



The City of Shawnee and the State of Oklahoma are proud to celebrate Governor J. Kevin Stitt's proclamation, of Oklahoma Aerospace Week, April 1st to April 6th, 2024, recognizing Oklahoma's substantial contributions to aerospace and aeronautics.

Oklahoma's journey in aerospace traces back over a century, deeply entrenched in a rich history of innovation and achievement. Home to a variety of aerospace and aeronautic facilities, the state has played a pivotal role in shaping the global aviation landscape.

A notable cornerstone of Oklahoma's rich and varied aviation history is the Shawnee Regional Airport, serving Oklahoma since 1929. Like many airports, Shawnee began as a modest strip of smoothed dirt, initially serving aerobatic acts and hobby fliers, including those who honed their skills during World War I. Gordon Cooper, the celebrated astronaut and one of the original Mercury Seven astronauts, learned to fly at Shawnee Regional Airport, piloting his father's Command-Aire bi-plane.

The history of Shawnee Regional Airport is steeped in innovation and service, as evidenced by its early days as a hub for aviation pioneers. Pottawatomie County Historical Society records show the airport's first business venture was the Jack Russell Airplane Company, which manufactured the groundbreaking "Russell Comet," a single-wing aircraft featuring innovative design elements developed by Russell himself. Following this pioneering endeavor, flying schools such as the Graham and Curtiss Flying Services set up shop at Shawnee, offering flight lessons and further contributing to the airport's growth and reputation as a center for aviation excellence. During World War II, the City of Shawnee, in partnership with the United States Navy, transformed the Shawnee Airport into a Naval Air Station shifting its focus to training newly recruited cadets for service in the war effort.

From its early days of innovation and flight instruction to its wartime role as a training facility for naval aviators, Shawnee Regional Airport has continuously adapted to meet the needs of its community and the nation, cementing its place in Oklahoma's aerospace heritage. Today, Shawnee Regional Airport stands as a proud member of Oklahoma's rich aerospace heritage. Beyond its historical significance, the airport plays a crucial role in driving economic prosperity for the region, with an annual economic impact surpassing \$11 million. The airport sustains 98 jobs, with an annual payroll totaling \$3.7 million, while the businesses and operations at Shawnee Regional Airport collectively draw annual spending of \$8.1 million from their customers. This comprehensive economic impact underscores the airport's importance as a hub of activity, attracting businesses, travelers, and investment to the area. As Shawnee Regional Airport continues to thrive, it not only honors Oklahoma's aerospace legacy but also serves as a catalyst for continued growth and development in the region.

As we celebrate Oklahoma Aerospace Week, we pay homage to our past while embracing the future of aerospace innovation. This week serves as a reminder of the extraordinary achievements made possible by the visionaries, aviators, and engineers who have propelled Oklahoma to the forefront of aerospace excellence. It's a time to celebrate our heritage, inspire future generations, and reaffirm our commitment to pushing the boundaries of exploration and discovery.