



## **Student Information Packet**

**41st Annual Pathfinder Awards Gala**  
**October 28, 2023, at the Museum of Flight**  
**5:30 p.m. to approximately 10:00 p.m.**

*The Pathfinders Awards honor individuals or teams  
from the Pacific Northwest  
for significant contributions to aerospace development.*

*This year's recipients are:*

*Raymond Conner & Gary Lai*

### **History of Raisbeck Aviation High School Attendance at Pathfinder:**

Since opening our school in the fall of 2004, our students and staff have attended this annual fall gala as guests of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, University of North Dakota, and several other collegiate and private donors who believe in the mission and vision of our aviation-themed school. If you were purchasing a ticket to this event, it would cost \$200. Consider that about **50** students and chaperones will be sponsored, and if you do the math, that's a collective gift from sponsors of \$10,000!

Students, we are delighted you are interested in attending the 41st Annual Pathfinder Gala at the Museum of Flight. This packet of information will provide you with essential information related to this very prestigious event.

### **How will attending Pathfinder benefit you?**

In today's world, **who** you know may be as important as **what** you know. This event provides an opportunity for you to meet successful leaders in aviation and aerospace who may someday offer you an internship or a job, serve as a mentor, or be someone you can call upon when conducting research for a class assignment or project. At this event, you will be expected to meet several people and interact with them. We call this "**networking**", and it is a skill that our graduates tell us that they learned well at RAHS; and most importantly, they count it as one of the most important skills in preparing them for life after high school. Most effective leaders are also highly effective networkers!

Pathfinder recipients are people who have aspired to do good in the world. They are people who dreamed big and set goals for their life's work. They are individuals who will inspire you to stick to your own goals and dreams and realize that you, too, can be a Pathfinder!

### **Student Selection Process:**

1. Read this packet, paying particular attention to the biographies of the Pathfinder recipients!
2. Write a four-paragraph essay that addresses all of the following:
  - a. Why you want to attend this year's Pathfinder Gala
  - b. What your career goals are.
  - c. What colleges you are considering attending.
  - d. What inspires you about one of this year's pathfinder recipient's contributions.
  - e. Your personal bio. You can write out your personal bio OR you can use the form attached. If you use the attached form your writing must be neat and legible.
3. **Your essay AND bio are due to Ms. McGuire no later than Tuesday, October 03, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.** Please hand deliver a copy to Ms. McGuire in the College & Career Center.  
*No emailed applications will be accepted.*
4. Essays will be reviewed by a committee. **We will announce the students who have been selected on October 9, 2023.** Selection will consider students who have not attended previously. Freshmen...we encourage you to apply!

### **If you are selected, you will be agreeing to the following:**

- Attend a required **Etiquette/Networking Training** session on **Wednesday, October 25, 2023 from 3:45-5:30 p.m.** in the RAHS Boeing Presentation Center (BPC). (If you cannot attend, you must be excused by either Ms. McGuire or Ms. Tipton)
- Attend the College Fair presentation on **October 27, 2023.**
- Wear appropriate formal or semi-formal attire to the Gala on **October 28, 2023 from 5:00 - 10:00 p.m.** If you want to attend and don't feel you have the right clothing, don't let that stand in your way of applying. We'll help you get what you need!
- You'll be required to **write a thank-you card** to your sponsor. This needs to be turned in **Friday, November 3,** to Ms. McGuire in the RAHS Career Center.
- Share your experience with others—family members, students in your Advisory class, and perhaps with staff from The Museum of Flight, if asked to do so.

We look forward to reading your essays and hopefully, chaperoning you at the 2023 Pathfinder Gala! In the last 100 years, our dreams of flight have taken us beyond the horizon and into space. And the dreams for tomorrow continue. The Museum of Flight Pathfinder Awards honor pioneering achievements in flying, engineering, education, operations, manufacturing, and an at-large category.

The two individuals have been selected for recognition in 2023:



## **Ray Conner**

### **Pathfinder Award Recipient in Manufacturing & Operations**

Ray Conner, former vice chairman of The Boeing Company and president and CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes (BCA), is described by his colleagues as a pioneering, humble leader who deeply appreciates the importance of meaningful, long-term relationships in the aerospace industry. His Boeing career began as a mechanic on the 727 and ultimately spanned 40 years. He led Boeing's propulsion division, served as the vice president and general manager of the 747 and 777 programs, held multiple positions in sales, and led BCA's supply chain and management operations. During his tenure in leadership positions, Conner solidified and expanded Boeing's prominence in aerospace, deepened its ties to the Pacific Northwest, and managed relationships with Boeing's employees, customers, regulators and others across the industry.

During the years Conner led BCA, the company executed increases in production rates across airplane models, breaking annual delivery records multiple times and out delivering its main competitor, Airbus, every year. Further, it laid the groundwork for achieving Boeing's current record of 806 annual deliveries the year following his retirement in 2018. In total, under his leadership, BCA delivered over 5,000 airplanes and sold over 7,000. These airplanes went to customers around the world, incorporating substantial efficiency gains that lessened their environmental impact. He also helped ensure that the Northwest would remain the world's premier region for aviation innovation and manufacturing.

Conner managed a workforce numbering in the tens of thousands, many of whom called the Puget Sound region home. He represented his company's interests in negotiations between Boeing and its employees' unions, and ultimately secured Everett as the site of manufacture of Boeing's next generation 777X and its composite wing.

