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published online: 5/10/2012

Student learns in airborne classroom

New London teen spends school day job shadowing pilot on St. Louis flight.

By JERMAINE PIGEE
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Instead of sitting in a classroom learning about airline pilots, Baylee Lindell, a junior at New London High School, had the opportunity to learn about the profession thousands of feet in the air.

With the help of Air Choice One, Lindell had the exciting opportunity to travel from Burlington to St. Louis Tuesday in the cockpit of an eight-person airplane.

"I'm in a class at school right now called workplace readiness," Lindell said. "As part of the class, we have to job shadow someone. I called (Mary Beard, director of Southeast Iowa Regional Airport) and asked her if I can do this and she said I can."

At first, Lindell said becoming a pilot was not her first option.

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Later in the day Friday, Lindell received a call from Shane Storz, CEO of Air Choice One.

"He said he set up an appointment for me to ride in the cockpit of an airplane," Lindell said. "I was jumping up and down. I was so excited."

Storz said Lindell wrote a very nice letter asking for a chance to job shadow a pilot.

"We have been looking at ways to inspire the up-and-coming youth because there is a shortage of pilots," Storz said. "We want to come up with ways to get the youth excited about aviation opportunities and the careers that are available."

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New London High School junior Baylee Lindell, 16, flies with Air Choice One pilot Andy Alexander doing a job shadow Tuesday on a roundtrip flight from Burlington to St. Louis.

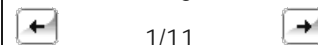
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Lindell had the opportunity to job shadow Andrew Alexander, an Air Choice One pilot.

During the hourlong flight to St. Louis, Alexander shared plenty of information with Lindell, including training, how to distribute the weight of the plane, how the gauges in the cockpit work, and he also translated the messages that came across air traffic control.

Because of scheduling, Lindell was able to fly with Alexander in the cockpit.

"We are certified to fly with a single pilot or two pilots," Storz said. "(Lindell) happened to catch a flight with one pilot. Ninety-eight percent of the time, we are a two-crew operation."

After a brief stop in St. Louis, Alexander switched planes, and two new pilots flew Lindell back to Burlington.

At the end of her experience, Lindell said she was very excited to learn more about a career in aviation.

"This was definitely an eye opener, and I plan to pursue this field more," Lindell said. "I thought about becoming a pilot, but I never really pursued it. Now, I want to pursue it even more."

Storz said having a female student wanting to be a pilot is not unusual.

"Female pilots are pretty dominant in the industry, actually," Storz said. "It's pretty encouraging to have female students in the area interested."

Storz said Lindell's experience will be the first of many for area students.

"We will be accepting essays, and the best one will get to job shadow a pilot," Storz said. "There will be four job shadowing opportunities throughout the year in our community."

For more information about the opportunity to job shadow a pilot, contact Dustin Cronin at (314) 843-8501.

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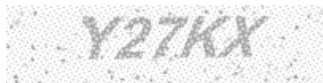
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