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Annual Young Eagles Day offers youths the experience of flying



A plane starts up to take a youngster on a plane flight for Saturday's Young Eagles Day at Fulton County Airport, sponsored by Adirondack Chapter 602 of the Experimental Aircraft Association. (The Leader-Herald/Eric Retzlaff)

JOHNSTOWN — For some youths, just being aloft in the single-engine airplane is fun in itself. For others, being able to see the Adirondacks and western Massachusetts while flying over Johnstown is amazing. A few may decide someday to go into aviation.

All these are worthwhile for area Adirondack Chapter 602 of the Experimental Aircraft Association.

Saturday was perfect weather for the 18th annual Young Eagles Day in which pilots offer youths ages 8 to 17 an experience flying.

“We’re hoping to interest young people in aviation,” said chapter president Patrick Morris. More than 600 youths have gone on flights from the Fulton County Airport, making them among more than 1.7 million youths who have experienced this.

Kathleen Meseno-Bowles of Amsterdam said she wants someday to travel the world and decided she would be more comfortable if she got some air time now.



Patrick Morris, president of Adirondack Chapter 602 of the Experimental Aircraft Association, prepares to take a girl on a plane flight for Saturday's Young Eagles Day at Fulton County Airport. (The Leader-Herald/Eric Retzlaff)

“I never did this before. I want to try something new,” said Collin White of Johnstown.

Morris said his grandfather was a pilot and he *“always heard stories”* about his flights from Edinburg in the late 1940s.

“When you’re off the ground a few hundred feet, the world seems smaller.”

“I can go to Cape Cod in an hour and a half,” he said.

Once a youngster takes a Young Eagles flight, he or she gets a certificate, a logbook of flight time, a free EAA student membership, Sporty’s Learn to Fly interactive online course, a free flight lesson if they pass Sporty’s and are at least 13, and is eligible for an EAA scholarship.



A pilot with the Adirondack Chapter 602 of the Experimental Aircraft Association takes off with a youth flight for Saturday's Young Eagles Day at Fulton County Airport. (The Leader-Herald/Eric Retzlaff)

Before the youths get taken up in a plane, Andrew Westcott of Troy, a student pilot, used a wooden model to teach them how an airplane flies.

“Some kids are scared at first,” he said. “The kids are extremely excited when they come out of the air. Some kids are jumping with excitement.”

If youths are comfortable, the pilot will allow them to hold the dual control so they can feel how the pilot maneuvers the plane.

Once in the air, Skyler Dee of Niskayuna said, *“It wasn’t bumpy, and we could see stuff far away.”*



Andrew Westcott of Troy uses a wooden model to teach youngsters how planes fly before they go on a flight with a pilot for Saturday's Young Eagles Day at Fulton County Airport, sponsored by Adirondack Chapter 602 of the Experimental Aircraft Association. (The Leader-Herald/Eric Retzlaff)

