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Young Eagles promote aviation

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AUBURN — Sam Benbow, 9, of Auburn, was the first child in line for a free airplane ride with the Young Eagles Saturday morning at DeKalb County Airport.

Volunteer pilots with the Young Eagles Chapter 37 gave their time and shared their equipment so children could get a glimpse of aviation Saturday during the DeKalb County Airport's second annual open house.

Benbow hoped her dad, Mark, was going to fly with her. She was a little nervous when she learned he would have to stay behind and take pictures of her flying into blue skies.

Benbow shared that he took his first flight in a small airplane at the DeKalb County Airport when he was about his daughter's age. He said the Auburn Rotary Club hosted an event at the airport, and children got to take rides with local pilots.

"I loved it," he said.

As his daughter headed into to the cockpit of pilot Mike Williams' Cessna 152 plane, Benbow waved and said, "She's my brave girl."

After about 15 minutes in the air, Benbow returned with a smile. Someday, she said, she might get her pilot's license.

The Young Eagles gave each child a certificate, log book, a "Learn to Fly" booklet and an information about taking free courses online.

Pilot Brad Moore said the Young Eagles would give about 70 to 100 children rides Saturday.



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Planes burn between five and 10 gallons of fuel per hour, and fuel costs between \$16 and \$25 per hour, Moore said.

"All of this is donated," Moore said. "We do this because it's fun and to promote aviation."

In addition to free rides, people could tour hangars, eat breakfast, participate in a "bomb drop" competition and talk to representatives from airport-related organizations such as the 99s.

Lara Zook-Gaerte of Century Aviation, the airport's fixed-base operator, said she felt Saturday's event was a success.

"We're pleased to see this many members of our community come out to support the airport," she said.

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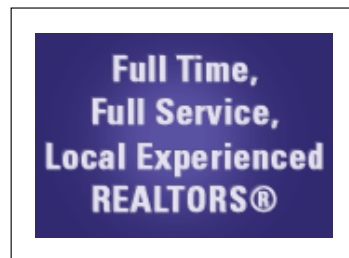
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