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## Fly away with me

### Experimental Aircraft Association provides free rides for students.

By WILLIAM SMITH  
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Unlike a lot of little girls, Peyton Jackson is an adrenaline junkie. The 10-year-old loves fast cars and motorcycles, and has taken an interest in airplanes.

When she learned she would be taking a free plane ride courtesy of the local 700 chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association, she was ecstatic.

"She's been talking about this non-stop," said her mother, Jody Jackson. "She's been counting down the days. She was very excited today, and a little apprehensive."

Peyton was one of 23 students treated to a free ride in a variety of home-built experimental aircraft and good old-fashioned Cessnas, which was a reward for participating in an EAA aviation course two weeks ago at the Southeast Iowa Regional Airport.

"She loved the class. She talked about getting to sit in the plane, talked about touring the airport. She had a lot of fun," Jody Jackson said.

Rides were limited to about 20 minutes, which resulted in a continuous cycle of small aircraft leaping from the airport runways and landing Saturday morning. Though the Cessnas were capable of taking up to three passengers at a time, the smaller experimental aircraft could seat only one.

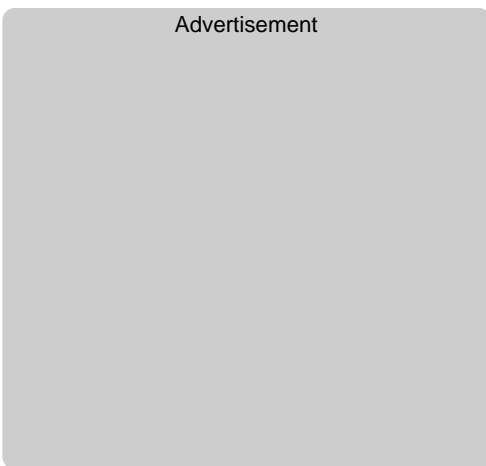
Peyton rode in EAA member Jim Knight's red-and-white RV-6, which he built with his father over the course of about four years.

"Everybody pretty much has their own plane in the EAA. We don't have a group plane. We've been talking about getting one for people who want to get their pilot's license," said EAA member John Jaeger, who was in charge of getting everybody into planes.

By the time Peyton Jackson returned from her flight, all she could manage was a stunned smile and a thumbs up. It was the first time she had been in the air, and an experience she'll remember a long time.

"We flew around, and we tried to look for my house. We saw the train and everything," she said seconds after stepping out of the plane.

The other two-seater experimental aircraft, a silver Zodiac reassembling a flying wing,



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belongs to EAA member Mark Ertz. He built it with his father and brother over a 10-month period, fitting the plane with a 120-horsepower Australian engine.

Ertz let 10-year-old Jarod Schaffer take a turn at the controls while they were up in the air, and Schafer was not disappointed.

"Awesomeness," Schaffer said as soon as he stepped from the plane.

"You didn't try to make him do barrel rolls, did you?" asked his father, Mark Schaffer.

"No," Jarod said.

"Thank god," his father replied.

For many, the aviation class and free flight was a way to experience something new. But for 14-year-old Skylar Franklin, it was another step on the tall ladder to becoming a professional pilot.

"I was thinking about flying commercial airplanes, but I was also thinking about flying helicopters for the Coast Guard or the Marines, or for Mercy hospital," he said.

Franklin had flown plenty of times before, but that didn't detract from his experience Saturday. He eats, drinks and breathes aviation, and would do it all over again if he could.

"I think this was an amazing thing to do, because I love flying," he said. "The class taught us things about planes that even I didn't know, so that was pretty cool. It's always cool to learn something new."

And for some of the students, the experience could be the first shuffle toward a military career in aviation.

"I've never been in a plane before, and it was really exciting," said Andy McLerran, 13, of New London. "I'm really interested in blowing stuff up, and I like planes. Especially dogfighting planes.SDRq



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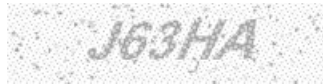
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