

Teaching Kids to Fly
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Fly Norfolk Aerospace Camps Offered Free

There is an age-old saying that that I am sure you have heard which says, “teach a man to fish and he will eat for life.” At Aviation Institute of Maintenance (AIM), we have taken that adage to heart and have teamed up with the City of Norfolk, VA to teach kids to fly! While I am not referring to “flying” in the sense of actually flying airplanes, but in the sense that we are helping these students see that they can soar to heights that they may not have ever really thought possible.

Fly Norfolk program’s mission is to reach the 1,400 kids enrolled in a summer camp through Norfolk Recreation, Parks & Open Space to provide them with age-appropriate education and career exploration in aerospace. For years, AIM has been providing programming and support to the city’s outreach to citizens, but never before have we been able to offer aerospace programming to so many Norfolk youth within such a wide variety of aviation-related programs.

The impact for the city of Norfolk is significant and hopefully long-lasting. Mamie Johnson, a City Council Member and K-12 educator, said, *“I am thrilled to see the pilot program we launched two years ago expand to provide STEM education opportunities to Norfolk scholars of all ages. It is never too early to think about a child’s future. These programs will give our youth an opportunity to see all that a career in aviation can offer and better yet, provide our participants a chance to receive their drone certification and get a job before leaving high school.”*

The Young Flyers program (ages 7-9) focuses on arts and crafts, model airplane assembly and flying, and aircraft identification. Every Friday has been designated as “Fly Friday,” where children fill their program day with aviation-themed learning activities. The curriculum for this program was developed within a partnership with NASA and AIM faculty.

The Flying Ace program (ages 10-12) is an on-going career exploration program featuring working aerospace professionals. So far, the children had the opportunity to spend the day with Stephanie Claudio, a flight attendant from Southwest Airlines, and Creighton Holt, a pilot for FedEx, to hear about careers in aerospace and how to pursue a career in aviation. In the coming weeks, students will spend the day with an aircraft mechanic, an avionics technician, and a NASA spacecraft engineer. Additionally, students will touch and feel aircraft components to understand the functionality of an airplane. To enrich the curriculum and experience, NASA, PSA Airlines, FedEx, JetBlue, and American Airlines have contributed content, personnel, and support for the program.



For older students, AIM will offer hands-on training opportunities. The Norfolk Navigators program (ages 13-15) is a two-week, hands-on course in aviation engineering and maintenance. In addition to basic concepts about flight, aerodynamics, and maintenance, students will engage in projects, including fabricating flexible fluid cables, constructing hydraulic tubing, riveting sheet metal, and flying drones.

Fly Norfolk’s hallmark program, the Certified Drone Pilot program, is for ages 16 and older, and it leads to a Federal Aviation Administration certification in professional Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) operation. This five-day course is scheduled for August 19-23, and it will prepare students for the FAA certification, provide computer simulation practice, and provide hands-on practice at drone flight at the air field at the Military Aviation Museum. The Certified Drone Pilot program is highly selective, and AIM took applications through July 22 for students who want to be considered for the course. Some of the young adults who complete the Certified Drone Pilot may seek careers in the developing fields of drone operation and maintenance, others might pursue careers in aerospace, and all of them will be guided to list



their FAA-certification proudly on their resumes to enhance their candidacy for college and careers.



The Fly Norfolk program culminates in a Summer Enrichment Carnival at Norfolk Scope Arena on August 20-21, 2019. The event will feature historic airplanes from the Military Aviation Museum and provide a celebratory environment for STEM education and aerospace careers for the city's youth. AIM is providing this program at no charge to the city or its residents.

This has meant a great deal to us at AIM and I want encourage others to look for opportunities to make meaningful impacts in your community and beyond. Let's teach kids to fly, and to soar, and to dream and then see where they can take us.