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Flying High in the Sky: local pilots take children on free flights

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OELWEIN (KWWL) - Some pilots in Eastern Iowa are inspiring the next generation of aviators by taking them 1,200 feet in the sky.

On Saturday, more than 30 children took flight at Oelwein Municipal Airport.

EAA John Livingston Chapter 227 hosted the free event.

The purpose was for children to see what real pilots do on the ground and in the air. During the flight, the pilot talked about the airplane, reviewed an aeronautical chart, and even allowed the kids to take control of the plane. Some of the children had aspirations to become pilots, and others were curious about the airplanes.

Many of the pilots had experience in the military or flying privately. There were a mixture of single-engine planes in the lineup; some were homemade and others were factory-built.

One pilot, Marty Hoel, said he's been flying airplanes for more than 40 years. His airplane, a Cessna Cardinal, has taken him all over North America throughout his lifetime. He said he loves seeing the kids' faces light up when they take off and look out the window.

"I'm at a position in life where I can give young people rides, and I'm really fortunate to pass my passion for it onto the next generation," Hoel said.

Grace Johnson, 10, told KWWL she flew for the very first time. She said her parents surprised her by taking her to the airport on Saturday.

Lucas and Kaleb Williamson said they enjoyed the view the most.

"I was scared at first takeoff, but when we were really high, I was happy," Kaleb said. "My favorite part was the view because I've never been so high before."

The pilots donated their time and their airplanes so the children could experience the freedom of flight.

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"My passion for [flying] extends to everyone that I see," Hoel said. "I feel that I'm an advocate for aviation, and this is a great way to share my passion."

The next EAA Young Eagles Flight will take place in Waverly. Fore more information, visit: <https://www.eaa227.com/events.htm>

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