

# Iowa Lakes Aviation Exploration Day takes off

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BY WILL MUSGROVE -- STAFF WRITER

Around 50 northwest Iowa high school students soared through the air last week while learning about aviation.

Iowa Lakes Community College held its second annual Aviation Exploration Day at the Estherville Municipal Airport Thursday, May 5. During the event, students learned about aviation careers, the science of flight and how science is used every day by pilots.

"We just want to give students an idea of what kind of jobs are available in the aviation market and what they can do for future employment if they are interested in aviation," Chief Flight Instructor at Iowa Lakes Ron Duer said. "We want to give them a little taste of it by giving them a an airplane as well."

An assortment of planes, ranging from corporate aircraft to crop dusters, were displayed at the airport during the event. Pilots conversed with students about their aircraft and how they got into aviation.

Former members of the Iowa Lakes aviation program flew students for about a 20 minute flight near the Iowa Great Lakes. Duer said the flight was designed to give students a brief introduction into the science of aviation.

"A lot of people have flown on airlines, but very few have flown in a small aircraft," Duer said. "It doesn't matter if you're an airline pilot or an Air Force pilot, everyone starts in the small planes learning how to fly. No one starts in the big jumbo jets."

Students also got a chance to test their own piloting skills in a flight simulator. In the simulation, students took off and landed a Cessna 172 airplane.

"The flight simulator is a little harder to fly than a real airplane," Duer said. "It's kind of like the one we used for training in the program at Iowa Lakes."

Duer said that the aviation program usually takes around two years to complete and mainly trains people to become private pilots. While in the program, trainees learn how to fly in a diverse number of small aircraft.

"We have a little bit of everything," Duer said. "We have a Cessna, a Cirrus Sr20, a Beechcraft Debonair and a Piper Seneca. We decided that we weren't going to train in just one model of airplane. We wanted to give the students a chance to fly many different types of airplanes because some day their job may require it."

Duer said most students who graduate from the aviation program often become flight instructors. He added there are also jobs available as plane mechanics, flight instructors, crop dusters and corporate airplane pilots.

Molly Bates, Iowa Lakes Community College Intermediary Connections Coordinator, created the aviation event a year ago.

Duer believes Iowa Lakes' aviation program provides students an opportunity to explore careers they

might not have thought possible before.

"We're offering the students an opportunity to take a look at some nontraditional jobs," Duer said. "In this part of the county, if you are not in an agricultural-related industry, you are in a supporting industry."

Students from Spirit Lake, North Union, Okoboji, Spencer, Sheldon, Emmetsburg, Algona, Newman Catholic and Estherville Lincoln Central participated in the event.

"I have never been in a plane before so it was a great first experience," Spirit Lake freshman Dayne Fisbeck said.

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