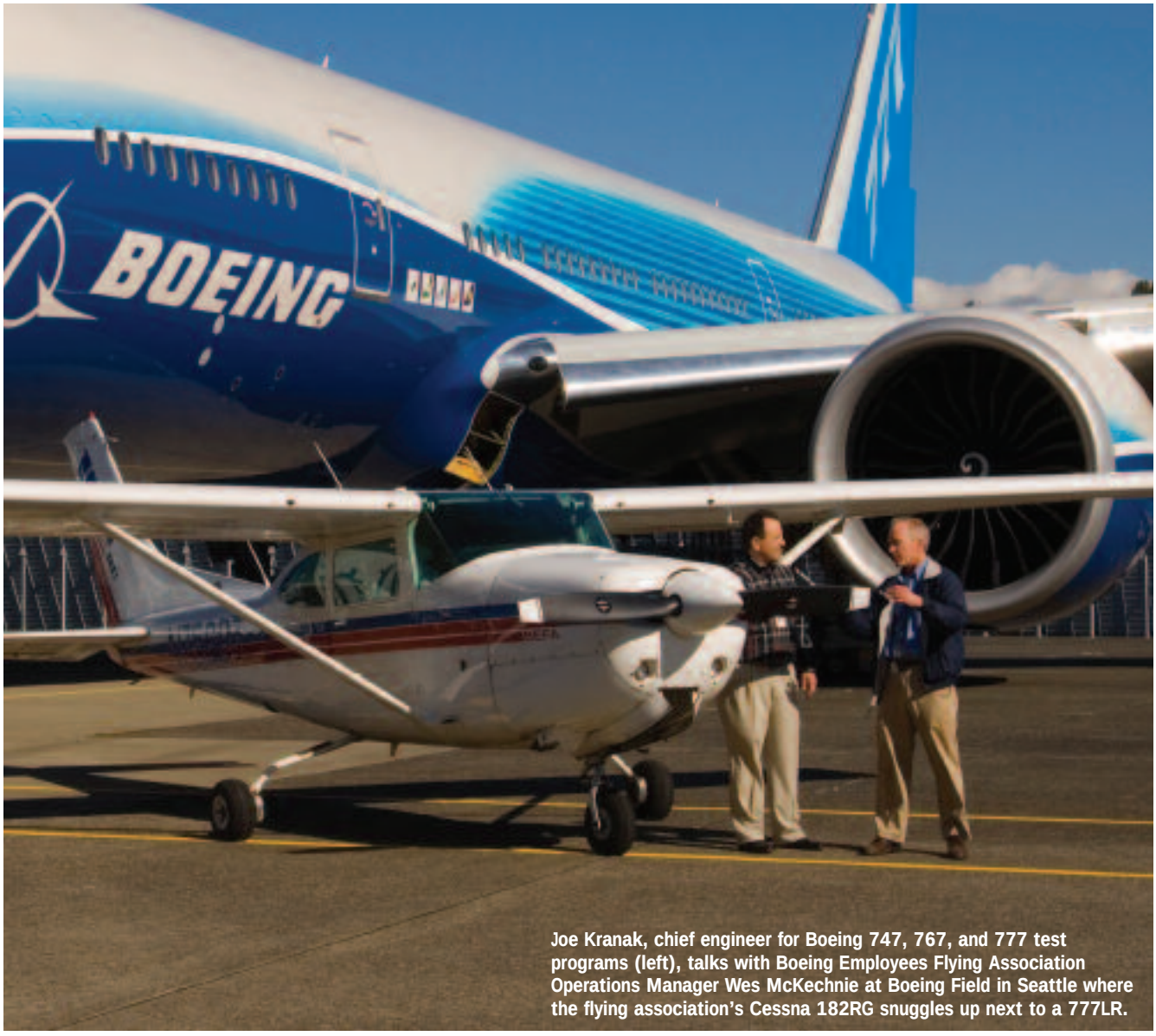


Joe Kranak, chief engineer for Boeing 747, 767, and 777 test programs (left), talks with Boeing Employees Flying Association Operations Manager Wes McKechnie at Boeing Field in Seattle where the flying association's Cessna 182RG snuggles up next to a 777LR.

