Margaret Viola, 2011 Thomas Hudner Scholarship of Honor recipient

Did you first learn about the Brian LaViolette Foundation when applying for the scholarship? What year was that?

I learned about the Foundation through EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) when seeking advice on finding support for funding my private pilot training. I was teaching at a school in East Africa (www.abaarso.org) at the time (2010-2011), and had come to realize during my time there that aviation/aerospace was what I really wanted to pursue in my career.

What was the name of the scholarship you won? How did you learn you had won? What did it mean to you to win the scholarship?

I was awarded the Thomas Hudner Scholarship of Honor, which I learned about in the spring of 2011 via an email, which I received while still in Somaliland. The award of the scholarship felt to me like complete validation and a "nod yes" - affirmation - from the Universe about my plan to return to the US from East Africa that summer and pursue flight training and a career in aerospace.

What school did you go on to attend with the help of the scholarship? What did you study?

I used the scholarship at CubAir Flight in Hartford Wisconsin to earn my private pilot license with tailwheel endorsement in summer 2011! Following completion of flight training I joined EAA full-time and have been working in aviation/aerospace ever since - on a path that lead me from EAA to Virgin Galactic in the famous aerospace (Mojave) desert of Southern California, to my current position at Airbus in Silicon Valley.

What kind of impact has Brian's story had on your life?

Brian's story is with me always: I learned about Brian and the Foundation while I was teaching in Somaliland and so I was seeing - daily and firsthand - the impact that one person can have on the trajectory of another's life, and the importance of education. Brian's story is all about that message! And so the scholarship from the Brian LaViolette Foundation really impressed upon me the need to live with a community-focus every single day.