



CLEAR SKIES AHEAD: BIANCA RHODES IS TAKING AEROSPACE INNOVATION TO NEW HEIGHTS

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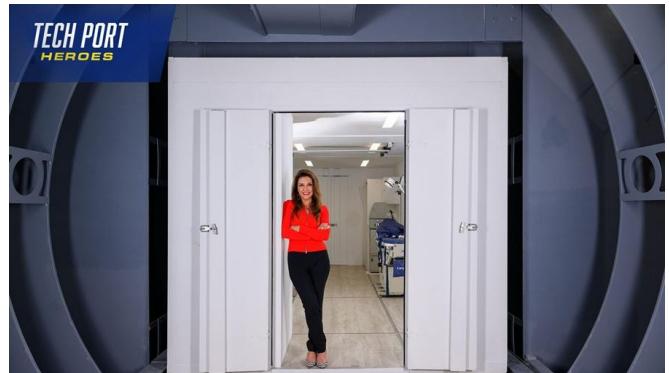
BY TRACY IDELL HAMILTON

Growing up in the Rio Grande Valley, Bianca Rhodes always dreamed of making the world a better place.

Today she's doing just that as CEO of Knight Aerospace, a global leader in custom air medical transport products.

After earning a degree in business from the University of Texas at Austin, Bianca launched her career as a commercial banker. She later served as CFO of Kinetic Concepts, which produces medical technology for wound healing. She then founded CrossRhodes Consulting, where she advised companies and helped them raise capital.

Through her consulting work, she met the founder of Knight Aerospace in 2014. What would become the world's largest outbreak of Ebola had just begun, and Bianca immediately saw the value of developing a "flying emergency room": a medical module that could be rolled onto cargo planes to safely transport contagious patients to life-saving medical treatment.



While militaries, NGOs and other organizations have for decades used aircraft to transport injured or seriously ill passengers, those operations have traditionally taken place in dark, noisy and unsanitary cargo holds or on passenger airplanes that are poorly designed to deliver urgent medical care.

Even though she did not have a medical or engineering background, Bianca's business acumen helped her visualize an important new global market. She started a company and built a team of talented personnel to design the modules, with the

idea that Knight Aerospace would manufacture and sell them. By 2017, she had acquired Knight and merged it with her startup, becoming president and CEO.

Two years later, Bianca relocated the company to the Port San Antonio campus, into 80,000 square feet for fabrication, design, research and development and office space. The Port's campus offers companies like Knight

the largest aerospace platform in South Texas, including access to the region's longest runway and proximity to a number of potential industry, academic and workforce development partners.

"That's turned out to be one of the best decisions I've made," she said. "It's been a great, supportive community." Bianca has grown the company from fewer than 20 employees to roughly 70 as of early 2025 — and thanks to a slew of new contracts, she expects to double that workforce over the coming year."

Bianca exemplifies our mantra of thinking of the Port as a special place for building futures," said Port President and CEO Jim Perschbach. "In the span of just a handful of years, she has grown her business and developed a solid, multi-talented team. All the while, she has remained true to her deep South Texas roots and a commitment to create opportunities for others in her community."

Knight Aerospace makes other roll-on/roll off modules as well, which can be configured to be used as everything from a laboratory to a VIP room. To date the company has delivered products to 37 countries around the globe.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began, the company pivoted from working on a basic medical module to a more specialized biocontainment model that would protect air and medical crews.



Knight Aerospace's aeromedical modules are rolled into the back of cargo aircraft, instantly converting them to flying medical facilities.



The Royal Canadian Air Force was one of Knight's first customers for its aeromedical modules.

Just one year later, Knight Aerospace delivered its first aeromedical bio-containment module to its first customer, the Royal Canadian Air Force. In 2025, Knight inked a long-term deal with aircraft manufacturer Embraer, offering their KC-390 customers the opportunity to outfit that craft with Knight's entire portfolio of roll on/roll off products. The partnership has already produced its first customer, the Royal Netherlands Air Force.

Hermetically sealed and pressurized with an independent air supply means pilots and crew stay safe from pathogens and eliminate the need for aircraft decontamination between flights. Fitted with state-of-the-art medical equipment, the containers allow for medical treatment during flight including emergency surgery.

Back on the ground, the units just need a power supply, like a gas-powered generator, to continue operating. This allows for the expansion of field hospitals and other temporary medical facilities to treat patients during pandemics, in conflict zones or remote places that currently lack such facilities altogether.

Not content to transform cargo flight, in 2023 Knight secured a \$3.75 million Small Business Innovation Research contract from the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory to develop low-cost, intermodal cargo containers for point-to-point rocket transport.

"This contract opens the door for Knight Aerospace to deliver modular mission solutions to rockets, low-earth orbit and even lunar operations," she said at the time. In early 2025, Knight delivered its first rocket cargo container to Cape Canaveral for testing.

Meanwhile, Bianca continues to give back to her community. During her time as the volunteer chair of the Dee Howard Foundation, an aerospace education nonprofit, Bianca had the idea for its now-signature program, teaching San Antonio middle and high school students to operate drones — and even giving them the opportunity to earn an FAA-approved commercial drone license.

In 2013 she founded Any Woman Can, a nonprofit which today is known as AWC, as it serves men as well, offering free services for pregnancy care, reproductive health and counseling. She has also supported Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Texas, San Antonio AirLIFE, Baptist Health Systems and San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind, among other nonprofits.



Knight Aerospace earned a grant from the Air Force Research Laboratory to build cargo containers for rocket transport.