

You Work *WHERE?*

“Don’t drop that spark plug! We’d have to replace it, because the inner porcelain insulator could crack ... take it to 30 foot-pounds with that torque wrench”. Jeff is coaching an apprentice aircraft mechanic about the fine points of engine upkeep. Jeff works at American Aero, a nationally renowned historic aircraft restoration center. In many ways he typifies today’s Airframe & Power Plant mechanics (A&Ps): four-year college degree, thirty months apprenticeship or one to two years A&P school.

Replacing a fuel pump, fabricating an engine brace, putting in a new windshield, tracking down a landing gear retraction problem, making a new aluminum “skin” and riveting it on a wing – its all in a day’s work for the A&P. The work sometimes involves as much art as labor when trying to replicate parts which haven’t been manufactured for sixty years, common on the Flying Fortresses, Mustangs, and Liberators which the eleven America Aero A&P mechanics work on.

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“Do you feel ready to fly a traffic pattern solo, Kelly?” Her flight instructor’s question marks a major milestone in sixteen-year-old Kelly’s flight training progress.

“Yes, Chad!” answers Kelly, “my parents are ready to watch from the control tower.” Under her parents’ proud gaze, Kelly safely flies a traffic pattern, then another, then a third. “Soloing was scary, but it gave me a wonderful feeling of accomplishment”, she reports, “flying gives you a totally different world view.”

Accomplishment comes naturally to Kelly: Florida state finalist swimmer, volunteer medical assistant in Peru, certifications in first aid, first response, and CPR *and* post-solo flight student. She dreams of studying aviation science and meteorology in college, and one day piloting ocean search and rescue missions for the Coast Guard. If her past is any indication, she’ll succeed.

Her flight instructor Chad has dreams too. “Even though the hours are long and the pay is low right now, when I build enough hours I’ll be able to get on with a corporate flight department. It’s going to take a few years, but I’m willing to put in the time now for the sake of my future.” Chad is one of seventy Epic



Aviation employees, a Certified Flight Instructor (CFI). Earning a CFI rating typically requires somewhere between \$20,000 and \$25,000, and 250 flight hours.

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American Aero and Epic Aviation are two of the numerous businesses based on our airport. A&P, CFI, tower controller, airport management, avionics, airframe component manufacturer, air charter, aircraft modification – these are all the type of high-tech, ecologically-friendly, quality airport jobs which really benefit the surrounding community. Our own airport is a case in point: if the airport were considered a single employer, it would be New Smyrna Beach’s sixth largest private employer!

Airport employees earned around \$3.5 million last year, providing a local benefit of \$10.2 million per year (2.93 multiplier). And estimating 129 employees, with average household size of 2.59, yields 344 of our neighbors who rely on the airport to put food on the table and to keep a roof over their heads.

The businesses of aviation are also crucially important to our state and country. Florida airports serve over 100 million passengers each year, and contribute over \$90 billion each year to our economy. Florida flight training is a major source of foreign commerce amounting to nearly \$100 million per year. In the year 2000 aviation in Florida accounted for an impressive 6% of the State’s Gross State Product, supporting 645,700 jobs in the process.

Our country is similarly benefited by aviation: in 2006 aviation industries and businesses generated over 10 million jobs and \$1.2 trillion in economic activity - an important 5.6% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

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“Look for oil leaks around the drain plug and oil filter – that’s where the most likely seal problems occur.” Back at the airport, Jeff’s apprentice is running up an aircraft following an annual inspection. “And if there’s a problem, first look at the places you’ve just worked on...” Jeff passes on these traditional nuggets of wisdom, as did his teachers many years ago. With knowledgeable, experienced A&Ps like Jeff coaching the next generation, our aircraft will continue to receive the finest care into the future.