TIM HENEGHAN

The boss says fly!

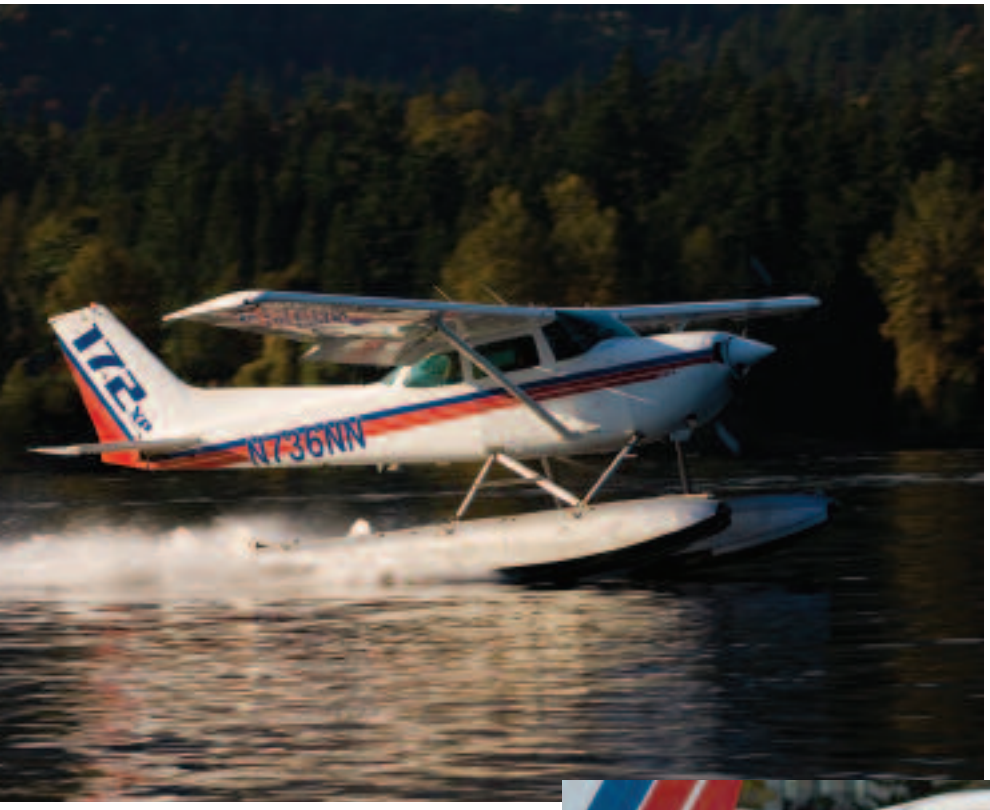
The best of all company benefits

BY ALTON K. MARSH

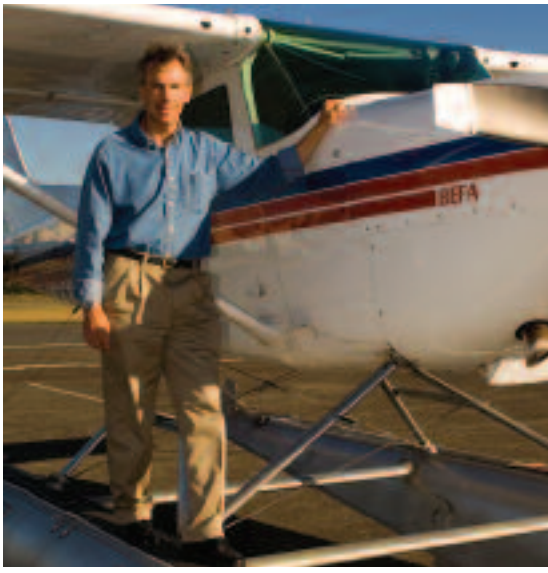
Here's something you can do about the cost of flying, although it may be a little extreme: Work for an aviation company that has a flying club or association. More than 1,000 pilots take advantage of this unusual fringe benefit at The Boeing Co., Lockheed Martin, Rockwell Collins, Jeppesen, Cessna Aircraft Co., Raytheon Aircraft Co., The New Piper Aircraft, Cirrus Design Corp., and Diamond Aircraft Industries.

