

For Immediate Release



Alaska Town Rolls Out Remarkable Support for New Build A Plane Project

Los Angeles, CA, October 28th, 2010—Talkeetna, Alaska sits at the front door of Denali National Park and has a legendary history of aviation. When residents learned of a proposed new Build A Plane program where local high school students combine classroom learning with hands-on efforts to build a real airplane, word spread through the town immediately.

“Once we announced we were going to start a Build A Plane project, we began getting an amazing number of offers from lots and lots of people who wanted to help or contribute in some way,” says Rebecca Fisher, a Talkeetna resident and Alaska Airlines pilot who volunteered to head the project.

With a population of less than 800 people, Talkeetna residents came together in force to offer assistance. K2 Aviation, a local bush flying service, created 2 full-time paid internships for Build A Plane students. Talkeetna Aero Services committed to hire a student for a paid, full time summer job and immediately began offering free motivational flights to nearby Denali and Mt. McKinley. Talkeetna Air Taxi established a \$2500.00 scholarship for students who pursue post-secondary education or training and they too have created a full-time paid position for summer, 2011 for a lucky Build A Plane student as well as offering free flightseeing. Talkeetna Aero offered free flights for all interested kids and their parents.

More support included Above Alaska’s owner/operator, Drew Haag, who is a flight instructor and aircraft mechanic who volunteered to oversee the Build A Plane aircraft reconstruction effort as well as give each student a free introductory flight lesson. Alaska Floats and Skis donated 15 free introductory flight lessons for flying on floats and skis. The local chapter of the Ninety-Nines agreed to donate up to \$500 to purchase a private pilot ground school course for the local library. Local establishment, Moore’s Hardware, donated \$1000. in supplies needed for the aircraft restoration. The Jessica Stevens Foundation donated \$1000 in cash, a sum immediately matched by local residents, Jim and Diane Graupman. MEA, the local electrical co-op, donated use of their large hangar to house the actual reconstruction of the aircraft, a Piper Cherokee Six.

Support for the project even came from outside of Talkeetna. United Parcel Service offered the Build A Plane students access to their Boeing 747 and MD-11 simulators. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has offered to host a local Aviation Career Education camp. And, aerospace industry giant, PTC, donated \$1 million worth of 3D computer-aided design software with lifetime updates.

Ed O'Connor, a teacher at Talkeetna's Susitna Valley Junior-Senior High School, helps students split their time between the aircraft restoration project and online aviation courses called AeroScholars, also provided through Build A Plane. "AeroScholars has worked out really well," O'Connor said, "because all the kids work at their own pace." The courses are written to national science standards and qualify for high school credit.

"I'm very proud of what our little town has done to support these kids," Rebecca Fisher added. "Aviation is a big part of who we are here in Alaska and I think people see this Build A Plane project as an opportunity to give back to the community."

"We have been so energized by the enthusiasm and excitement shown in Alaska for Build A Plane. This Talkeetna project and others like it will certainly help in the classroom with science, math, engineering and technology skill-building and hopefully inspire many kids in Alaska to consider aviation as a career" said Lyn Freeman, Founder of Build A Plane.

Build A Plane supports three other programs in Alaska, two in the Eskimo villages of Hooper Bay and Chevak, and another in Begich Middle School in Anchorage. For more information, log onto BuildAPlane.org or call 804-843-3321.

A high resolution photograph is attached.