



## **Class of 2024**

### **Wally Funk**

#### **Aviation Trailblazer**

Born Mary Wallace Funk in 1939, Wally was born to fly. Attending Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri at 16, she joined the women's flying club and earned her pilot's license at age 17. For the next sixty years Wally realized her dreams started as a young girl, overcoming barriers and obstacles along the way. She holds numerous aviation certificates and ratings. She is an accomplished flight instructor teaching hundreds to fly and helping thousands more earn advanced ratings. In 1968 she earned her Airline Transport Pilot rating only to be turned down by airlines because she was a woman. Undeterred, she became the Federal Aviation Administration first female flight inspector and in 1974 the National Transportation and Safety Board's first female Investigator. In 1961, she volunteered for the First Lady Astronaut Trainees (FLATs) program, known today as the "Mercury 13." Wally never stopped dreaming of going to space, and on July 20, 2021, aboard the Blue Origin NS-16, Wally became the oldest person to fly in space at that time at age 82.