

Allegan County News & Gazette

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Take Your Children to New Heights at the 2006 Fly-In

By Sara Chappell

Schools are out for the summer, the weather is getting warmer, and your kids are already bored. It probably doesn't seem possible to keep them occupied and entertained without spending your entire vacation fund. Don't get too frustrated, the 6th Annual West Michigan Fly-In is a fun-filled and low-cost way to take your children's summer vacation to new heights.

On June 24th, the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) will provide free airplane rides to children during the Fly-In. These rides, also known as Young Eagle Rides, will be provided by volunteer pilots from EAA Chapter 221.

These pilots donate their airplanes and time in order to expose children to the benefits of flight and aviation. Each pilot has been inspired to do so as a result of aviation's positive influence in their own life. Children ages 7 to 17, with parental consent, are invited to experience the exhilaration of flight for themselves free of charge.

In 1992 the Young Eagles Program was created to give interested young people an opportunity to fly in a general aviation airplane. The program's mission was "to provide a meaningful flight experience for 1 million young people by the 100th anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first powered flight and the 50th anniversary of the EAA," both of which occurred in 2003.

Since achieving and surpassing this goal, more than 40,000 volunteer pilots have given over 1.2 million Young Eagle Rides to children in 90 countries around the world. As of June 8th, 2006, the 1,219,803 Young Eagle Rides have been logged.

In addition to the free airplane rides, interested children can also visit the Young Eagles website at www.youneagles.org.



This airplane and many others will be on display during the Fly-In. Young Eagle Rides will be provided in small airplanes like the one pictured.

The website contains interesting and educational information regarding the program and aviation in general. There is even a running tally of the number of Young Eagle Rides logged to date.

Once a child has taken a Young Eagles Ride, he or she will have access to a "member's only" section of the website as well. Don't miss this free opportunity to add your child to the growing list of young people taking to the skies with the Young Eagles.

For those who would prefer to remain on the ground, adults and children of any age are invited to wander through the various aircrafts on display and talk with pilots during the Fly-In. There will also be a classic and custom car and motorcycle show from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. rain or shine. As in past years, a sky-diving demonstration will be performed for those who are brave enough to watch.

In addition to the numerous beautiful aircrafts, cars and motorcycles on display there will also be a variety of foods available. From 7 a.m. to 11 a.m., the Allegan Lion's Club will host a pancake breakfast

for \$4.00 per person. The Allegan Rotary Club will be selling hot dog baskets from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. for lunch and the Allegan Jaycees will have pop and popcorn for sale all day. Other concessions will include Pete's Finger Licking BBQ, Deano's Ice Cream, cotton candy, pizza, sausage, roasted almonds and pecans, lemonade, smoothies and more.

The Allegan Airport is located at 740 Grand Street in Allegan. Visitors familiar with 131 should take exit 55. Padgham Field is just 9 miles West on M-222.

For more information regarding the sixth annual West Michigan Fly-In, please contact Dodgen Aircraft at (269) 673-4157 or e-mail info@dodgenaircraft.com.

To learn more about the Young Eagles Program, contact Jim Butcher, the Young Eagles Coordinator, at (269) 375-5923, e-mail ea221YE@triton.net or visit the Young Eagles website at www.youneagles.org for general information about the program.