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# Invention

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## Reaching New Heights

Deborah Donnelly-McLay '95

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# REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

UPS PILOT ELEVATES KIDS' INTEREST  
IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MATH

Deborah Donnelly-McLay '95



**D**eborah Donnelly-McLay knows all about reaching new heights.

She transformed herself from a flight attendant to an international pilot with the world's largest package delivery company, an educator and a volunteer working alongside Nobel laureates to foster the next generation of scientists, engineers and mathematicians.

Donnelly-McLay flies for UPS and spends much of her time 30,000 feet above the ground, but her passion is firmly grounded in inspiring children. "I

feel very blessed for all the opportunities I have been given and hope to give back to our community and children worldwide by being a positive role model and mentor, especially for young girls," she said.

Donnelly-McLay noted that Thomas Edison State College laid the groundwork for her success. "Thomas Edison State College was the perfect fit for me. I was working full time as a flight attendant for Continental Express Airlines and pursuing my flight ratings and certificates," she said. "I was very



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successful in the College’s aviation program because it allowed me to earn credit for my flight ratings and through the CLEP testing program. This flexibility allowed me to accelerate my education while I continued to work and fly. The classes in aviation were very interesting and excited my curiosity to learn more.”

After earning her Associate in Science in Applied Science and Technology in 1994, her Bachelor of Science in Applied Science and Technology in 1995 and completing her flight certificates and ratings, Donnelly-McLay became a full-time flight instructor and then a captain and FAA check airman for Continental Express Airlines.

In 1998, she began her flying career at UPS as a flight engineer on the DC-8. Since then, she was promoted to first officer on the Airbus A300/600 and Boeing 757/767 aircraft and today serves as an international pilot flying 757 and 767 aircraft to South and Central America.

As her career has progressed, so has Donnelly-McLay’s education. Donnelly-McLay earned a Master of Science in Aeronautical Science degree from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and is currently finishing a second master’s degree in history from Harvard University and a doctorate degree in education from Nova Southeastern University.

“I try to be a positive role model for young students,” said Donnelly-McLay, who is on the faculty as a professor at Everglades University in Boca Raton, Fla. “Teaching is a passion of mine and a way to give back some of the knowledge that I have gained throughout the years.”

Donnelly-McLay’s passion for teaching has led her to be active with several organizations focused on encouraging young students to become interested in science, technology, engineering and math, including the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education Coalition and FIRST (For Inspiration and

Recognition of Science and Technology) program.

Recently, she was appointed to the Strategic Board of the Molecular Frontiers Foundation, which promotes the understanding of the molecular sciences in society for children in conjunction with the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and Nobel Academy. In this capacity, Donnelly-McLay serves with 11 Nobel laureates in the sciences to promote science education for children worldwide, including third world countries.

This past June, she was asked to speak to the youth regarding her role as a mentor and role model, especially for females interested in science.

“Whereas schools often emphasize problem solving, Molecular Frontiers gives priority to asking good questions,” she said. “The MoleClues website ([www.moleclues.com](http://www.moleclues.com)) invites young people to submit questions about anything that may fall within the molecular realm, broadly defined, and all questions are considered for the Molecular Frontiers Inquiry Prize competition, with the chance of winning iPods and laptop computers.”

Despite her busy schedule and being a mother of two young children, Donnelly-McLay is an active volunteer in her community, where she promotes career development for women in aviation and science.

She was recently appointed as a board member to the Boynton Beach YMCA and is also an active member and past president of the Boynton Beach/Lantana Rotary Club. Interestingly, Donnelly-McLay was selected as a Rotary International Youth Exchange student when she was 15 and visited Brazil. She said the trip had a tremendous impact on her.

“I owe thanks to my strong family, including my mother, my grandfather, my children and close friends, who have all helped me accomplish my goals,” she said.

Donnelly-McLay lives in Boynton Beach, Fla.



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