

January-June 2026



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❖ WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT



As President of the Boeing Leadership Association of Southern California for 2026, it is both an honor and a privilege to welcome you to what promises to be an exciting and impactful year with BLASC. Together, we are building more than a professional network; we are cultivating a community of leaders committed to growth, connection, and excellence. This year, I am especially energized by the opportunities ahead as we continue to deliver meaningful events designed to inspire, develop, and connect each of you. Your voice is essential to that mission, and I encourage you to share your ideas, so that we can continue shaping an organization that truly reflects and serves its members. Our community is already growing, with new members joining us in 2026, and this momentum is something we can all be proud of. I invite each of you to be an Ambassador for BLASC. Share your experiences, invite your colleagues, and help us expand the reach and impact of our organization. Growth is strongest when it is personal, and your involvement makes all the difference. For those looking to take a more active role, there are exciting opportunities to get involved. We are currently seeking a Vice President of Membership, a vital position that helps strengthen our connections and supports our continued growth. If you are passionate about building community and making a difference, I encourage you to reach out and learn more about joining the 2026 board. In alignment with Kelly Ortberg's vision of developing leaders and fostering meaningful engagement across the company, BLASC is committed to expanding professional development opportunities this year. We aim to create more intimate, small group experiences where members can connect directly with Boeing leadership, gain insights, and build relationships that support both personal and professional growth. We will also be launching a member survey soon, an important opportunity for you to share your perspective and to help guide the future of BLASC. Your input will play a key role in shaping what comes next. I invite you to join me in making this year our most impactful yet. Together, we can strengthen our community, elevate one another, and continue building an organization that inspires leadership at every level.

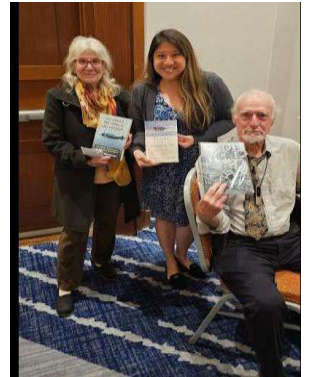
❖ FEBRUARY GMM

The “Indiana Jones” of Aviation Captivates BLASC The Boeing Leadership Association of Southern California (BLASC) gathered at the Long Beach Marriott on February 24, 2026, for an evening that blended camaraderie, good food, and a once-in-a-lifetime storytelling experience. The featured speaker, Ralph Wetterhahn, is not just an aviation expert—he has earned the nickname the “Indiana Jones of Aviation” for his fearless pursuit of lost aircraft, hidden wrecks, and untold stories from the past.



Ralph’s journey began as a fighter pilot, graduating from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1963 before serving three combat tours during the Vietnam War. He flew 180 missions in the F-4 Phantom and A-7 Corsair, downed a MiG-21 in the

now-famous “Bolo Mission,” and completed 144 carrier landings. Later, he logged over 1,000 hours in the F-15 Eagle. But as impressive as his military record is, it is what came after that, that makes his story truly extraordinary. In what many would call a second career; Ralph transformed into an Aviation Archaeologist. With boundless curiosity and a respect for history, he has traveled to some of the most remote and challenging places on earth—Cambodia, Guadalcanal, the Russian Far East, the Philippines—tracking down aircraft wrecks and unraveling mysteries surrounding missing-in action service members. These expeditions are not just technical recoveries; they are deeply human stories that provide closure for families and honor the sacrifices of those who served. Ralph’s work was featured in documentaries on NOVA, Discovery, and National Geographic, including The Last Flight of Bomber-31 and Missing in MiG Alley. He is also the author of several acclaimed books, including The Last Battle, which won the prestigious Colby Award. Each story he shared blended adventure, history, and emotion in a way that left the audience both educated and deeply moved.



As he recounted some of his dangerous investigations, the room was quietly focused on his true adventures, punctuated with audible gasps. There were also funny moments that Ralph recalled resulting in bursts of laughter. His passion for uncovering the truth of a felled aircraft was as compelling as his respect for the aviators who flew them.

The evening wrapped up with a brief Q&A and a book signing, where members eagerly leaned in to learn more about Ralph, his most memorable discoveries, and what drives him to keep searching for the truth.

It was clear that his real-life adventures struck a chord, reminding everyone present of the value of perseverance, curiosity, and honoring history.

The February meeting was more than just another event on the calendar—it was a rare opportunity to step into the shoes of a modern-day adventurer and see aviation history through his eyes. He dedicated his life to uncovering the mystery of missing aviators and aircraft. He brought peace to the families of those whose aircraft went missing. BLASC members left the dinner meeting inspired, energized, and grateful to meet Ralph who has lived his life in the service of others.