Boeing has the largest group with 450 pilots (315 are active) and 19 piston-engine airplanes including a Beech Duchess, a Citabria aerobatic airplane, and, get this, a 210-horsepower Cessna 172XP floatplane. (Even more unusual is the fact that this floatplane can be rented for solo flights.) All the aircraft are owned or leased by the Boeing Employees Flying Association (BEFA).

Learning to fly and maintaining flying skills obviously help Boeing employees with a broad range of talents. BEFA also is a great way to meet employees from diverse departments. Want to know how we got permission to photograph a BEFA Cessna 182RG next to the new Boeing 777LR (long range) still in testing at Boeing Field in Seattle and under heavy se-



The Boeing Employees Flying Association aircraft include a Cessna 172XP floatplane (left). Peter Cookman (below), associate technical fellow, is an aerodynamicist working on wings and control systems for the new Boeing 787 and the next-generation 737.



Marissa K. Singleton (left), principal engineer, Advanced Air Traffic Management, Boeing Phantom Works, learned to fly in the company's flying association.

curity? The head of flight testing is a BEFA member. The 182 was flown from the association's headquarters at Renton Municipal Airport to Boeing Field a few miles away, where the new airliner is in flight test.

It isn't entirely an employees-only association. BEFA President Frank Marshall pointed out that the group offers a number of services to the public as well as to members, such as ground school classes, Computer Assisted Testing Service (CATS) knowledge tests, and use of a Frasca simulator. He added that 10 percent of the members are not Boeing employees, but who are guests of the group.

BEFA member Marissa Singleton is a principal engineer in advanced air traffic management at the Boeing Phantom Works, where futuristic projects are done. Obviously she understands air traffic control better as a pilot. She got her private certificate at BEFA in 1992 and now has 500 hours. Peter Cookman is an aerodynamicist working on the Boeing 787 and next-generation 737. "I was a new pilot by about three months when I joined. I found the initial instruction at BEFA was better than what I had experienced," said Cookman. BEFA member Rich Gregory has the unusual Boeing job of crawling inside airliner wings and sealing fuel cells. He got his multiengine rating while participating in the association.

One of the mascots of the association is a Snoopy doll that, thanks to the travel schedules of Boeing's employees, has been photographed at locations all over the world. These include China, Russia, Gibraltar, Australia, France, The Netherlands, South Africa, and Mexico. Snoopy arrived in Seattle attached to a bottle of laundry detergent as a purchase bonus in 2001. He was aboard when the Boeing 777LR mentioned previously set a world distance record in November 2005.

