

# business Briefing

# On Eagles' Wings

Flight school participation in Young Eagles brings benefits to all

BY HELEN WOODS, MCFI

Suppose I were to tell you that there is a program that can energize your renters; motivate your students to complete their training; book all of your planes solid for a day; provide positive free publicity to your flight school; strengthen community relations among your school, other pilots, and the general public; inspire a future generation of pilots; and possibly even attract a few new customers in the process. There is such a program. It is called Young Eagles, and it can be easily brought to your flight school by a partnership with your local EAA chapter.

The Young Eagles program has flown more than 1.5 million young people ages 8 to 17 since its inception in 1992. More than 42,000 pilots have been active from more than 90 countries. The concept is simple: General-aviation (GA) pilots are paired with young people and take them on short, enjoyable flights in light aircraft and, hopefully, inspire them to one day join our ranks as pilots.

The majority of Young Eagles are flown at “flight rallies” held by a local chapter of the EAA. These rallies organize multiple planes and pilots to fly sizable groups of kids in an efficient manner. Any EAA chapter may organize a flight rally, but rallies do tend to be manpower intensive—both on the ground and in the air. For this reason, smaller chapters often find themselves less active in Young Eagles programs than they’d like. This is where a partnership with a local flight school can be beneficial to all involved.

Unlike many other not-for-profit programs out there, any airworthy aircraft, including homebuilt airplanes, light-sport aircraft, and rented planes may be flown as part of a Young Eagles event. There is no

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minimum flight time requirement for pilots, and any pilot holding a sport pilot certificate or higher may participate. With such liberal requirements, a flight school partnered with an EAA chapter will quickly find an enthusiastic bubble of participation percolating among its students, staff, and renters.

Chesapeake Sport Pilot recently partnered with two local groups—chapters 4 and 571—to host our rally. As the date approached, the excitement amongst our school’s community was tangible. Several of our post-solo students made a push to complete their training in time to qualify to fly for the rally, and our renters came out of the woodwork to get current so they

could fly the kids as well.

On the day of the rally, staffers who generally have little opportunity to fly for pleasure rented planes to take youngsters aloft for the thrill of it, and students who had been unable to complete training beforehand showed up in force to work registration, park planes and cars, and safeguard the flightline—and they found new determination to complete their training before the next rally so they could fly, too.

The local paper covered the event, and neighbors from communities surrounding the airport—who were known for complaining about airport noise—brought their children and grandchildren out for flights, leaving with smiles on their faces.

For their part, the local chapters earned credit from the EAA for each Young Eagle flown, and they made new friends and partners for future activities. We’d like to thank them for their help in organizing a spectacular event.

To be sure, Young Eagles is an outstanding program that helps to strengthen the future of GA. Through partnerships between local EAA chapters and flight schools, these events can bring benefits to both the school and the local EAA chapter while greatly increasing the size and scope of Young Eagles’ outreach. For more information, including the requirements for participation, visit [www.YoungEagles.org](http://www.YoungEagles.org).

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