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**PLANT CITY HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE WINS  
TONY JANNUS ESSAY CONTEST GRAND PRIZE**

*Student and Guidance Counselor Rewarded for Interest in Aviation*

**TAMPA, FLA. (October 25, 2007)** - Continuing its tradition of supporting the future of aviation, the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society is rewarding deserving students through the Tony Jannus Essay Contest. The Society has selected Plant City High School sophomore Johnnie Bryars Byrd, III as the grand prize winner of this year's Tony Jannus Essay Contest. Byrd will be recognized on October 25, 2007, during the 44<sup>th</sup> annual Tony Jannus Award luncheon at the Renaissance Vinoy Resort and Golf Club in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Encouraging students' interest in the aviation industry, the Tony Jannus Essay Contest is open to all Florida students in grades 6 - 12. Students must write an essay that incorporates the history of commercial aviation in the United States with emphasis on one of the previous winners of the Tony Jannus Award; Florida's role in the development of commercial aviation; and jobs created directly and indirectly through the growth of commercial aviation.

Byrd composed the grand-prize-winning essay on the development and constant improvement of commercial aviation. For his outstanding essay, Byrd will receive three round-trip airline tickets from a Florida airport to any domestic destination served by Southwest Airlines and a \$600 spending allowance. Looking up to his sister as a role model, Byrd wishes to attend the U.S. Naval academy to pursue a career in military aviation.

"Johnnie has always been interested in aviation and he really embraced the Tony Jannus Student Essay Contest, reading books about Tony Jannus and Colleen C. Barrett. He and his father even retraced Tony Jannus' original flight path as part of their research," said Sherrie Mueller, Plant City High School Guidance Counselor.

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Mueller encouraged Byrd to enter the Tony Jannus Essay Contest. Since coming to Plant City High School six years ago, she has promoted the Tony Jannus Essay Contest. For encouraging students to participate, Mueller will receive two round-trip airline tickets from a Florida airport to any domestic destination served by AirTran Airways.

Since its first nominee in 1964, The Tony Jannus list of winners has grown to a virtual “Who’s Who” in the industry, including such luminaries as Brigadier General Charles Yeager, Donald W. Douglas, Sr., Capt. Edward V. Rickenbacker, Col. Frank Borman, Herb Kelleher, Sir Richard Branson, Joseph Leonard and now, the first female recipient, Colleen Barrett. In addition to the Tony Jannus Award program, the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society recognizes outstanding local students with an annual essay contest and presents college scholarships to worthy university students.

The Tampa and St. Petersburg Chambers of Commerce established The Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society in 1964. The Smithsonian Institute recognized Tony Jannus as the founder of the world’s first scheduled airline. The airline - which began flights on New Year’s Day, 1914 - had only one plane, a single-engine Benoist flying boat that flew round trips daily between Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida. For more information on the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society please visit [www.tonyjannusaward.com](http://www.tonyjannusaward.com).

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