

*Dedicated to the Advancement of the International Helicopter Community*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 1, 2021

Contact: Dan Sweet

Phone: 703-683-4646

Email: dan.sweet@rotor.com

## **Jeanette Eaton Named Recipient of HAI's Salute to Excellence Award For Excellence in Communication**

*Alexandria, Virginia (March 1, 2021)* – Helicopter Association International (HAI) is pleased to announce Jeanette Eaton, vice president of commercial strategy and business development for global commercial and military systems at Sikorsky, is the 2021 recipient of the association's Excellence in Communications Award. The award, sponsored by Lightspeed Aviation, recognizes an individual for creative distinction in disseminating information about the helicopter industry.

The daughter of a US Army helicopter pilot, Jeanette Eaton grew up around aircraft and often attended air shows with her father. Yet her parents didn't suggest she pursue an aviation career. Her mother inspired her to attend college while her father emphasized the benefits of a career in engineering.

Aviation had other ideas. The defining moment in Eaton's career path came shortly after receiving her electrical engineering degree, on the day she interviewed with Sikorsky and toured a CH-53E Super Stallion.

"I was maybe 21, and I was so overwhelmed and impressed with the helicopter," she recalls. "The engineering, the power, the missions this aircraft could do—it was all so inspiring. I knew right then and there I wanted to work for Sikorsky and work on helicopters."

Eaton spent the first 17 years of her career at Sikorsky. Participating in the company's leadership development program, she steadily gained skills, knowledge, and expertise across a variety of positions while earning a master's degree in manufacturing engineering, an MBA with a focus on manufacturing management, and a master's in executive management.

As she gained knowledge and experience, her passion continued to evolve. Through Sikorsky's leadership development program, she discovered she enjoyed sales. She loved working with, getting to know, and sharing the stories of her customers. She was a natural communicator and thrived on sharing her passion.

Her mentor encouraged her to obtain her FAA ratings to increase her credibility and marketability as an aircraft sales representative. Eaton earned her commercial instrument single-engine land certificate and landed a job at Bell Helicopter as a sales manager. Bell helped her add on her commercial helicopter certificate, and that's when Eaton really hit her stride.

"Some of my most treasured experiences have come from cross-country trips across the United States in helicopters," she says. "Those experiences are truly the source of my passion, working with customers and flying. We all need to be ambassadors to aviation."

## EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

2-2-2-2

Ten years later, Sikorsky recruited her back as director of marketing, and she was soon promoted into commercial sales. Today, Eaton is responsible for strategy and business development for Sikorsky products around the world, supporting customers while also finding ways to grow the customer base. At the same time, she is focused on giving back.

“Part of my job, one of the things I love to do, is to celebrate and recognize our customers and help share their stories,” she says. “As a salesperson, I also feel we have to give back to the community.”

Eaton is very active in volunteer activities that promote aviation and expose the next generation to aviation careers. She volunteers with the Eastern Regional Helicopter Council and the Whirly-Girls and also donates her time to the Girl Scouts, Junior Achievement, Civil Air Patrol, local schools, and other organizations, talking to youth about STEM and aviation careers.

“When I think back to my past, I am thankful for those who inspired me,” she says. “I feel if you’re not exposed to something, you don’t know it exists or is possible for you. It’s important to teach [children] to open themselves to new opportunities. Looking back, the things that made the biggest impact and helped me find my passion were when I said yes to opportunities, even when I was a little afraid to do it.”

HAI recognized previous recipients of the Salute to Excellence Awards through events at HAI HELI-EXPO<sup>®</sup>, the association’s annual trade show. Because of the pandemic, HAI is acknowledging the achievements of this year’s recipients through a variety of virtual events, including a series of webinars relevant to the subject of each award. Each individual recipient or team will also receive a trophy and publicity surrounding their work.

###

*HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry. HAI members represent more than 3,000 aviation businesses and individuals who safely operate more than 4,500 helicopters approximately 2.3 million hours each year in more than 73 nations. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective method of commerce and to the advancement of the international helicopter community.*