Volunteers needed to help Manchester students build airplanes; open house Aug. 18

Search is on for adult volunteer mentors to aid student plane-building program; open house on Tuesday, Aug. 18 at 7 p.m. at Aviation Museum of N.H.

LONDONDERRY, N.H.—Want to help local high school students build an airplane?

Then you're invited to attend the Aviation Museum of New Hampshire's upcoming plane-build volunteer mentor open house on Tuesday, Aug. 18 from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

At the open house, you'll learn about the museum's high school aircraft-building program and meet current volunteers.

You'll also find out how you can help the ongoing project at the Manchester (N.H.) School of Technology as well as other plane-building projects in other districts.

All are welcome at the open house. Volunteers with experience in airframe and powerplant systems, aerospace engineering, metal-working, manufacturing, assembly, and related fields are encouraged to attend.

However, training in basic workshop skills and procedures will be offered, and anyone is encouraged to participate regardless of background.

The open house is at the Aviation Museum of N.H., 27 Navigator Road, Londonderry, N.H.

"For our student plane-building program, the most important quality we're looking for in volunteer mentors is the readiness to join in an adventure that is making a difference in the lives of area young adults," said Jeff Rapsis, the Aviation Museum's executive director.

Launched in 2019, the Aviation Museum's plane-building program is run in partnership with local high schools and Tango Flight, a Texas-based educational non-profit. Students work alongside adult mentors to assemble a two-seat RV-12iS aircraft, which are produced in kit form by the Van's Aircraft Co. of Oregon.

Finished student-built aircraft are then sold on the open market, with proceeds used to pay for kits and materials for subsequent plane-builds.

No school district tax money is used in the plane-build programs, which are funded by grants and donations made through the Aviation Museum, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

The program is part of the Aviation Museum's youth education outreach program, which aims to encourage young people to pursue careers in aviation and aerospace.

In Manchester, the program's first student-built airplane was completed and first flown in August 2022. The aircraft is currently being used to promote the plane-building program prior to being sold this fall. A second aircraft was completed in 2026; a third aircraft is now underway.

The Manchester program's second airplane is under construction in a dedicated workshop/hangar at Manchester School of Technology, 100 Gerald Connors Circle, Manchester, N.H.

The Manchester plane-build is under the day-to-day direction of Jeff Sullivan, an MST faculty member and the school's aviation program instructor. Students work on the aircraft each school day, usually in early afternoon until the end of the school day.

Volunteer mentors participate on a flexible basis and typically visit the workshop once or twice a week. Participation is flexible to meet the schedules of those participating.

Mentors are regarded as volunteers for the non-profit Aviation Museum of N.H., but must follow all district policies while participating in a build. Volunteer mentors are also subject to criminal background checks similar to all school district volunteers.

"With a new school year just starting, it's a great time for new people to get involved. You'll get the satisfaction of helping kids with a memorable project, and learn a lot yourself," said Jeff Rapsis, the Aviation Museum's executive director.

The Aviation Museum, based in the 1937 art deco passenger terminal at Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, is dedicated to preserving the Granite State's rich aviation past, and also inspiring today's students to become the aerospace pioneers of tomorrow.

"As a non-profit, we depend on volunteers to carry out our mission, so everyone has the potential to make a big difference," Rapsis said.

If you plan to attend the open house on Tuesday, Aug. 13, please call (603) 669-4820 ext. 404 and leave a message with your name, or send an e-mail to cbates@nhahs.org.

"Volunteering at the Aviation Museum is a rewarding way to give back to the community, and help light the spark of aviation in people young and old," Rapsis said.

"As a side benefit, volunteers become part of a family that can lead to new friendships and opportunities," Rapsis said.

The Aviation Museum of N.H., located at 27 Navigator Road, Londonderry, N.H., is a non-profit 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization.

For more information about volunteering at the Aviation Museum, visit www.aviationmuseumofnh.org or call (603) 669-4820. Follow the Aviation Museum on social media at www.facebook.com/nhahs.

AVIATION MUSEUM of NEW HAMPSHIRE

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