

## I Am American by Sally Krusing

I, a middle-aged Tucson woman, who has wanted to travel in space, finally will blast off to space in a few years. Recently I attended the open house of Spaceport America in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

There people from all walks of life enjoyed the new spaceport built for this one purpose. I saw many girls in strollers to teenagers, many girls and young women flocked to the rocket, robot and astronomy exhibits. There were kits available for children to design and build electrical circuits, to build a video game or create a robot. I'm proud that my country has progressed to offering girls more varied opportunities.

I watched as a long line of people waited for their temporary tattoos depicting the history of flight starting from Icarus and the Wright Brothers aircraft to single engine propeller airplane, jet airplane, four-jet engine plane, the lunar lander, Spaceship One, and Virgin Galactic's Spaceship Two. Now even I have a temporary tattoo plastered on my arm.

How many of those girls want to blast off into space?

How many of them actually will blast off to space?

Will many of these girls become interested in working in the space industry in fields that encompass a wide range of professions—engineer, lawyer, doctor, mechanic, computer scientist, astrophysicist, astronomer?

Will any of those girls become pilots?

Will traveling into space inspire citizen astronauts, me for instance, to alter their lives once they've returned to earth?

How many women will lead commercial companies to join the space challenge?

Dr. Katie Bauman, the twenty-nine year old computer scientist, led the team that developed the algorithm to render the picture of the first black hole. We've come a long way from when the black women in the movie *Hidden Figures* had to run in the rain to another building to relieve themselves.