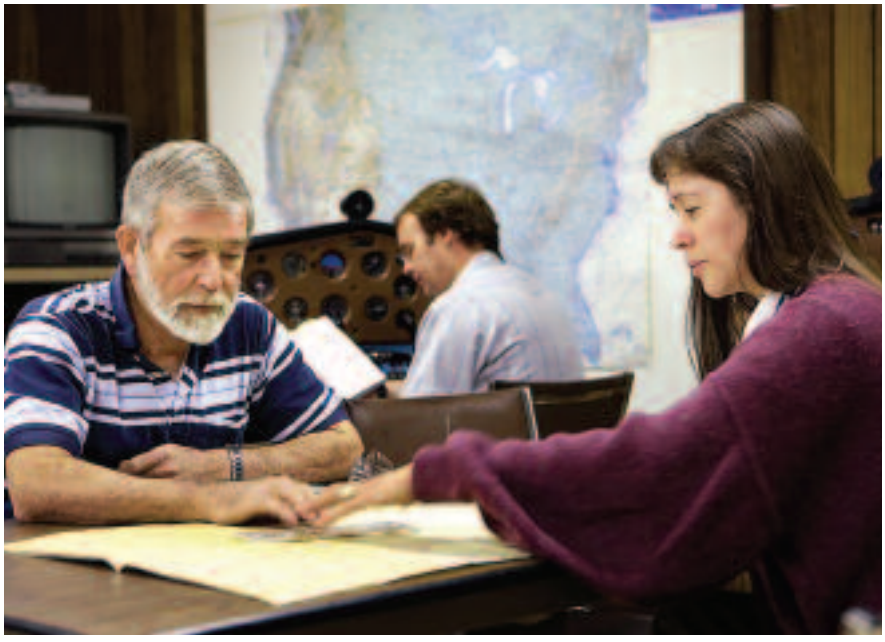
Boeing employees receive incentive reimbursements of $500 for solo and $1,000 for the private certificate—a program begun by former Boeing Commercial Airplanes chief Ron Woodard. Woodard learned to fly in the association and now owns a de Havilland Beaver floatplane, and is part owner of another Beaver on amphibious (land or water) floats. "In the airplane business you have to have something in common with your customers such as flying. It was an extremely good value for Boeing to have as many em-

TIM HENEGHAN; MIKE FIZER (OPPOSITE PAGE)

ployees as possible to go through that training," Woodard said.

Boeing employees pay from $52 an hour (tach time) for a Cessna 150 to $149 for the Duchess and $120 for the floatplane, plus a variable fuel surcharge currently ranging from $6 to $23, depending on the size of the aircraft. Many are older-model aircraft with updated avionics, interiors, and paint and are owned by or leased to the association. They include: four Cessna 150s, a Piper Warrior, seven Cessna 172s, a 1999 Cessna 172SP, a Bellanca Citabria, a Piper Arrow, a Cessna 182, Cessna 182RG, the Duchess, and the Cessna floatplane.

When it was time to re-cover the tube-and-fabric Citabria, it was handled just like any other Boeing project. A group was formed, a leader was chosen, and tasks were subdivided among the group. Most aircraft are based at Renton Municipal Airport where Boeing 737s are manufactured, but three are based several miles to the north at Snohomish County Airport (Paine Field) in Everett, where the biggest Boeing aircraft are built.

