



For Immediate Release

Build A Plane Expands into Remote Alaskan Villages

Riverside, California, April 18, 2007—Build A Plane, the Thomas W. Wathen Foundation and the Federal Aviation Administration announced the start of a series of aircraft construction projects aimed at teaching aviation skills to young people in remote Alaskan villages. The first program is scheduled to begin next month in Hooper Bay, Alaska, where students will build and then fly a Thorp T-211 to earn Light Sport Repairman and Sport Pilot certificates.

“You can’t imagine what a dream come true this is for us!” said Hooper Bay High School teacher and pilot Grant Funk. “Our village is more than 90% Yu’pik Eskimo and is 500 miles from the nearest road. Almost everything we do here involves aviation.”

“We’ll begin the building process right away,” Funk said. “Next fall I’ll teach a Sport Pilot ground school so that when the airplane is completed we’ll have the ground school already finished. And as soon as the airplane is certified and ready to roll, we’ll teach them to fly it.” Grant Funk is also a certified flight instructor.

This project is a direct result of the partnership agreement signed last year between Build A Plane and the FAA’s Aviation and Space Education Program. Build A Plane will work with the Hooper Bay High School group to provide additional aviation vocational opportunities. The National Center for Aircraft Technician Training coupled with the Aircraft Electronics Association is offering a course in repair and installation of avionics. Additionally, the Parametric Technology Corporation is preparing to donate \$1.5 million dollars worth of 3D computer-aided design software.

The Thorpe E-LSA T-211 aircraft is being donated by Dr. Ram Pattisapu, founder and CEO of IndUS Aviation which operates out of Dallas, Texas and Bangalore, India. “It’s a huge privilege for our aircraft to be part of a program like this,” Pattisapu said. “IndUS has been a big supporter of Build A Plane since the project began several years ago and I hope more of the aviation and aerospace community will step up and get involved. This is the kind of thing we need to be doing.”

Federal Express has agreed to pick up the Thorp T-211 aircraft components from India and fly them all the way to Anchorage, Alaska at no charge. Arrangement are underway to transport the 6 boxes of aircraft part the rest of the way to Hooper Bay..

Build A Plane has donated dozens of aircraft to groups interested in using real airplanes to teach science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Next month representatives

from NASA, the FAA, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Purdue University, the Thomas Wathen Foundation and others will begin a Build A Plane project to create low or no-cost aviation curricula for grades K-12.

For more information on Build A Plane, visit the group's website at www.BuildAPlane.org.