



The Spirit of Aviation

Who and what we are

Tom Poberezny, President

EAA members are passionate about flying and passionate about their participation in aviation. How else could we explain thousands of pilots and volunteers giving airplane rides to more than 1.3 million youth. Or technical counselors and flight advisors voluntarily sharing their time and talent with thousands of homebuilders.

EAA was founded on the principles of family togetherness, participation in a mutual interest, and the sharing of knowledge and information. Today a term used to describe this type of fellowship is “community.” EAA is indeed a community, but it’s a community that’s often hard to describe—just like it’s hard to describe EAA AirVenture Oshkosh to someone who’s never attended. We end up saying, “You have to be there to understand it.”

I think the difficulty in explaining EAA and AirVenture is that much of what our association is about is intangible; it’s a spirit that is difficult to describe. You can’t touch spirit, but you can see, hear, and feel it when you’re with a group of people who share a common purpose or interest. EAA members are the spirit of aviation.

That spirit has caused EAA members to advance aviation in ways that no one expected. Did you ever imagine that a homebuilder would send the first civilian rocket into space? Or that homebuilders would develop one of the largest general aviation companies in the industry?

Recently I had a discussion with EAA staff, and I shared this observation with them: There is no organization

in aviation or any recreational interest group that has the passion and pride of accomplishment that EAAers have. I truly believe that. I also told them that the impact EAA has had on aviation has been outstanding. Think of the innovation that EAA members have spawned. That energy will continue into the future.

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Since 1970, for one week a year in late July, Oshkosh has been the worldwide home for aviation, as EAA’s annual fly-in convention takes center stage and the spirit of aviation abounds. When the EAA Aviation Center opened in Oshkosh, our goal was to create the home for recreational aviation. Now, our vision is that the knowledge, information, programs, and services that emanate from Oshkosh—whether in our print magazines, newly redesigned websites, or e-newsletters—will make Oshkosh the 365-day-a-year home for aviation enthusiasts. We want EAA to be the place where aviation enthusiasts come for information, encouragement, camaraderie, and community.

To make certain that aviation remains a viable opportunity for all, we need to grow our ranks...the number of aviation enthusiasts and pilots. Your fellow EAA members at headquarters are committed to that task, and we ask your commitment, too. During my recent staff meeting, EAA lifetime member Joe Norris, of our Aviation Services staff, shared his reason for joining EAA. He said: “I joined EAA because a person who was important in my life came to me and said, ‘EAA is an organization that is important to what we love—aviation—and you should be a member.’ I took his advice and joined; he was and still is right.”

We are an association with diverse aviation interests, coming together under a common banner. Are we a homebuilders organization? Yes. Do we aspire to share aviation’s heritage through the preservation of warbirds and vintage aircraft? Yes. Do our members of the aerobatic community enjoy testing the limits of aircraft performance? Yes. Do we strive to share our passion for flight with all who have an interest by making it easier for them to participate in aviation? Yes.

Sometimes diversity creates division, but in reality, diversity is EAA’s strength. It’s the willingness of EAAers to welcome anyone who has an interest in aviation that has allowed EAA to grow. EAA AirVenture Oshkosh is proof of that year after year, as aviation enthusiasts of every aircraft type gather to share their love of anything aviation. The spirit of aviation lives on through EAA members. 