



West Ottawa students enjoy flight night in Historic Hangar

This past Sunday night March 10 at the Park Township Airport Historic Hangar, a gaggle of West Ottawa middle and high school students were flying all around the airport, but from inside the hangar. Thanks to a new Redbird Flight Simulator purchased and operated by the Park Township Airport Historical Association, the students were able to explore their flying skills while classmates watched and cheered.

"We are pleased to introduce young people to the excitement of flying with this state of the art simulator," said Jeff Vos, pilot and president of the Park Township Airport Historical Association (PTAHA for short). "The PTAHA is a non profit organization that helps manage the Park Township airport and is involved in many aviation related activities. With this new simulator we will be able to show young people what flying is all about. There is an increasing shortage of commercial pilots, and we are hopeful that some of these students will get the flying bug."

The event started with local pilot Tim Hildore talking about his attraction to aviation starting when he was a boy. He described the many ways he was able to gain flight experience. Now after thirty years of commercial flying he is currently the corporate pilot for the Fogg Filler company. Next up, Bob Garlinghouse sporting his US Navy flight jacket, told the students about his early fascination with flight. After high school he was accepted at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. He told the students, "When I was just 23 years old, not much older than many of you right now, I was flying an F-14 Tomcat fighter from the deck of an aircraft carrier in the Indian ocean. That's pretty exciting! If you consider a career in flying, the sky's the limit."



Bob Garlinghouse talks about flying an F-14 fighter

Time to fly. Everyone moved into the training room of the hangar and gathered around the three screen Redbird TD simulator. It gives a very realistic view of what a pilot sees when flying a Cessna 172 single engine airplane. With Vos assisting, students had a chance to take off from Park Township Airport, fly out to the beach and then come back and land, preferably without crashing! With enthusiastic encouragement from fellow students, there were some interesting approaches to the airport. Jonathan Bloemers exclaimed, "This is nothing like a video game...it's so much harder!" Vos told the group, "This Redbird simulator is the same type of certified equipment used by aviation schools to train new pilots. Licensed pilots can also log hours on this machine to help maintain their proficiency."



Jonathan Bloemers flies the simulator with guidance from PTAHA president Jeff Vos

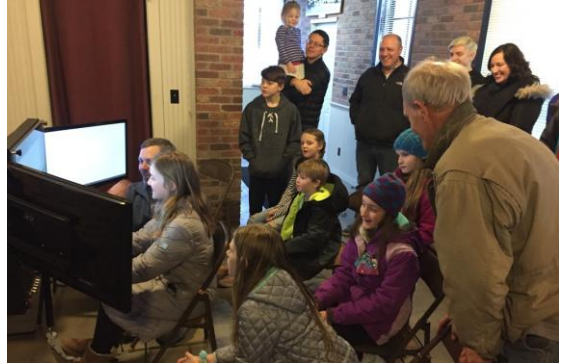
"The toughest part was steering the plane on the runway with your feet!" said Abagayle Hogan, the first of the girls to successfully land...on the runway. Anderson Bloemers, a West Ottawa sophomore, had a good feel for the simulator and executed a smooth flight and nice landing. Anderson said, "I'm so glad the PTAHA is offering students time to use this simulator. I've been thinking about a career in aerospace engineering or aviation for as long as I can remember. This will give me some great experience before I even get into college."

The Park Township Airport Historical Association will soon be publishing a schedule of times when the simulator will be available for students, with the assistance and instruction of a member of PTAHA or another local pilot volunteer. The PTAHA is also involved in several aviation activities at the airport throughout the year, including the [Airport Breakfast, Open House and Car Show on Saturday June 8.](#)

PTAHA also works to preserve the history of the Park Township Airport which was opened in 1937, one of Michigan's early airports. By 1944 Hope College had over 100 students in its GI Flight Training Program. The US Army-Airforce sent airplane and helicopter pilots here to be trained. Vos said, "PTAHA is seeking local residents with any historical information, photos, or artifacts that will help us document the interesting history of the airport over the last eighty two years."

For more information and updates about PTAHA and its activities, or if you would like to assist or contribute, go to: www.parktownshipairporthistoricalassociation.org or email info@parktownshipairporthistoricalassociation.org

Article submitted by Bob Stander, PTAHA board member.



Ella Sandstedt smiles as she lines her Cessna up for landing at Park Township Airport.



Sophomore Anderson Bloemers making a right turn back toward the airport