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Iowa DOT spin-off promotes aviation in state

February 24, 2014 | By Benét J. Wilson

The Iowa Aviation Promotion Group (IAPG), a nonprofit organization that promotes aviation in the state, was created in 1998 to take over the annual Fly Iowa event from the state Department of Transportation.

“The Iowa DOT had been sponsoring the annual Fly Iowa fair, but it had reached a point where they felt an independent, not-for-profit should take over with volunteers to choose sites to host the event and oversee its administration,” said the organization’s volunteer Executive Director Chuck McDonald.

Fly Iowa is just one of the projects now overseen by IAPG, said McDonald. “Over the years, we’ve expanded the charter to beyond just the air fair. We now host a series of youth events, Iowa Pilot Palooza, and other kinds of online and media-based aviation promotions,” he said. “In December, we worked with a local morning Des Moines TV show, which gave us seven minutes on the air,” he said. “We took one of their hosts and gave them a flight lesson that aired across Central Iowa.”

IAPG also does things to get kids involved in aviation, said McDonald. “We provide a template for short half-day camp experience for a youngster that’s an expansion of a Young Eagles flight that includes ground activities,” he said. “We’ve done this the past eight years. We’ve averaged 250 to 300 kids at eight sites across the state, for free.”

The organization also hosts the Fly Iowa Challenge. “We have 109 public-use airports in Iowa. Those who become members of IAPG are automatically enrolled in the Fly Iowa Challenge,” said McDonald. Participants fly to as many of the 109 airports as possible, with no time limit. Participants are eligible for bronze, silver, gold, or platinum awards.

Among IAPG’s 150 members are airports, FBOs, and its biggest supporter, Rockwell Collins, said McDonald. The organization gets funding for its \$20,000 yearly budget from Rockwell Collins and members, he added.

Fly Iowa is hosted by a different airport every year, and IAPG gives the host \$5,000 in seed money that the local community has to match, said McDonald. “They also must raise \$40,000 total needed to fund the event, which handled between 4,000 and 6,000 attendees and includes a flight breakfast, aviation displays, and exhibits, an airshow, and a youth event,” he said.

It all comes down to people for making organizations like IAPG a success, said McDonald. “We have the support of the state DOT and the airports community which sees it as important,” he said.

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On Feb. 21, leaders representing every aspect of the U.S. aviation community gathered for a gala at Paramount Pictures Studios in Hollywood, Calif., to honor famed aviator and aviation legend R.A. "Bob" Hoover. The tribute played out before more than 470 attendees and included a red carpet reception, speeches and honoraria, dinner, and the premier showing of *Perfecting Flight*.



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