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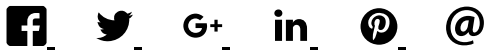
Fly Ottumwa makes education its mission

Winona Whitaker 18 hrs ago



Darren Graham, aviation instructor for Indian Hills, will show high school students what IHCC has to offer during Fly Ottumwa Legacy Education Day in August.

Winona Whitaker



OTTUMWA — Fly Ottumwa is planning three days of family fun and entertainment revolving around the city's aviation history, but it's also accepting the mission to keep the world's aviation industry growing.

Boeing Company is predicting a shortage of two million pilots, crew members and maintenance personnel by 2032, said Fly Ottumwa Media Coordinator Isaac Campbell. So Fly Ottumwa has invited Iowa high school students to spend a day learning about the industry and the career opportunities it offers.

"We kind of have a responsibility when we have the means to do something like this with the airshow," Campbell said.

Boeing expects a worldwide pilot shortage of 636,000 in the next 20 years," said Campbell. "It's a big crisis that people are starting to talk about it. We feel like the best way to combat this impending crisis is to give kids a real life-changing experience and [let them] meet the world's best pilots.

"A lot of the pilots that are coming to Iowa are top pilots," said Campbell. They perform tricks for the air show, but "they all have day jobs."

Skip Stewart who brought his biplane Prometheus to Ottumwa last year, also flies for Fed Ex; Susan Dacy, who will bring her Super Stearman Big Red to Fly Ottumwa, is a pilot with American Airlines.

Dacy's presence is "a great opportunity for young girls who are interested in aviation to get involved," Campbell said. "What better way than to get our kids in front of these role models?"

Sponsored by Ottumwa Regional Legacy Foundation, Education Day is not a public event. Fly Ottumwa contacted schools in southeast Iowa and expects more than 100 students to attend. Ottumwa High School alone committed to more than 60, Campbell said.

"It was a great opportunity for our students to get involved," said Nicole Kooiker, superintendent of Ottumwa Community School District. The district worked with school counselors and talked with teachers whose class subjects intersect with elements of Fly Ottumwa.

Some of Scott Guest's students who studied post-World War II will take part in Education Day as will Kelly Scott's U.S. History students.

“They gave us a certain allotment of students,” said Kooiker, and the district wanted to fill all of those spots.

The district likes to take advantage of opportunities to form a link between the instruction students are receiving and things that are going on in the community, Kooiker said. Students not only learn the subject, but they learn to be involved in the community.

The interest shown by the schools encourages Campbell. “I would expect that this Legacy Education Day could grow in the future,” he said.

Education Day will show students interested in aviation that “This is how you can be successful, and it doesn’t take very long, and you can do it right here in Ottumwa,” Campbell said. “Even if the kids say this isn’t right for me, they can still be excited and proud of Ottumwa’s aviation history.”

Event Director Pam Kaupins said that Fly Iowa reached out to 17 or 18 schools in southeast Iowa, inviting students to Education Day. “They’ve been really enthusiastic.”

Nothing is required of the schools except transportation to the airport.

Students will meet at the naval air station the morning of Aug. 24, and Stephen Black will give them a history of the NAS in Ottumwa, Kaupins said.

A former Ottumwa resident, Black formed Friends of NAS with Mike Gretz of Montezuma and Dave Falkenhagen of Sandusky, Ohio, to raise money to buy the NAS administration building and restore it.

“Then we will move them to a corporate jet career display,” Kaupins said. Students will tour the Tennyson Enterprises corporate jet and hear pilot Kevin Jarvis talk about a career as a corporate jet pilot.

Musco Lighting’s jet and pilot Keely Parrish may also take part if not required to be elsewhere, Kaupins said.

Then students will go to a hangar and meet Kyle Franklin who put his plane together and tell students about careers as an aerobatic stunt pilot.

“The jet rally will have some model jets and will talk about their passion,” Kaupins said. “When you think of models you don’t think of the most advanced miniature aircraft in the world.”

Lunch will be provided, and students will have the opportunity to visit with many of the pilots who will perform during Fly Ottumwa including Dacy, the premier female stunt pilot who also flies a Boeing 777, and the pilot of the A-10 who will tell students what it’s like to be a fighter pilot.

“Then they’re going to get a mini airshow,” Kaupins said. “They’ll be the first ones who will actually see the A-10.”

Following presentations at the airport, students will take a bus to the Indian Hills Community College north campus to see what education they’ll need to have a career in the aviation industry.

“I have not found any other airshows in the country that are doing this,” Kaupins said. Because of the IHCC aviation program, Education Day is a natural fit for Fly Ottumwa.

“They will essentially come over to our facility and tour our aircraft hangar and to see all of the aircraft students work on,” said Darren Graham, IHCC’s chief flight instructor. The school may also have aircraft from flight training onsite.

“They can get in some of them if they want to,” Graham said. “[It’s] just a good opportunity for them to have a hands-on experience because they can touch, and they’re not going to break anything. And if they do, we can fix it.”

Graham may have a raffle and allow two or three students in the flight simulator, he said.

The IHCC aviation staff will talk to the students about how to prepare for a career in aviation and what jobs are available. The industry predicts a shortage of 600,000 pilots in the next 20 years, and “there’s nowhere in the world where we’re pumping students out that fast,” Graham said.

The IHCC aviation program is a 21-month program. “They can come in with no knowledge of education and leave career ready,” Graham said.

“Indian Hills was part of the Fly Iowa last year. It’s a good way to promote aviation, promote our programs here and promote Indian Hills in general.”

Area high schools who want more information about Education Day may contact Kaupins at 641-777-6651.

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