

Shaesta Waiz

Founder & Pilot Dreams Soar, Inc.



After 145 days, 22 countries visited across five continents, and 32 outreach events inspiring more than 3,000 young girls and boys, Shaesta Waiz completed her global solo flight on October 4, 2017, returning to Daytona Beach International Airport to mark the completion of this historic circumnavigation for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and aviation education. At the age of 30, Shaesta is the youngest woman to fly solo around the world in a single-engine aircraft. Her journey to this endeavor was no easy road.

Born in an Afghan refugee camp, Shaesta and her family traveled from Afghanistan to America in 1987 to escape the Soviet-Afghan war. One of six sisters, Shaesta and her family grew up in Richmond, California. They attended school in an underprivileged district where substitute teachers, sharing textbooks with classmates, and watching friends drop out of high school was the norm. Shaesta believed her future consisted of getting married at a young age and starting a big family. It wasn't until she discovered her passion for aviation at the age of 18 that she started thinking about attending college and becoming a pilot.

After a long journey of pursuing an education in a non-traditional field, Shaesta became the first person in her family to earn a bachelor's and master's degree — both from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. At Embry-Riddle, she founded the Women's Ambassador Program, an initiative that seeks to mentor and support young women pursuing an education in aviation and engineering. This program was a great success and continues on today. In seeking to advance her efforts to a global scale, Shaesta founded the non-profit organization Dreams Soar, Inc. in 2014, as an initiative to share her story with young girls and women around the world, to let them know it is possible to achieve their dreams, regardless of the challenges and traditions they may face. Shaesta is the first certified civilian female pilot from Afghanistan, and their history books will be rewritten to include her inspiring story.

Dreams Soar accomplished its first ambitious goal to partner with strong female role models along the global flight, to share and promote the importance of STEM and aviation education and careers. Through industry partnerships, a "Dream Team" of college students and a group of seasoned advisors, the Global Solo Flight for STEM was met with success. Shaesta and her team will dedicate the next chapter to continuing outreach efforts, and providing a scholarship program for the young minds that were inspired by Shaesta during her journey, to empower them to enter STEM and aviation career fields.

Every time Shaesta opens the door to an aircraft, she asks herself, ***"How did a girl with my background become so lucky?"*** The truth is, anyone can be her.

"You must believe in yourself and allow your dreams to soar"

~ Shaesta Waiz.



