Flight, Focus & the Future

Annual Report
2023
MISSION:
To preserve New Hampshire’s rich aviation heritage and inspire today’s youth to become tomorrow’s aerospace pioneers.

VISION:
To be the region’s leading resource and advocate for local aviation history, preservation, exhibits, and education.

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Dear members, board members, volunteers, and all Aviation Museum supporters,

Thank you for everyone’s efforts, which made 2023 a year to remember. In all areas, we showed positive growth. Here’s a round-up of the year’s highlights, all made possible by your involvement.

We completed another season of engaging activities designed to bring families to the museum, including aviation-related visits from the Easter Bunny and Santa, plus our popular “Witch’s Broomstick Pilot License” program at Halloween.

At the same time, we staged programs and exhibits to carry out our mission of celebrating flight and historic preservation. Highlights included programs on 19th century ballooning, aviation-based conservation and environmental protection, and New Hampshire’s abandoned airports.

In July, we marked the 50th anniversary of the loss of Delta Air Lines Flight 723 (which crashed in Boston after leaving Manchester) with a program, and we closed the year with ‘Flying Home for the Holidays,’ a World War II-themed exhibit of uniforms and posters in collaboration with the Wright Museum.

Our archive and collections team, led by volunteer Steve Heffelfinger, made significant progress in cataloging all our holdings as well as developing new procedures for donations to be evaluated and researchers to gain access.

In addition, we have digitized all editions of the Beacon, a newspaper issued at Grenier Air Base in the 1940s, as well as other fragile print publications so that future researchers may access them without damaging the originals. These will be available via the Aviation Museum’s new website in 2024.

Speaking of which: in November 2023, our newly updated website was unveiled. It’s filled with useful information about the Aviation Museum for visitors and the curious; new features include a video library of past museum programs and an online store.

In education outreach, we continue to build our capacity to introduce young people to aviation. Education Director Debbora Losch, with the help of dedicated volunteers, has developed a range of programs to serve all ages.

Our high school plane-building program continues at the Manchester School of Technology, where students are about halfway through building their second RV-12iS, aided by the museum’s volunteer mentors and Aviation CTE Instructor Jeff Sullivan.

During 2023, the museum’s board authorized us to expand the plane-building program to another school. Much of the latter half of the year was spent identifying the district. We have since decided to go ahead with a district, the identity of which will be announced at our annual membership meeting on Thursday, Jan. 18.

With the help of Assistant Director Leah Dearborn, we continue to seek out ways to improve the museum’s operations. We are implementing a more formal budgeting process for 2024 and beyond, which will enable us to better track budget-to-actual revenue and expense figures. We are evaluating a new membership system, new donor tracking software, updated archives and collection software, and more!

With public support essential to the museum’s operations, we maintain a robust communications effort. We issue weekly volunteer updates, bi-weekly e-newsletters to our email list of more than 2,900 people, and the quarterly printed Aeronaut publication to all members. We maintain an active social media presence on all popular platforms, regularly issue press releases to a curated list of media contacts, and engage in a variety of traditional direct mail campaigns all year round.

Volunteers play a key role in everything the museum does, but I do want to take a moment to acknowledge the museum’s professional staff. Leah Dearborn and Debbora Losch work tirelessly to maintain our operations at a high level for volunteers, visitors, students, donors, and supporters. Although our staff is small, we are fortunate to have two talented, capable, and dedicated people on board.

Finally, it’s been my privilege to serve as Executive Director of this great organization for the past five years. I’m grateful for all I’ve learned from so many people I’ve had the pleasure of meeting since I joined the Aviation Museum. Together, we’ve accomplished a lot, and laid the groundwork for a lot more to come. With that in mind, I’ve recently re-upped for another five-year term. The work continues. I look forward to collaborating with everyone who shares the same dream — to keep alive the great aviation stories of the past, and also to encourage young people to say ‘Yes!’ to aviation.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Rapsis, Executive Director
Aviation Museum of N.H.
Letter from the President

Dear friends,

The past year has been one of significant progress for the Aviation Museum of N.H. Under the guidance of our five-year strategic plan, we continue to find effective ways to carry out our mission while being careful stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

As members, you are part of a group that believes aviation is for everyone. To that end, we create exhibits and run programs that inspire the public to embrace all aspects of flight. Highlights of our 2023 programming included a display of World War II uniforms and posters in conjunction with the Wright Museum of Wolfeboro, N.H. Our “Exploring Aviation” series included talks on abandoned airports, wildlife conversation, and 19th century ballooning.

We also maintain a robust historic preservation and conservation program. Of special note is the ongoing rejuvenation of our archive and collection operations. Under the guidance of volunteer Steve Heffelfinger, a dedicated team made steady work throughout 2023 updating all our records and developing new procedures, with the ultimate aim of making our collection more available to researchers and the public.

In education outreach, we continue to make strides. In 2023, Education Director Debbora Losch (a new staff position we added in 2022) created our first-ever aviation youth summer camp. We also took a major step forward by expanding our student plane-building program to two schools in different parts of the state: Lebanon High School and Farmington High School.

Meanwhile, our original plane-building program at the Manchester (N.H.) School of Technology continues, with students about half-way through their second aircraft. Under the leadership of Aviation CTE instructor Jeff Sullivan, we hope to have another student-built RV-12iS light sport aircraft aloft in the year future, with more to follow.

