

# Gliding through the skies

## Condon tells of World Gliding Championships experience

September 30, 2015

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By David Swartz

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Some people think they can glide through life-or at least through the skies.

### Article Photos

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Tony Condon Jr. is off to a good start in the latter respect after he and his United States teammate Francois Pin placed third at the 2015 World Gliding Championships. Individually, Condon placed ninth while Pin placed third.

An Estherville native, Condon told about his experiences Tuesday at the Iowa Lakes Community College SERT building in Estherville.

A graduate of the aviation program at Iowa Lakes, Condon first became interested in gliding while at Iowa State University.

"I met the glider club in Ames and got hooked," he said.

He used the pilot's license he earned at Iowa Lakes to qualify for the U.S. Team. The World Championship occurs every two years and the 2015 competition took him to Pociunai, Lithuania.

Condon spoke of the differences between U.S. competition and World competition.

"Scoring at the World Competition is less forgiving of mistakes," he said.

Also, in U.S. competition, pilots are not allowed to work together.

"At World, you can work with a teammate, which allows us to fly faster and I think is a more enjoyable way to score," he said. "

Condon described gliding competition strategy as a combination of "cross country running and chess.

"You're constantly balancing the risk/reward for each decision that we made on every flight," he said. "The goal is not to be in the lead, but be within your range of your target position."

A glider contest is based on speed around an assigned course. Pilots are flown up to 2,000 feet by a tow plane. They each then fly what is called a "task," which routes them to certain areas.

The pilots have computers with GPS to track and verify that they complete the course and at what speed. The pilot with the fastest speed wins the day.

Condon said the American team had a strong showing on the final day of competition as Pin placed first while Condon placed second.

Condon's longest glider flight was about 525 miles from Wellington, Kan. To DeQuincy, La.

Condon spoke to aviation and engineering students at Iowa Lakes as well as a handful of high school students. Condon's presentation was coordinated with Molly Bates and the Intermediary Connections office as well as Molly Faber and the Regional STEM Hub.

Condon is the son of Tony and Jody Condon, both employees of Iowa Lakes Community College.

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