❖ APRIL CRUISE

Boeing Leadership of So Cal (BLASC) members, along with the Boeing Aerospace Employees Travel Club (BETC) and The Engineers Retirees Society (ERS), attended an overnight repositioning cruise on Holland America aboard the Eurodam, traveling from Vancouver to Seattle on April 24–26.



Arriving in Vancouver

The group arrived in Vancouver via Amtrak on Thursday early afternoon. After checking in to their hotel, members met up and enjoyed a walking tour of downtown Vancouver and the Smith Cove Cruise Terminal, including a stop for Nanaimo bars. Then they took advantage of the Flying Over Canada experience and finished the evening by dining together. On the following day, everyone enjoyed breakfast together, then headed to the terminal at 10:30 a.m. to board the ship.



Once onboard, group members headed to the lunch buffet. The team enjoyed the Bon Voyage party and the hot tub. For some guests, this was their first cruise. They were especially excited about the early check in to their rooms, touring the ship, enjoying the buffet lunch, attending the Bon Voyage celebration on deck, posing for

photos, and gathering again for dinner at the ship's fine dining restaurant. Some guests also enjoyed the casino, attended the comedy show in the event arena, ventured out to see live music, or spent time on the dance floor. Many also enjoyed the hot tub, the wide variety of dining options throughout the ship, and live



entertainment in multiple locations. It was truly a whirlwind experience—packed with fun and new memories!

The next morning, we met up for a nice breakfast at the fine dining restaurant, some went to the buffet. We took more photos, then disembarked at the Seattle Smith Cove



The rooms were \$99 plus tax, which included ALL meals and events! **No single supplement.**

We will certainly offer this event next year to our members!

For more info, contact: [John Neller, bikenstein@myctl.net](mailto:bikenstein@myctl.net) or Corine.kumano@gmail.com and/or Claudette@ClaudetteTravels.com Members, Friends, and Family all welcome to attend.

❖ HEART WALK

BLASC joins in the “**American Heart Association HEART WALK**,” at the Angel Stadium of Anaheim



Held at the Angel Stadium, Saturday, April 11, 7:30am to 11am

Including a 5K Walk, a Survivor Miracle Mile, and a Pet Route.

BLASC members joined more than 600 communities nationwide, to support the **American Heart Association “HEART WALK”**. This is the world’s largest event to raise awareness and funds for care, support and research. This inspiring event calls on participants of all ages and abilities to join the fight against heart disease.

The BLASC Team met up and walked all around the stadium, and enjoyed a Sponsor Expo and an Extraordinary Area, including snacks, giveaways, and interactive education. The goal of this event includes encouraging the confidence to have at least one person in every household prepared to perform CPR.



The Heart Walk is the American Heart Association's premier event to raise funds and awareness for heart disease and stroke, the nation's #1 and #5 killers. In 2026, the Heart Walk will continue to offer in-person events in most markets, while also providing options to participate in your neighborhood or favorite park. The events are designed to be inclusive and safe, with mask-friendly policies and flexible participation formats.

Thank you to all our walkers and donors!!!

❖ JUNE GMM

From Ideas to Impact: Innovation Lessons from Dr. Todd Citron

BLASC Leadership Night speaker challenged us to stay curious, embrace healthy debate, and turn great ideas into meaningful results.

What does it take to turn an innovative idea into something that works?

That was the central question explored by **Dr. Todd Citron** at BLASC Leadership Night on June 2. Drawing on an accomplished career with Hughes and Boeing—including serving as Boeing's Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer—Dr. Citron shared practical lessons on innovation, leadership, and engineering excellence.

One message stood out: *Innovation is more than having good ideas. It is about delivering value to the customer.*

Make Room for Ideas—and Challenge Them

Dr. Citron encouraged leaders to create an environment where people feel safe sharing ideas, while also making sure those ideas are thoroughly vetted. His advice included:

- Allow failure, but do not tolerate incompetence.
- Experiment boldly but do it with discipline.
- Seek diverse perspectives, then move forward deliberately.
- Build expert relationships while staying focused on outcomes.

He also challenged us to think about the culture we create in our meetings. If everyone is always polite and no one challenges an idea, it may mean people do not feel comfortable speaking honestly. Healthy debate can make an organization—and its ideas—stronger.



Leadership Makes Innovation Real

Turning an idea into reality requires the right people, clear expectations, transparency, and a willingness to identify risks early. Dr. Citron emphasized rapid learning and iteration, including the use of tools such as digital twins to gain knowledge sooner and increase confidence before physical construction begins.

As technology continues to transform engineering, Dr. Citron pointed to opportunities in virtual development, automated design optimization, and AI—alongside challenges involving engineering intuition, safety, and certification.