Even as we pursue innovative programming, we continue to carefully manage our resources so that the museum remains on sound financial footing. With Assistant Director Leah Dearborn playing a key role, we continue to seek new grants and sources of revenue to enable us to carry out our mission to more people: visitors, students, and the community at large.

And I can’t report on 2023 without saluting our dedicated crew of more than 80 active volunteers. As the primary driver of our success, they make everything possible. On behalf of my fellow board members and museum staff, let me extend a hearty thank you to each and every volunteer who gave so generously of their time, energy, and talents to support our mission throughout the past year.

Finally, to our members: thank YOU for your continued belief in our mission and for being members of our community. Your support is the foundation of our success, and your input remains crucial. Your questions and suggestions are welcome at any time, and I look forward to your participation in our Annual Membership Meeting.

All best wishes,

Robert DiMeo, President, Board of Directors
Aviation Museum of N.H.
The Year in Numbers

- Approximately **9,500** Museum Visitors
- **238** Memberships Sold
- **63** Active Docents Logged
- **4,863.5** Hours of Donated Time

• A New Summer Camp Program Launched - **$7,380** in Scholarships Given Out to Campers
• **1,252** K-12 Students Reached Through Educational Outreach

- **8** ‘Exploring Aviation’ Lectures and **8** Major Special Events
- **1** New Temporary Exhibit Installed
- The Writing, Research, and Publishing of **1** Non-Fiction, Historical Book Fully Funded
- **1,460** Archive Items Cataloged
In 2023, the Aviation Museum of New Hampshire continued to grow its educational activities and programming, including the debut of the first-ever ‘Flights of Discovery’ Aviation Summer Camp, which brought in $26,190.99 of gross income. Membership income is up, while special event income was lower than in 2022, mostly due to the one-time infusion of revenue from the Northeast Airlines event sponsored by Delta Air Lines in July of that year. However, overall net profit is up significantly from 2022 by $66,556.48. Facility rental income is up from last year and gift store sales of merchandise continued in a positive trajectory. Admissions income is close to 2022, but also trended slightly upwards. Grant funds received for the year totaled $56,513.99 and 2023 marked the first year that the museum participated in New Hampshire’s charitable gaming initiative, which brought in a welcome influx of income at the year’s end.

The negative number seen in the RV-12 expense line reflects the re-classified costs of the completed first aircraft, which may impact the year’s net profit. The year 2023 represented an interim period between plane-build programs. In 2019 to 2021, larger numbers were generally seen in the plane-build portion of the museum’s income because we were raising and spending money directly for the Manchester School of Technology plane-build. Although that plane-build is now operating, 2022 and 2023 were quiet in that respect, as the project was up and running. However, 2024 and 2025 are likely to show significant expansion of spending and income due to two new plane build programs getting underway. This process has already begun. Major RV-12 expenses in 2023 included a 25 percent deposit towards the new school program to begin in 2024.

In summary, the Aviation Museum is well positioned to start 2024 with several new initiatives and opportunities to expand its programs and constituency.

Sincerely,
Jay Carter, Interim Treasurer

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**Treasurer’s Report**

**Major Sources of Income**

- **Summer Camp**: $26,190.99
- **Aviation Education Program**: $3,565.00
- **Gala/Special Events**: $98,322.25  
  *Includes Charitable Gaming Proceeds*
- **Membership Income**: $17,569.14
- **Other Income**: $68,138.99
- **Sales**: $48,164.49

**Major Expenses**

- **Aviation Education Program**: $4,319.92
- **Gala/Special Events**: $32,884.28
- **Operating Costs**: $12,170.57
- **Summer Camp Expense**: $6,734.28
- **Wage Related Expenses**: $183,179.76
- **RV-12 Expenses**: $110,564.11

**2023 Total Expenditures**: $258,816.45  
**2023 Total Gross Profit**: $297,611.97  
**2023 Net Revenue**: $38,795.52
Plane-Build Program Update

With the beginning of a new year, the Aviation Museum of N.H. is proud to announce a much-anticipated second student plane-build project in a new district: Lebanon, N.H. The new plane-build will commence in September, 2024. To launch the project, the Aviation Museum will raise $250,000 in start-up funds from businesses, government agencies, foundations, and individuals. But that's not all. When the Aviation Museum sent out a request for proposals from interested districts in the fall of 2023, it received some wonderfully detailed submissions for consideration. One that stood out especially came from Farmington High School to build a plane in their STEM Learning Center on the other side of the state. Since the Aviation Museum's core goal is to help as many schools start their own plane-building programs as possible, it was agreed by the board of directors and school administration to take on a third plane-build program at Farmington High School, to begin in 2025 when a kit is available. The plane-build at the Manchester School of Technology will continue unchanged, and we hope to utilize the valuable lessons learned from that build to help streamline the establishment of the two new programs. We are thankful for our generous donors, volunteers, and community of supporters and educators for all the efforts that have made expansion of the plane-build program in New Hampshire a possibility. We look forward to sharing the excitement of bringing aviation to two new school districts worth of students!

Debhora Losch, Education Director
Aviation Museum of N.H.
Thank You

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