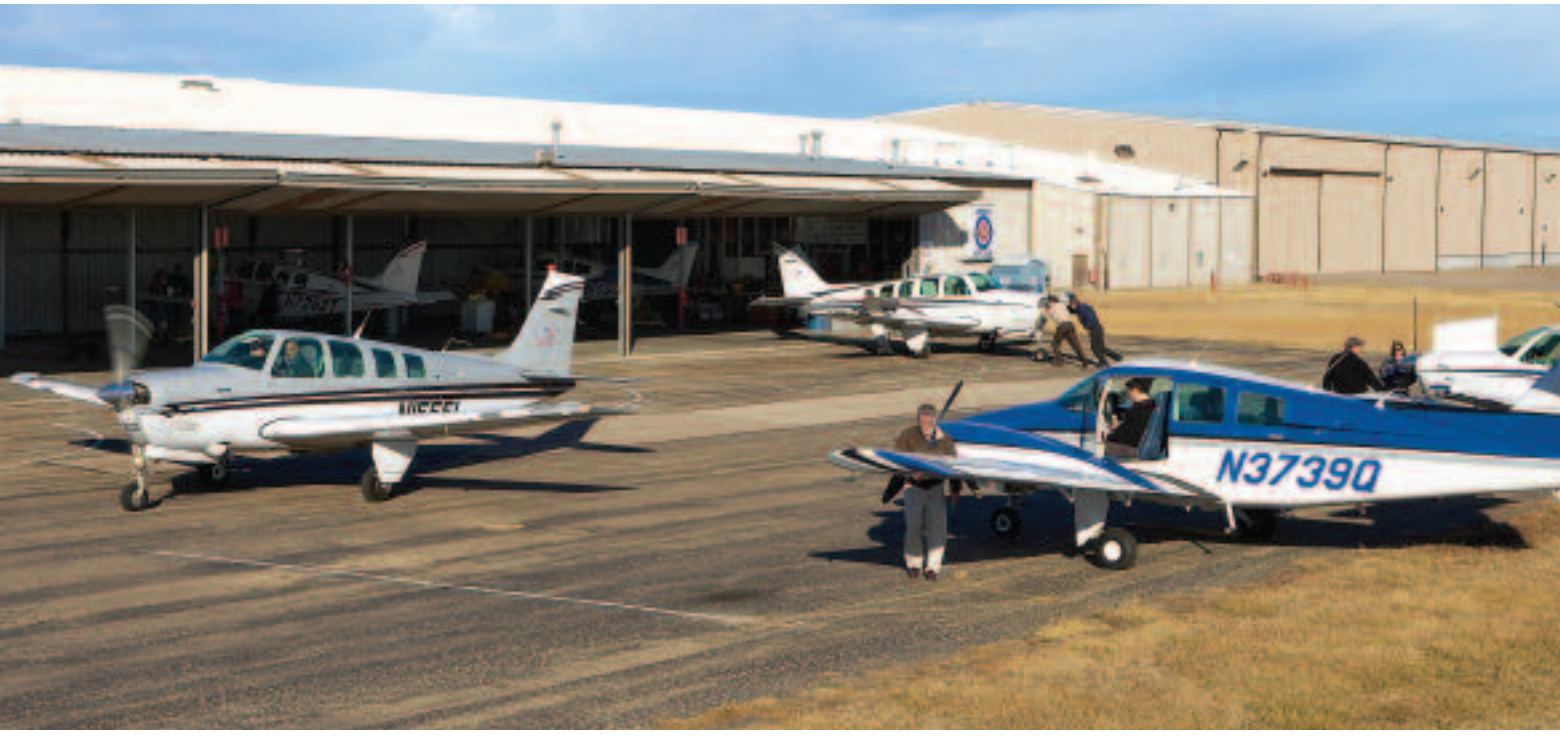


Raytheon Aircraft is the oldest

Although Boeing's association started in April 1954 with an Aeronca Defender, it is not the oldest company flying group covered here. That honor goes to the Beechcraft Employees Flying Club at Raytheon Aircraft Co. in Wichita, which began July 11, 1941, with Porterfield, Luscombe, and Stinson aircraft. Raytheon Aircraft Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Jim Schuster has flown with the club. The club has 160 members and nine aircraft, including five Beechcraft A36 Bonanzas—and a Beech Duchess. Three Beech Sundowners are used for training. "The club is used as a recruiting tool for potential employees," said Raytheon Aircraft Media Relations Manager Mike Turner.

Meanwhile, across town, the Cessna Employees Flying Club could once

Marc Cross, Raytheon's flying club's membership officer, practices at the simulator while Mike Morgan, club treasurer, and Janice Albeita-Lynch study sectionals (left). The Raytheon club has nine aircraft for training (below).



boast 600 members, but a combination of past layoffs and the general economy has reduced the club to 400 (200 active) members who share 15 aircraft. The club, based at Wichita Mid-Continent Airport, will be 60 years old in 2006. All the aircraft are club-owned, making this 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization largely independent of Cessna. The club is at an important turning point: It is converting its entire fleet to new Garmin G1000-equipped Cessna 172s, 182s, and 206s. It will keep two older Cessna Cutlass aircraft from the previous fleet. Sales of the older aircraft will help with the purchase, and the new aircraft will be discounted by Cessna, which also will provide financial help. The club gets fuel from the Cessna fuel farm, and parts are available at cost.

