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# The Daily Iowan

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## Kids earn their wings in IC with Young Eagles

BY ALEX SHEETS | JUNE 11, 2012 6:30 AM

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The small engines roared as several excited and anxious children waited their turn to soar as Young Eagles.

The young participants took to the air at the Iowa City Municipal Airport on June 9 to explore the opportunities of working in the field of aviation.

The Experimental Aircraft Association hosted Young Eagles, a program that offers free flights and one-on-one time with volunteer pilots for 8- to 17-year-olds interested in exploring careers in aviation or curious of how planes work.

"We are growing the aviation community," said Denny Hodge, the president of the Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 33, based in East-central Iowa. "We are really just starting to see the fruits."

Usually, 60 to 75 kids typically show up to Young Eagles events, he said.

Before Young Eagles began in Eastern Iowa, roughly 33,000 pilots were certified in the central region of the United States, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. The latest figures for 2011 for total pilots is recorded at nearly 44,000.

The University of Iowa does not offer opportunities similar to Young Eagles to college students, but the College of Engineering is active at the Iowa City Airport.

Associate Professor Tom Schnell, the director of the Operator Performance Laboratory for the engineering school, runs the program at the airport. Numerous plane and helicopter simulators are kept in a hangar at the airport, along with other technologies for aviation and ground transportation research.

Some of the participants at the Young Eagles event had never set foot on an airplane before June 9. Delaney McMahon, 11, got her first exposure in an airplane at Young Eagles.

"[My favorite part] was looking over the town, because it looks really small," she said. "It looks like sculptures."

McMahon said she had not thought of aviation as a career opportunity before the Young Eagles program, but she now looks forward to the next event.

The Young Eagles program remains free because the volunteers all provide their own planes, many home-built, along with fuel for the plane and safety equipment.

Many of the kids who attended the event had an interest in aviation before arriving, and Jonas Goodman-Van Meter, 8, was no exception. He said he wants to be a jet pilot when he grows up.

"The scariest part was turning," Jonas said after landing.

The 8-year-old couldn't control his fear while flying.

"He tapped me on the shoulder and there were just tears going down his face," said Shawn Rhinehart, a volunteer pilot who owns a 1964 Cessna 172 — a plane that can fit up to 4 people.



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TODAY'S PRINT EDITION

Additional free opportunities for kids to continue their aviation exploration with ground school are available after the Young Eagles free flight. Ground school is theoretical education on aviation, including the physics of flying and how to read a weather report.

The Iowa City Airport also has a lot of traffic headed to the UI Hospitals & Clinics, according to Minnetta Gardinier, an associate dean of the UI Graduate College. Gardinier is a pilot in her free time as well, and she will fly in the Air Race Classic, an all women's cross-country race.

Opportunities for college students interested in aviation are available. Green Castle Aero Club, a flying club in eastern Iowa, offers training packages.

The next event for the Experimental Aircraft Association will be July 1 in Marion.

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