

HOW TO GROW AND IMPROVE AN EAA CHAPTER

SOME IDEAS FROM EAA SEMINAR “BOOT CAMP” AT FLABOB AIRPORT JANUARY 25, 2019

Dave Fretwell and Gordon Heinrich flew down for this event which was attended by over 60-chapter members from 5 States. This is the site of the first EAA Chapter #1. We appear to already be doing some good things in our Chapter 465 based on EAA recommendations, but we obtained lots of additional and new ideas about how to:

- Grow our Chapter with new adult, as well as youth members. Ideas included working more with the “Eagles” program to attract and get adults involved in aviation. This “Flying Start” program has been well developed by EAA. It parallels the young eagles’ program with some of the same benefits and focuses on reaching out and mentoring adults to become Chapter Members and get more involved with flying. It was noted that nationally about 20% of chapter members drop out of participation in chapters annually so if we are not adding new member we are slowing “dying”. *Getting adults involved includes making personal invitations to Chapter meetings and activities, as well as public promotion on our Chapter but the key is personal contact. EAA provides a 6-month free national membership for aAdults and we should possibly adjust our Chapter bylaws to do the same.*
- New ideas for programs at monthly meetings. Meetings need to have three components: social, food, and program. This requires continued effort to get decent speakers or site visits organized. Having food/drink at meetings helps social interaction, as does being sure visitors always introduced, made to feel welcome, and encouraged to become part of the Chapter. *Some good videos from EAA and other sources can be used to present ideas and encourage discussion on specific topics. Name Badges are very important, EAA can provide up to 50 personalized name badges for only \$35*
- Chapter promotion. This is of course linked with previous points but EAA will provide nice Chapter specific banners, activity posters, and materials at low and sometimes no cost as part of our EAA national membership. Pancake breakfasts etc. for the general public as well as participants from other Chapters or aviation organizations are a way to promote our chapter. Flyouts/fly ins which do not need to be restricted to Chapter members, and potential “adult members” can be give a free “ride”. Note that EAA confirmed that EAA Chapter liability insurance does cover fly ins to our chapter, and flyouts to other venues (but liability for the inflight portion of the fly in/flyout has to be covered by the individual plane owner’s insurance). *Social media including Chapter Web Page and Facebook were highlighted as one of the best ways to promote Chapters. Web pages are good but passive, Facebook is active and has much more impact that web pages for both adults and youth. Our Chapter needs to improve our Facebook presence. EAA will also, at our request, send out a “blast” to nearby EAA members if we have a special event.*
- Generate funds that can be used to promote aviation in N. County. Chapters are using a wide variety of ideas including breakfasts, silent auctions, and are getting significant donations of tools, planes, hangers, etc. from donors and using the funds generated to finance more promotion efforts, expand Chapter activities including providing “learn to fly” scholarships for young eagles. Most chapters which are having success in generating funds have set themselves as 501c non-profits as this allows individuals to give chapters tax deductible donations Our Chapter should consider establishing a 501C3 status and EAA can provide assistance with processing the Federal IRS paperwork.
- Young Eagles; This is of course one of the major initiatives of EAA and our Chapter. *A donor has just provided a USD 1.0 Million Grant to EAA for learn to fly scholarships for young eagles. Our chapter was encouraged to pre-qualify and apply for grants. This would also allow our Chapter to provide leadership and help support other youth aviation initiatives in N. Country via our active Young Eagles program. In addition, EAA is obtaining some free SIG RC kits to provide to selected Chapters who want to get them for youth to build and fly. In the future, if the program works well, EAA expects to have kits available to all chapters at a low cost (i.e. \$350 which is about ½ retail)*

The above are just a few ideas that were outlined at the event, and the EAA provided us with a “Chapter Handbook” with many better and concrete ideas which we should review and selectively implement in 2019