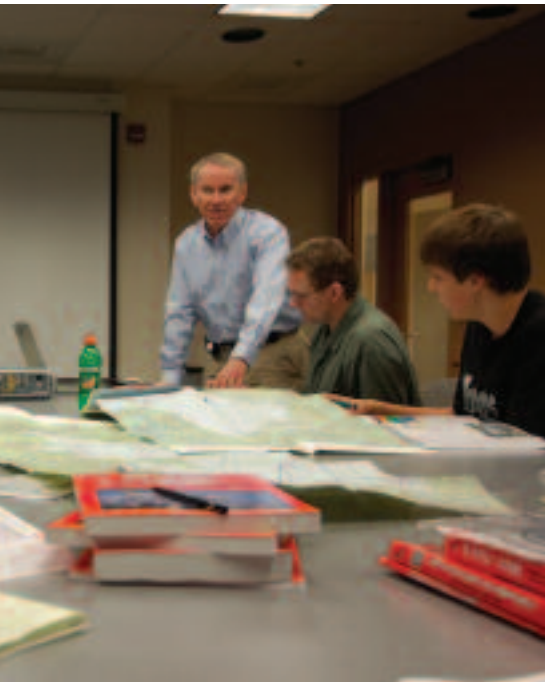
"In striving to attract aviation-passionate employees, we feel an attractive flying club is important," said Cessna Chairman, President, and CEO Jack Pelton. "We think it provides a beneficial link for the employees who belong to the club and the work they do. It also provides an economical way for interested employees to enjoy the benefits of flying. It is a win/win for everyone."

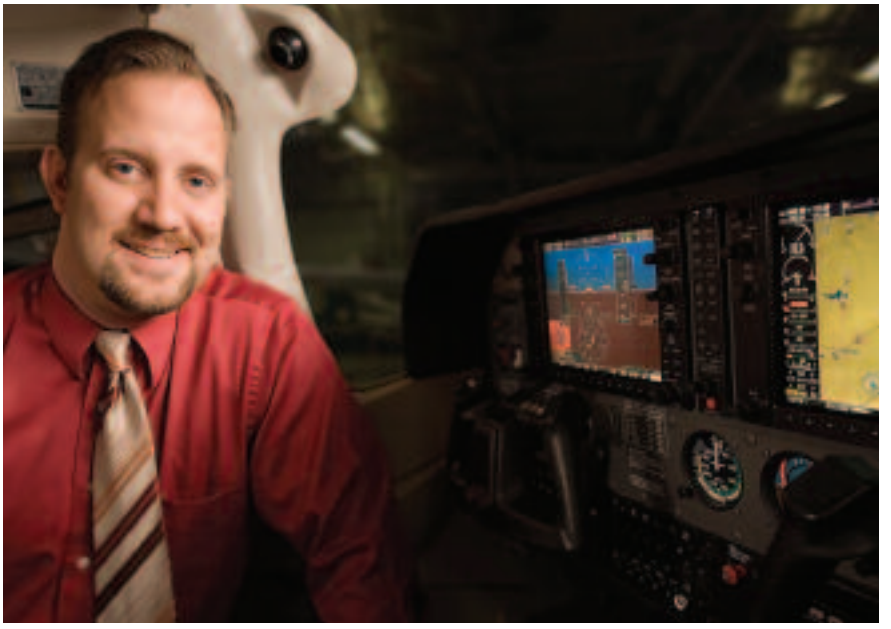
As is the case at Boeing, there are reimbursement incentives for those learning to fly. Students who pass the ground school are reimbursed for their home study kits. They get $500 back when they solo and $1,000 after earning a private certificate. The club contains large contingents from the jet side of the company. An effort was made to expand the club to Independence, Kansas, where piston-engine aircraft are manufactured, but there wasn't enough support to keep it going. Instead, Independence employees interested in learning to fly can either travel to Wichita or benefit from a Cessna-subsidized rental rate at a nearby commercial flight school.

Scott Foster, president of the club and also an AOPA member, said flying in the club helped him build the hours needed to become a Cessna jet test pilot. "My goal as a new engineer was to be a crewmember in a jet. In January 2000 I came to Cessna with 100 hours and a private pilot certificate. I flew a lot in the flying club and became a test pilot in four to five years. I now have 1,900 hours and two type ratings. A number of those hours are in production flight testing," said Foster.

