

Boy Scouts work on earning Aviation Merit Badges at Canyon Ferry Airport

by Matt Nelson and Matt Lindberg

On the evening of Monday, June 12th, twelve members of Boy Scout Troop 212 East Helena, which also includes scouts from Townsend, worked together toward earning their Aviation Merit Badges at the Canyon Ferry Airport. Among the attendees were Scout Master Eric Sommer, Broadwater County Airport Manager Dwight Thompson, County Commissioner Darrel Folkvord, Airport board members consisting of Bob Hollister, Adam MacDonald, who is the board chairman, and Rob Bargatze. Also present was Aubra Lewis, who is in the airport board administration assistant and is also a retired 5th grade teacher from Townsend. She had taught several of the scouts, and it was easy to tell that they liked each other! Mark Young works for the city of Helena as the Transportation Engineer and is the father of three of the scouts.

Matt Lindberg, the Safety & Education Bureau Chief /Aeronautics, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) wrote: *"The East Helena Scouts, volunteers, airport manager Dwight Thompson, and Montana Aeronautics gathered at the Canyon Ferry airstrip to paint rocks that mark the field elevation and help Scouts work toward earning their aviation merit badges. Also lending a hand were local pilot volunteers."*

After the airport sprucing up was done, Scouts worked toward earning their Aviation Merit Badges by completing introductory flights, learning the forces of flights, explored aviation careers, flew drones and flight simulators (brought to the airport by Matt Lindberg), and learned the basics of navigation and primary flight instruments. The evening wrapped up with burgers cooked over a campfire donated by Dwight.

Dwight is the airport manager of both the Townsend and Canyon Ferry airports in Broadwater County. Significant improvements have been made to both airports by Dwight in his official capacity, and through the time and resources he has volunteered. Both airports are in fantastic condition and ready for your visit thanks to him!

A special thanks is owed to him for the support of the Scout Aviation merit badge program. It is especially nice that the Canyon Ferry runway is nicely rolled, the weeds are sprayed and mowed, and even some cactuses were dug up in the parking areas!"

Dwight had his 1975 Cessna 172 on display, in which the students were given training in pre-flying an airplane, but the highlight of the evening was when Townsend pilot Wade Litton took the scouts flying in his 1967 Cessna 182. Each of the four flights had three scouts as passengers. They took off from Canyon Ferry Airport heading South, flew over Townsend, and along Canyon Ferry Lake. It didn't matter whether or not the scouts had flown before. Each scout stepped out of the plane after landing with wide grins, excited laughter, and a memory that will last a lifetime.

Conner Mowery, Carter Sommer, and Colter Schaible flew in the first flight with Wade; followed by Zach Matthews, Konner Swan, and Sam Smith in the 2nd flight; Skyler Buffham, Marcus Phan, and Walker Young in the 3rd flight; and Ephraim Young, Damon Young, and John Sommer in the 4th flight.

After the scouts flew, Eric Sommer was a passenger with two other people, and then Mark Young, a young TV reporter named Rachael, and I were all able to go for a ride. What made it even special for me is that I had about 30 minutes of flying from the right seat, since I am a pilot!

Thanks to all the Boy Scouts and everybody else who participated. God Bless.