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Central Campus aviation student to finish freshman year at 76

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One Central Campus student is poised to finish his freshman year in the Central Campus Aviation Technology Academy, though he first worked in the aircraft industry more than half a century ago.

Richard Link, 76, is from Maxwell, Iowa, and graduated from high school in 1960.

"I was the first of six siblings to get my diploma," he said. "Our parents grew up riding to school on horseback."
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(Photo: Special to the Register)



Central Campus aviation instructor Tim Harmer demonstrates how to use the program's flight simulator. (Photo: Kathleen Hurley/For the Register)

After time spent at Ellsworth Junior College and serving in the military, Link first worked in the aircraft industry in 1966 when Boeing hired him as a toolmaker. Link married Linda, an East High graduate, and the couple have two children, four grandchildren and even a great-grandchild.

Now, he volunteers at the Iowa Aviation Heritage Museum in Ankeny and wants to learn more about aircraft maintenance.

Those accomplishments did not stop him from wanting to add more to his list. Link, currently a freshman, joined the Central Campus aviation program in January, after hearing about it on social media.

Students in the Aviation Technology Academy get hands-on training in complete assembly and disassembly of the piston, turbine and prop aircraft engines. The Central Campus program has its own fleet of aircraft, ranging from helicopters to a Learjet at its aviation lab on the south side of Des Moines. Students also are able to do pilot training on a flight simulator, something Link said he's eager to try.

"Richard is a pleasure to have in class," said Keith Boot, Link's primary teacher. "His previous and current experience both help the class better understand the industry."

Des Moines school officials said Link is proof that the sky is the limit.

"I intend to go all the way and get my (Associate Arts) degree," Link said.

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