

Our graduates, our values

By Mark Hille '97, CEO, U.S. Air Force Academy Association & Foundation



The cover for this June issue celebrates two enduring institutions: our Air Force Academy and the nation it supports.

As the United States approaches the 250th anniversary of its founding, we pause to reflect on the enduring values and freedoms that we uniquely enjoy and that each graduate has taken a solemn oath to defend.

Perhaps it is through the example of some of our finest and most distinguished graduates that these values can be most clearly seen.

We see them in leaders like **Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Bradley Hosmer '59**, the Academy's very first graduate, the first graduate to receive a Rhodes scholarship and the first graduate to serve as Superintendent of the Academy. General Hosmer's many firsts and his countless achievements represent the noble spirit of public service that defines our alma mater. Just a few weeks ago, we had the privilege of cutting the ribbon on the new Hosmer Visitor Center, named in honor of General Hosmer and his wife, **Zita**, just outside the North Gate (photos on p. 136). This incredible facility stands as the premier welcome center for generations of future leaders, and a physical reminder of the heritage we hold dear.

We see them in pioneers like **Col. (Ret.) Fred Gregory '64**, former Acting Administrator of NASA, a National Aviation Hall of Fame inductee and the namesake of Gregory Hall, the home of our Astronautics, Chemistry and Biology departments. Colonel Gregory's career as a combat rescue aviator, test pilot and

astronaut sets an example of the bold, adventurous spirit that launched our nation and has led us to the moon and beyond. On May 21, we celebrated the installation of a stunning bust of Colonel Gregory, beautifully crafted by sculptor **James Nance '71**, in Gregory Hall.


We see them in senior government officials like **Lt. Col. (Ret.) Dan Edwards '91**, Assistant Secretary of Transportation, and **Col. (Ret.) Matt Anderson '97**, Deputy Administrator of NASA. Both men demonstrate the high-level strategic leadership that the nation expects from our graduate community (bios on pp. 62-63).

We see them at the highest echelons of our military command in **Gen. John Lamontagne '92**, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and in the courage and self-sacrifice of **Lt. Col. William "Skate" Parks '07**, the Air Force's most recent Silver Star recipient. Col. Parks will be honored this summer with the Sullenberger Award for Courage, named in honor of **Ambassador Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger '73**, who is widely known for his extraordinary skill and courage as captain of US Airways Flight 1549 on Jan. 15, 2009 — the "miracle on the Hudson."

We also see these ideals personified in **William "Bill" Boisture '67**, **Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Susan Helms '80** and **Gen. (Ret.) Tod Wolters '82**, our newest Distinguished Graduate Award recipients. Each has, throughout their life and career, uniquely embodied the Academy's Core Values of integrity, service and excellence. We look forward to honoring these exemplars at the Distinguished Graduate Award dinner on July 24 at the Academy, and we will share

their full stories in the September issue of *Checkpoints*.

While neither our Academy nor our nation is yet perfected, both are worthy of our support in becoming, as our Constitution states about our Republic, "a more perfect union." The examples above remind us that this "striving toward" is achieved by the character of those willing to embody and defend our shared values.

So as we near the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, may we call to mind our country's highest ideals, look with gratitude on those who came before us and on those who serve today — including so many members of the Long Blue Line — and look forward with confidence in the generations willing to answer the call for the next 250 years. 

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark".

Mark Hille '97