No description of Conner's tenure would be complete without comment on the greatest challenge he faced—the grounding of the 787 fleet due to battery issues, which occurred just six months after he moved into position. Many have spoken at length about the leadership he provided during those critical months: the countless hard judgment calls he made; the operating rhythm he established to manage the situation's many challenges; and the ways in which he personally put himself on the line to reassure Boeing's customers, partners and the flying public. Many senior aerospace leaders have praised his steadfast guidance as indispensable during the grounding, and indeed as the primary reason that Boeing emerged stronger and with its key customer, supplier and regulator relationships intact. Boeing did not lose a single 787 customer from the grounding.

Other corporate and government leaders describe Ray Conner as someone who deeply appreciates the importance of profound, longstanding relationships in the aerospace industry. As summarized by Brad Tilden, former chairman and chief executive officer of Alaska Air Group, "Ray Conner grew up next to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and attended Highline High School. Over his long and successful career, he has earned a reputation for doing the right thing, both for customers and for employees. Many leaders aspire to this worthy goal, but Ray has actually done it."



## Gary Lai

Pathfinder Award Recipient in Engineering

The rocket roars off the launch pad, accelerating to over 2,200 mph in two minutes and climbing to 350,000 feet. Later, it restarts its engine and slows to a near hover before landing vertically back on Earth. Its crew capsule then emerges from the sky, deploying parachutes and landing softly. This is yet another demonstration of New Shepard, a fully reusable human spaceflight vehicle.

Gary Lai, Chief Architect, led New Shepard's design team for much of its history. But it was not always clear that this would be the field in which Lai would create his legacy. Growing up in New York City, Lai developed a passion for space after watching Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*. Lai recalls that growing up, "I didn't know what an engineer was. My teachers never discussed it as a career." He attended Cornell University to study astronomy but became disillusioned by the long path to academia. He ended up majoring in finance instead.

In his senior year, Lai took the last course Carl Sagan ever taught before he passed away. Meeting his childhood hero, Lai's passion for space was reinvigorated, and by then he knew that engineering was a more hands-on path to pursue his passion. He started over and enrolled in aerospace engineering at the University of Washington.

Kistler Aerospace in 1998, one of the first major startups in reusable rocketry, hired Lai to help develop their business plan because of his dual background in engineering and finance. There, Lai met Rob Meyerson, who later went on to become President of Blue Origin. Meyerson recruited Lai to become Blue's 18th employee.

Lai would go on to fill many roles, helping Blue grow to over 10,000 employees. He led New Shepard's launch site development in Texas and the team that started the BE-3 rocket engine program. In 2008, Lai took over the New Shepard crew capsule, leading development of all its unique safety systems, including its composite cabin, parachutes, retrorockets and the escape system that can propel the capsule safely away from the booster rocket.

In November 2015, New Shepard became the first rocket ever to fly to space and conduct a vertical, rocket-powered landing. In January 2016, the same vehicle did it again, pioneering the path to today's reusable rockets and winning the 2016 Collier Trophy. However, there was no clear path to proving it was safe enough to fly people, and no guidance from the Federal Aviation Administration. Lai became System Architect, overall technical lead of the project, at this critical point. He rallied the team to devise and execute a plan for human flight certification, culminating in the first human flight in July 2021. To honor his contributions, Blue invited Lai to fly New Shepard himself in March 2022. Not only did he become the first Asian-American flyer on New Shepard, but he is the only person ever to lead the design of a rocket and then fly it to space himself.

Today, Lai is a technical advisor contributing to all Blue Origin programs, not just New Shepard. Lai received the 2017 RNASA Stellar Award, the 2019 Blue Origin Founder's Award for Technical Ambition, and now the 2023 Museum of Flight Pathfinder Award for his contributions to aerospace history.

## Student Biography

A copy of your application and biography will be shared with your Pathfinder sponsor in advance of the event. This is so your sponsor and their table mates, who are often employees of their company or organization, can learn something about you before the event. This helps with conversation at dinner and throughout the evening. Likewise, once we know who your sponsor is, you should research who they are and what their organization or company does.

### Biographical Information:

1. **Name** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Age** \_\_\_\_\_
3. **High School: Raisbeck Aviation High School**
4. **Graduation Year** \_\_\_\_\_
5. **Activities in which you are currently engaged or in which you have previously participated, and honors and recognition you have received during your teenage years. Examples: Boy Scouts, earned Eagle Scout; ASB, sports/athletics (in school and outside of school), school clubs and leadership positions you may have held; scholarship awards, etc. You may list these as bullet points in the space below or write a short essay and attach to your application.**  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. **Education plans after high school**  
  
**Name of college, university, technical school, apprenticeship, or military branch you want to attend, and why. It is okay to list more than one that you may be considering:**  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. **Career Goal** \_\_\_\_\_
8. **Hobbies & Interests** \_\_\_\_\_
9. **Student Cell Phone Number** \_\_\_\_\_
10. **Student Email Address** \_\_\_\_\_
11. **Parent Email Address** \_\_\_\_\_

***Please turn in your Student Bio with your Pathfinder application. Your application is due to Ms. McGuire or Ms. Tipton no later than Tuesday, October 3, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.***