

Young Eagles Rally planned for Saturday

Free airplane rides will be available for kids

BY TRAVIS MORSE
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MOUNT VERNON — Youth ages eight to 17 will get the chance to go on free airplane rides during the upcoming Young Eagles Rally from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 1, at Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

The airport's Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 1155 in Mount Vernon typically hosts events of this sort twice a year, one in late May and another one in the fall. The goal of the Young Eagles Rally is to expose youth to the joys of aviation, said EAA Chapter 1155 President Steve Willis.

"Hopefully, it will generate some interest (in aviation)," Willis said. "Some of them might go on to be pilots after being introduced to it. ... They have a really good time."

Saturday's rally is free and open to the public. No pre-registration is required, but kids must have a parent present to sign all of the required paperwork. The event will be dependent on the weather. Interested parties should come to the Bonnie Cafe lobby at the airport to begin the process Saturday.

"This will enable youth ages eight to 17 the ability to fly in an airplane for free," an event news release states. "Our sole mission

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is to introduce and inspire youth to the world of aviation. Parental signed consent is mandatory for the flight. Forms will be available at the Mount Vernon Airport. Rallies are influenced by weather, pilot/aircraft availability and public health issues. Every effort will be made to make a timely decision to change our rally date if needed."

According to the EAA website, the Young Eagles program was launched in 1992. It is the only program of its kind, with the sole mission to introduce and inspire kids in the world of aviation. More than 2.3 million young people have enjoyed a free introductory flight through the Young Eagles program. These flights are made possible through the generosity of EAA member volunteers, the website states.

This year, the EAA is celebrating the 31st annual International Young Eagles Day on Saturday, June 8. On or around this day, there will be a number of EAA chapters holding Young Eagles Rallies at different locations.

"We're doing it on the first of June, the eighth of June is (International) EAA Young Eagles Day where lots of chapters around the country try to all do the Young Eagle flights that day," Willis said. "We weren't able to schedule ours on the eighth so we picked the first (of June)."

Mount Vernon Airport Director Chris Collins praised the Young Eagles program, saying that it is a very positive experience for children and their parents.

"I've participated in this program since 1999 and it never gets old," Collins said. "It's just wonderful to share the flight experience with youth and to see the excitement on their faces and the parents and grandparents."

For more information on Saturday's Young Eagles Rally, contact the Mount Vernon Airport at (618) 242-7016. The EAA Chapter 1155 is always seeking new members and anyone with an interest in aviation is encouraged to come to their meetings, which occur at 6 p.m. on the first Tuesday of the month at the local airport.

For more information on Young Eagles, visit eaa.org/young eagles.
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