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Visually impaired campers soar through clouds

by KYLE WEBB
News Editor

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VINTON — Upon first glance there was nothing out of the ordinary Monday afternoon at Vinton Municipal Air Field. There was a group of children enjoying the nice weather, relaxing on a large blanket spread over the bright green grass while enjoying some snacks.

Then you notice the folding canes nearby, followed by the arrival of a small fleet of small aircrafts, and the sense of something unique filled the air.

Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) Young Eagles arrived at the Vinton airport in order to take the campers from Iowa Braille's June summer camp on a skyward journey, teaching them about their planes and the experiences of flying.

"It's a really unique opportunity that the kids may not get otherwise," John Justice, a residential program counselor for Iowa Braille and Waterloo resident, said. "Without vision it is tough to know what is going on around you and the pilots do a great job of explaining everything to the kids, including the sensations they may be feeling while flying."

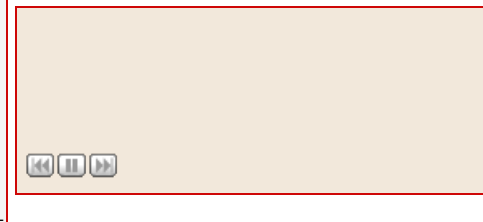
The group of six campers explored the planes as four of them received one-on-one interaction with a pilot while the last two doubled up in the biggest plane. The pilots explained what each flap, nook and cranny did while the campers ran their curious fingers along the smooth exterior of the plane.

"What does this do?" Could be heard almost in unison as the campers walked around the planes.

The EAA Young Eagles have been involved in taking youth skyward for over 10 years including the last two years with the Braille School.

"The EAA program is all about teaching young children about aviation," Connie White, a member of the EAA Young Eagles, said.

The EAA Young Eagles have flown more than one million children over the past decade and hope to fly a million more in the next decade.



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