history.

Mr. Sanford “Sandy” McDonnell and members of the McDonnell family have committed \$5 million towards the construction of the new Center for Character and Leadership Development at the Academy.

Academy officials hale the \$5 million commitment as a pivotal point in the development of the new facility. “We are delighted to receive such a transformative gift; it is truly a game-changing commitment at this critical moment in our institution’s history,” says General Gould, Superintendent of the Academy. “This Center marks a new era in our mission of developing leaders of character for our nation—one devoted to a perfect balance of excellence in body, mind and spirit, and grounded in the Academy’s core values.”

This major donation honors Sandy McDonnell, whose lifelong dedication to character education inspired the gift. Mr. McDonnell was chairman and chief executive officer of the McDonnell Douglas Corporation for seven years, and served the company for a total of 40 years. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II, and holds degrees from Princeton University, the University of Colorado, and Washington University. He is a co-founder and chairman emeritus of the Character Education Partnership in Washington, DC, and chairman of CHARACTER*plus*, a public school character education initiative in the St. Louis Region.

“We are proud to be part of this exciting project, and to honor Sandy,” says John F. McDonnell, former CEO of McDonnell Douglas and a current Director of the Boeing Company. “We laud him for his unwavering dedication and perseverance in his lifelong pursuit of making America a nation of character.”

General (Retired) Steve Lorenz, President of the Endowment, shared his thoughts on the recent gift: “I am moved by the McDonnell family’s thoughtful support and generosity. As a pioneer and longtime leader in the aerospace industry, Sandy understands the complex challenges that face each successive generation of newly commissioned officers at the Academy. His willingness to lead our efforts ensures that our graduates are prepared as leaders of character for our nation.”

The gift was additionally motivated by the service of Sandy McDonnell’s grandson, Captain William Sanford MacVittie, Class of 2006. Captain MacVittie recently completed his third deployment, having flown 124 combat missions in the C-17 Globemaster III.

“The Air Force Academy is leading the way for other universities in our nation because they believe character development is as important as academic knowledge,” says Mr. McDonnell. “With the new Center for Character and Leadership, the Academy is poised to elevate character education to an entirely new level.”

The Center for Character and Leadership Development will be the first organization of its kind in the United States—the focal point for the total integration of character and leadership development into all aspects of the Academy experience. Under the guidance of nationally recognized scholars, the Center will conduct sophisticated research and develop best practices to spearhead advancements in the field. When complete, the new Center is poised to become the intellectual and physical nexus for national character and leadership dialogue in the 21st century.

For more information on the Center for Character and Leadership Development, please contact:

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