A Challenge for All of Us

Dr. Citron closed with four principles that are especially fitting for BLASC's leadership community:

- **Always stay curious.**
- **Never stop learning.**
- **Be unrelenting in the pursuit of excellence.**
- **Proactively network and collaborate.**

His message is a great reminder that innovation does not happen simply because someone has a great idea. **It happens when people have the courage to share ideas, the discipline to challenge and test them, and the leadership to turn them into results.**

❖ Space Tech Expo USA 2026!

Space Tech Expo USA is a two-day event, BLASC was there!!! Held at the Anaheim Convention Center



Space Tech Expo USA is a two-day event, with an Expo, Conference, Workshops, an Array of Speakers, and a Skills Lab. This year it was June 2 – 4 in Anaheim. The BLASC team attended the invite only Opening with Exhibitor and VIP Networking Reception. We met face-face with industry leaders and startups, highlighting an array of technological solutions for including Satellite Technology, Engineering Services, Communications & Ground Systems, Electronics, Test & Measurement, Subsystems, Launch Services, and More.

The Expo started off with an Opening Keynote Panel, entitled “Ensuring American Superiority in Space.” The Boeing Company’s Christ Tzelepis, Director of Space Mission Systems Business Development, was one of the 3 keynote speakers. [Opening Keynote Panel: Ensuring American Superiority in Space](#)



The Focus is on providing an exhibition and conference for space technology, innovation, and networking. This show is good for engineering, production, purchasing, material managers, design, test and more.

It was interesting to go to a place to meet suppliers across the supply chain and have speakers come together to talk about the latest trends, and new directions within the aerospace and space industries. With so many advances in software and competition, the “*Keeping up with the dynamic space industry*” was especially notable, addressing the current market climate.



BLASC /Boeing members were able to meet with existing suppliers and technical exhibitors to discuss new products, new trends, lead times, and pricing, including chips, components, and parts, to large assemblies and builds. Click below to learn about the conference proceedings:

Day 1 [Conference Proceedings | Space Tech Expo USA](#)

Day 2 [Conference Proceedings | Space Tech Expo USA](#)

BLASC will be organizing another group to attend, with free registration at the next **Space Expo returns to Anaheim, CA in 2027**. We will also join in at hosted opening reception with lots of food and drinks! Look for more details to come!

UPCOMING EVENTS

-  **October – 2027 Board Applications**
-  **November GMM – Panel of Speakers**
-  **November 15 – Girl Scouts of Orange County Volunteer Event**
-  **December Professional Development – Communicate to Enable Collaboration**
-  **December 5 – Annual Holiday Party**
-  **January 2027 – Board Transition**
-  **February 2027 Professional Development – Coaching, Growth & Feedback**
-  **February GMM – TBD**

Check our Web Site regularly for new and exciting events throughout the year at <https://blasc.us/>

BLASC VISION AND MISSION

Vision: Building organizational partnerships that accelerate leadership development in our workplace and our communities

Mission: Inspire, develop, and connect leaders by providing growth opportunities for our members and contributing to our community through:

- Hosting motivational and entertaining social events to foster unity
- Providing accelerated training and development opportunities to drive business and professional success
- Partnering to provide and enhance talent development for our Boeing sponsors.
- Investing in charitable causes and exceptional students

❖ BLASC Board of Directors

BLASC Board of Directors constitutes the governing body of BLASC and is responsible to the members. There are currently vacancies on the Board. Contact Heidi Crews if you would like to apply for a position.



Heidi Crews
President



Corine Kumano
VP Operations



Tiffany Gazzeny
VP Finance &
Budgets



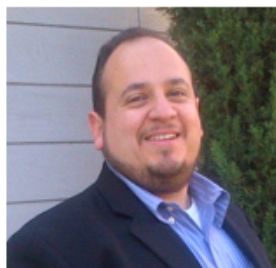
Brian Metran
VP Community
Services



Ryan Udell
VP Professional
Development



Annie Fleury
VP Retirees



Jose Garcia
VP Programs

❖ BLASC Board Alternates



Kim Talor
VP Membership



Kojo Sarkodie
VP Professional
Development



Rick Tkach
VP Community
Service

❖ BLASC Executive Advisors

BLASC Executive Advisors counsel and mentor BLASC Board members. Thank you for your support and encouragement.



Reena Byrne
Executive
Sponsor



Vera Fair
Executive Advisor
to VP Programs



**Lydia
De Pillis-Lindheim**
Executive Advisor to
VP of Operations



Jill Erps
Executive Advisor to
VP Finance & Budgets



Vanessa Smith
Executive Advisor to
Community Services



**Li-Chen
(Gemini) Chang**
Executive Advisor