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FEATURED

Kids get the chance to soar

Mark Newman Aug 5, 2017



Pilot Jeneanne Visser goes over the flight plan with young passengers Madison Baskett, 15 and McKenna Baskett, 11. Clubs are often willing to provide volunteer pilots for programs that promote aviation.

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OTTUMWA — Going up in a small plane was to be the highlight of an Aviation Youth Rally on Saturday at Ottumwa Regional Airport. When the big moment arrived to climb in, however, a few campers looked a little nervous.

For the few who were having second thoughts, pilots would spend a few minutes talking to them. Before taking a pair of sisters, Madison and McKenna Baskett, up for a ride, pilot Jeneanne Visser showed them the aircraft inside and out.

"I will always have control of the airplane," she told them.

A safety escort along with the pilot and the girls told the kids in some ways, the small planes are easier to be a passenger in than the big planes. You can see outside more easily, and you can see the plane being controlled. The girls hopped in without hesitation, while their mom proudly took pictures of them.

Fellow aviation enthusiast and volunteer Minnetta Gardinier said if the girls had been nervous, they had a really good pilot to go up with.

“She and I flew across the continent: We earned a third place out of 49 planes in the Air Race Classic,” she said.

Audrey Keck is the manager for Archangel Flying Service, the airport’s fixed base operator.

“Archangel does these kinds of things to help promote aviation,” she said. “We like to do this.”

Though the loudest experiences were at the airport, kids had spent time at the Indian Hills North Campus — in the classrooms.

“We worked to make it fun for the students,” said Darren Graham, the school’s chief flight instructor and department head for the north campus. “And we had 54 [students] ages 8-15.”

Hope Deregnier is 13. She heard about the event while in school in the Sigourney district; a friend’s mother works at Indian Hills.

“I’ve never actually been in a plane,” Hope said. “My oldest brother went to China for wrestling. Ever since then, I wanted to be in a plane — and learn to fly.”

She got to ride up front with the pilot Saturday. She was even more hands on inside the North Campus hanger. It was her first chance to use a rivet gun.

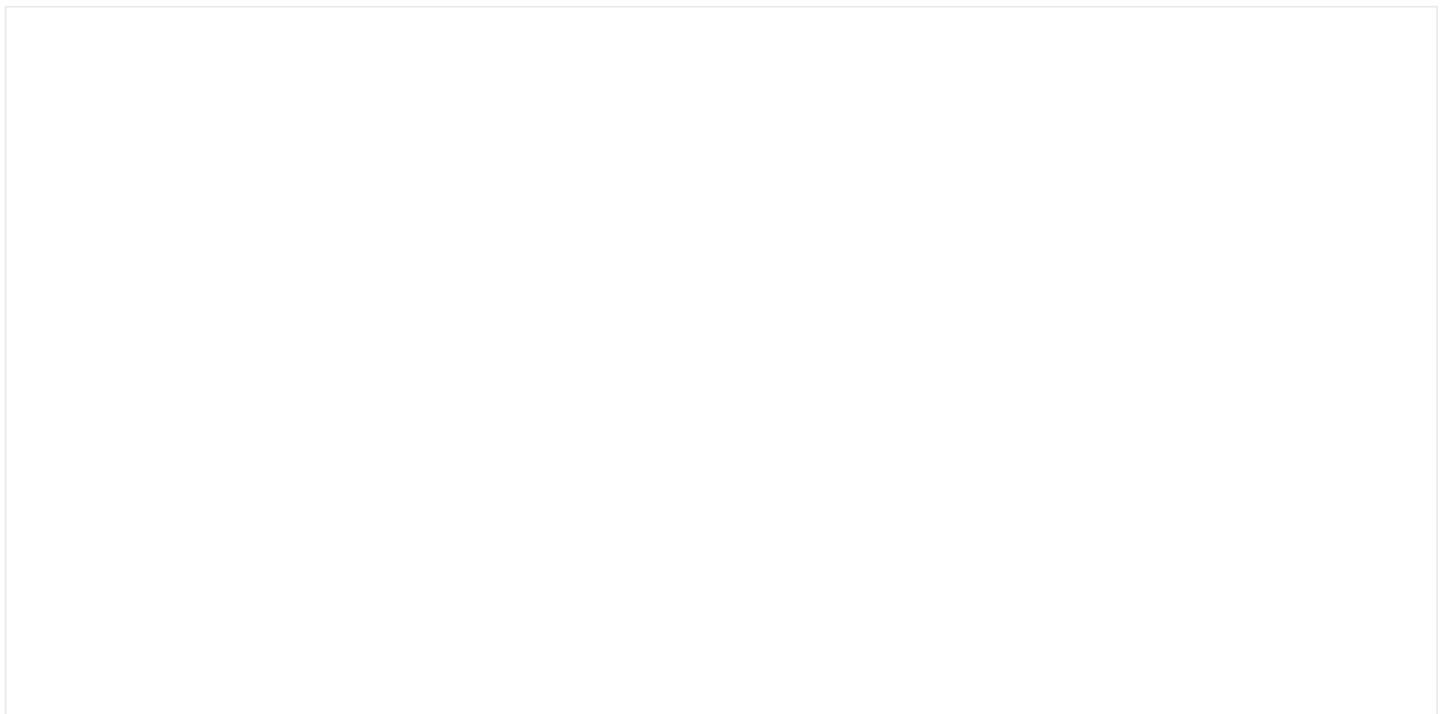
“We did a [flight] simulator, learned a little about repairing planes,” Hope said, “by putting rivets into a piece of metal.”

Those were her two favorite ground activities. Her mom, Alisca Deregnier, was keeping an eye on a couple of other Sigourney school district children, too.

“They’ve all had a great time,” she said.

Graham said in the simulator, each student was guided by an IHCC flight instructor. During the science portion of the day, an instructor explained how pressure on one side of an object and low pressure on the other side can lead to flight. A glass of water, with a piece of board atop it, can be flipped upside down. Air pressure keeps the lid on the glass. Some of the experiments sounded plausible when Graham explained them. When they happened, however, they looked impossible. Sending air under a screwdriver and allowing low pressure to stay above it? You get a floating screwdriver.

Of the four modules students experienced Saturday, one was in the air. And while the three on the ground were all handled by Indian Hills, this was not a recruiting expedition for more students. The school did, however, get to show off what one Iowa Aviation Promotion Group spokesman called a “premier program.” The courses at IHCC teach their students to repair aircraft or to become a professional pilot.





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