

AVIATION CAREER EXPLORATION ACADEMY STUDENTS MEET AT CANYON FERRY AIRPORT by Matthew Nelson

Eighteen high school students participated in the three-day 2023 Aviation Career Exploration (ACE) Academy course which ended up on Saturday June 17th at Canyon Ferry Airport. Sponsored by Montana Aeronautics, and staffed by volunteer pilots of the Montana Pilots Association (MPA), the course was designed for students wishing to pursue a career in aviation. Besides being a pilot, other opportunities are Avionics (aircraft radios and electronics), Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) mechanics, working in an air traffic control tower, preparing weather reports, etc.

Some (but not all) of the leaders/pilots for this event were Ryan Stock, Rob Esurdge, Dwight Thompson, Nick Hunt and his son Porter, Brandon Wilson, Clint Saunders, and Matt Lindberg, the Safety & Education Bureau Chief / for Montana Aeronautics.

The following aircraft were located at Canyon Ferry Airport for this event:

- Cessna 150 N7718E converted to a tail-dragger, owned by Nick Hunt, Bozeman
- 1974 Cessna 172M N5149R owned by Daniel Hurst, Manhattan, Montana
- 1970 Citabria Model 7KCAB N9064 co-owned by Don Hendrickson, Helena
- 1973 Cessna 182P N79882 owned by WEBBS WILDLIFE CONSULTANTS LLC, Park City, Montana
- 1957 Cessna 182A N3803D owned by Clinton Saunders, Belgrade
- 2023 Kitfox Light Sport N65KA owned by FOXAIR LLC, Homedale, Idaho
- R-44 Helicopter flown by Brandon Wilson
- 1946 Piper Cub PA-12 owned by Ryan Diehl, Columbus, Ohio. This plane was on the field, but not part of the event.

Kieron Moore is 16 and lives in New Zealand. He has lived there for 12 years. He is currently staying with his Godfather in Stevensville, Montana and together they are building a plane, it's a Bearhawk Patrol, which is similar in design to a Piper PA12 Super Cub. He has been interested in aviation since he first saw an airplane. He has just started working in the United States on obtaining his Private Pilot License (PPL), and has six hours of flying so far. Besides aviation, he has interests in photography, running and hiking. He also wants to hike the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT).

He talked about the shortage of pilots. Part of that is the expense of flying. He pays \$120 for the airplane he rents and \$45 for the instructor. He has done some flying with his Godfather. However, he is willing to work to pay for his flying by doing odd jobs.

He doesn't want to fly commercially for the airlines, but has thought about doing charters or guiding. Right now he definitely just wants to get his license. He has thought about joining the Air Force. Once he gets his license he has thought about becoming an instructor to build up his hours. He wrote about the ACE course:

"Day 1

We got there at 6 am and started the day with a flight, there were 2 Cessna 172s, 1 Bonanza G36, and a Cessna 206. I was in the 206 we took off from Helena and went to Deer Lodge from there we went to Lincoln. The flight was smooth with great views, I am unsure about what the other planes did.

After we landed we went and got a tour of Helena Collage, then we went to the ATC Tower and got a tour of that, then lunch, next was the National Guard tour, we went in the Black Hawk and Chinook hangers (they were way bigger then I would have ever thought), and got to go in both of them, then off to a Helena Airport bus tour, after that, we went to Exec Air/MT and saw their air ambulance after that was the end of day one

Day 2

We drove to Missoula in the morning, we started with Neptune Aviation and got a tour of their hangers and firefighting planes, after that, we went to the Smoke Jump center went through where they pack the parachutes, and their gear, then the planes, and next was lunch, then we moved on to the Museum of Mountain Flying, where we got a tour of Miss Montana 1 hour after we got there she left for an Idaho fly-in I believe, then we went to Washington Companies, where we got a tour of their hangers and a jet which was great, then back to Helena

Day 3

We got up and jumped in the vans to go to Canyon Ferry, where there was a fly-in, after that went back to Helena airport at 12 pm and that was the end of our trip.”

Suzanne (Susie) Michalski lives in Townsend. Although she is not a pilot herself, she helps prepare students for their careers and was involved with the ACE students at the Canyon Ferry Airport. She has recently started working as a career coach through the Office of Public Instruction. She goes into the schools to speak with the students and try to get them exposure to soft skills like interviews and how to conduct themselves in an interview, how to dress for opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, certifications. They talk about military opportunities, four year education, two year education, and the importance of all of that. Career coaches expose the students to dual credit college classes, summer camps and soft skills they can use to get the desired job. They work with principals, counselors and teachers to get them the tools they need (including funding) to teach these skills to the students.

Often, we hear about what is wrong with American youth. These eighteen kids represent what is right with American youth. God Bless.