

Lake students build ultralight aircraft



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By RICHARD JOHNSON, For The Globe Gazette | Posted: Saturday, March 10, 2012 1:01 pm | (0)

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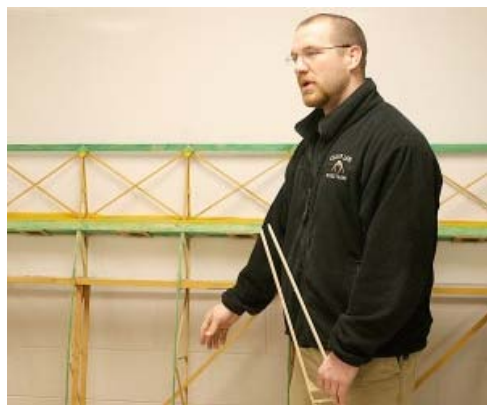
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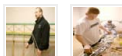
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Clear Lake High School teacher Mike Lester talks about the ultralight class his students are building. They're using the wing behind Lester as a model for theirs.



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A shop class at Clear Lake High School is making an ultralight airplane.

CLEAR LAKE — When they learned Clear Lake High School students were building an airplane, some folks figured it was a radio-controlled job.

Not hardly.

It's an honest-to-gosh ultralight aircraft — a Legal Eagle XL, to be exact. And it's expected to soar.

"We want it to fly," said Clear Lake senior Mike Asbe.

"It's moving in the right direction," said Independent Metals course instructor Mike Lester.

The endeavor is part of "Project School Flight," a program promoted by Clayton Folkerts Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chapter 94, which encompasses nine North Iowa counties and is based at the Mason City Municipal Airport.

It received the blessing of school officials and took off with the school year in August. Several North Iowa businesses donated parts, services and money for the airplane kit.

The students, juniors and seniors in the advanced course cut and beveled pieces of aircraft-grade spruce for ribs on each 25-foot wing of the plane.

They've learned practical applications in aeronautical engineering, Computer-Aided Design (CAD) drawing, assembly, trusses, steel pipe-welding, woodworking and metalworking, said Ken Asbe of Clear Lake, Mike's father and the president of EAA Chapter 94.

The plane, powered by a two-cylinder, 45-horsepower modified Volkswagen engine, will carry one pilot weighing up to 275 pounds. The craft will weigh 254 pounds or less. Thus, under Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules, the owner won't require a pilot's license.

It will belong to EAA Chapter 94, and sold, hopefully to an area pilot.

Proceeds will return to the Project School Flight program planned as an annual project at Clear Lake High.

The goal is to have the ultralight finished by the end of the school year and show it off in Clear Lake's

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annual Fourth of July parade.

"They're playing away at it," Lester said of his students. "It's a learning experience for everyone. The community resources have been helping out big-time. It takes everyone to build this. It's a big project. It's a good challenge for them."

"It takes a lot of time and effort," Mike Asbe said. "Sometimes you've just got to work through struggles."

Said Ken Asbe: "We figure if they can build this, they can build anything, if they put their mind to it."

See <http://eaa94.org> for more chapter information, upcoming events, and Project School Flight sponsors.

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