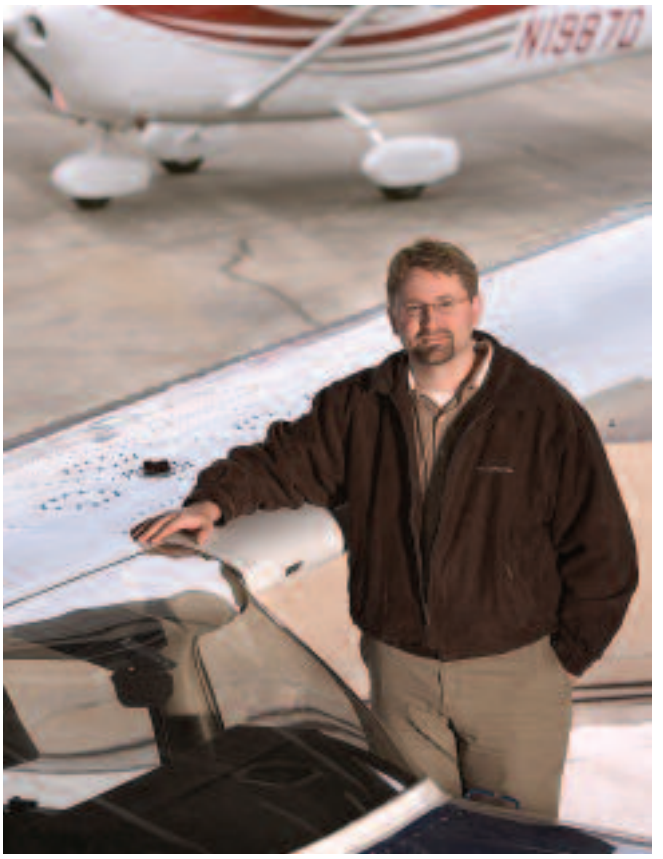
Jeff Holter is the designated manufacturing inspector for Cirrus (above). Members fly together and assist one another in earning ratings (right). Jon Pease of the Cirrus Advanced Development department takes the right seat with Holter (below).

JUSTIN DILLON





The Cirrus club now has 84 members, many of whom use the club to earn their ratings through group events such as ground school (top). Jon Pease (above) is about to solo.



Jeremy Anderson (above), general manager of the Cessna Employees Flying Club, in the group's new Skylane. Scott Foster (left), president of the club, became a Cessna jet test pilot after building hours in the club.

MIKE FIZER (2); JUSTIN DILLON

Company flying clubs have greatly benefited the employees, whether it is professionally or by the realization of a personal dream. At Cirrus Design, where the Cirrus Flying Club has 84 members and three aircraft, student pilot Bob Johnston said he could not have afforded flight training on his own. "Flying has only been a dream to me before. I always wanted to but never thought it would be realistic," Johnston said. He is learning in one of two Cirrus SR20 aircraft—one has a standard panel while the other has an Avidyne glass-panel cockpit. The third aircraft is a Piper Warrior.

Jon Pease, like Johnston, is at this writing about ready to solo, and feels he couldn't have afforded flight training on his own. "It was an opportunity that I couldn't pass up," Pease said. Pease works in the Cirrus Advanced Development department, while Johnston works in the Experimental department.

Casey Komarek, an airframe and powerplant mechanic, was able to cut a deal with Cirrus that benefits him and the company. "If I work on a club airplane off the clock on my own time, they give me hour-for-hour flight time, including fuel. I did an annual inspec-

Jeppesen Employees Flying Association held an open house after taking delivery of its new Diamond Star.

"We had a town hall meeting to see if employees were interested in starting the club, and 200 people came. The interest was overwhelming."

