District III—Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia

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A few of the full-scale aircraft in attendance at the EAA Chapter 426 Wings & Wheels event.

As model aviation enthusiasts, we should always look for ways of growing our hobby. I hear complaints that no one, particularly young people, is interested and that our hobby is dying. The truth is our hobby is changing and we need to look for ways to attract people interested in aviation. If they aren't coming to us, perhaps we need to go to them.

One way is by getting involved with the EAA. Many EAA members began with model aviation and are still modelers. One program EAA utilizes to attract new blood is the Young Eagles. Since 1992, the Young Eagles have allowed more than 2 million youth, ages 8-17, to take an introductory flight in a general aviation airplane.

Recently, AMA received an invitation to attend the EAA Chapter 426 Wings & Wheels event, held at the Cumberland Regional Airport in Wiley Ford, West Virginia. I notified the organizers that AMA would set up a booth, and I contacted James Dolly of the Cumberland Area Model Society (CAMS), who in turn contacted Darrel Imhoff of the Mexico Farms RC club, both AMA charted clubs in the area.

Upon arrival, I was pleasantly surprised with the level of participation and enthusiasm displayed from the area club members. They were set up with plenty of model aircraft of all types on display. The event began with the local Civil Air Patrol presenting the flag and full-scale aircraft of all kinds, flying in for the day's activities, which included a breakfast, a car show, and EAA Young Eagle flights.

Max and Kristin White were busy flying EAA Young Eagles. The smiles say everything!

Throughout the day, club members and I talked to hundreds of people who showed an interest in aviation. Many had no idea that modeling activity was taking place in the area and the clubs proudly promoted their events, facilities, and enthusiasm for the hobby.

At the end of the day, several great things happened for the future of our hobby. Young people were introduced to aviation with a flight in an airplane, the public was educated about our hobby and the local model clubs in the area, and everyone enjoyed a day at the airport talking about our passion—aviation.

Contact your local EAA chapter and ask to participate in its events and invite them to participate in your club events. This is just one of many ways we can help secure the future of not only model aviation, but all of aviation.

Members of the CAMS and Mexico Farms clubs put together a nice model aviation display at the EAA fly-in at the Cumberland Airport in Wiley Ford WV.

Youth are the future of model aviation. I want to encourage the District III clubs to consider hosting a TAG event for 2018.

Did you know that AMA has a program similar to the EAA Young Eagles and AMA will help pay for your club's event? It's called TAG, or Take-off And Grow. TAG provides a one-day introduction of model aviation, with the intent of drawing new people into our hobby by allowing them to visit your club and try RC flying. I want to encourage all District III clubs to consider hosting an event in 2018. For more information, contact me or go online to www.amaflightschool.org/programs/take-off-and-grow.

What could be better for our future than introducing people to our great hobby and having it paid for by AMA!

Until next month, fly safely—fly AMA.

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