–Mark Van Tine, president and chief operating officer, Jeppesen

tion and had 35 hours free flight time. It is going to pay for my private [certificate]. For other guys, it is only $35 to $45 an hour plus the instructor [at $25 an hour], and you're flying a Cirrus!" Jeff Holter is a designated airworthiness representative for Cirrus and was a pilot before joining the club, which started in 2000. He finds that the club increases his ability to "work professionally." It also cuts 12 hours off his family's occasional trip to Michigan.

The Cirrus club has the support of upper management. In fact, the Piper Warrior is owned by company cofounder Dale Klapmeier and the glass-panel SR20 is owned by Cirrus Design Vice President William King.

Top-level support is a key to the success of any club. At Jeppesen, it was President and Chief Operating Officer Mark Van Tine who founded the group. It now numbers 50 members and is growing.

Van Tine began planning for the Jeppesen Employees Flying Association three years before it started in 2005 at Centennial Airport near Denver with two aircraft, a new Diamond DA40-180 Diamond Star, and a 2001 Cessna 172SP. He got ideas for the bylaws and structure of the association from Cessna and Boeing, Jeppesen's parent company. "It is valuable for our employees to use the products and services they make every day and to become customers of the company—to experience what our customers experience," said Van Tine. "It promotes the industry and aviation. We had a town hall meeting in the cafeteria to see if employees were interested in starting the club, and 200 people came. The interest was overwhelming. Three-fourths or more of the crowd flew. A third were CFIs."

The association offers a three-day course on the Garmin G1000 glass cockpit found in the Diamond aircraft. In 2006 a reimbursement program that is expected to be similar to those at Cessna and Boeing will begin when details are finalized. A number of employees are taking only the ground school to gain aeronautical knowledge and work with Jeppesen training materials. Van Tine is a member of the club and is using it to get current. "I am a silent member except for safety matters," he said.

Diamond is justly proud of Jeppesen's selection of a DA40-180 and has a club of its own in London, Ontario, Canada, the 50-member Diamond Employees Flying Club. That's 20 percent of the company workforce.

Diamond's incentive program provides a 90-percent discount for ground school and 50 percent off for simulator rental. Each member gets two free hours of flight-instructor time each year. Rental rates are half that for commercial rental, or about $50 (U.S.) an hour. A commercial flight school is used to schedule the aircraft and provide flight instructors. Members are from every factory department, from composite material manufacturing to repair and overhaul.

When the club started, employees were given enough parts by Diamond officials to build their own Katana. That aircraft has been traded in for a DA20-C1 trainer aircraft. "Through the club, employees are able to relate their day-to-day job to actually flying the aircraft," said club member Jeremy Austin.

That's the same philosophy found at The New Piper Aircraft in Vero Beach, Florida. The Cherokee Flyers, as the club is known, is headed by Mike Giessert, who is manager of the fabrication of parts at Piper. The group has two 1999 Piper Archers used by 47 members. "Most people couldn't have gotten their rating any other way," he said. Employees in many cases sought positions at Piper because of a strong interest in the aviation industry, and a desire to learn to fly is a part of that. The Cherokee Flyers makes it possible. The group is open to Vero Beach residents, although at higher rates than charged to employees. Thus, the club has become a way to promote general aviation to the community.

Airframe manufacturers aren't the only ones supporting the industry in which they work. Avionics manufacturer Rockwell Collins supports the Rockwell Flying Club at The Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids. It has more than 25 members who get to choose from a Piper Arrow, Cessna 172, or Cessna 150. Reimbursement depends on whether the employee's job at the factory ties into flying. If the case is strong enough, up to 100-percent reimbursement for training is possible.

Another company recognizing the importance of flying to aerospace employees is Lockheed Martin. In Marietta, Georgia, the company operates the Lockheed Martin Employees Association and owns the aircraft—two Cessna 172s and a Cessna 182RG used by 55 members. Avionics for the giant Lockheed C-5 military cargo airplane are installed by club president R.J. Schramm, a general aviation enthusiast and pilot like you. AOPA

i Links to additional information about company flying clubs may be found on AOPA Online (www.aopa.org/pilot/links.shtml).

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