



For Immediate Release
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Grand Rapids, MI – October 22, 2019: West Michigan Aviation Academy (WMAA) has been recognized as a Distinguished Flight School for its high standard of accomplishment in flight training by the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), the world's largest aviation association.

Each year, AOPA invites flight students to review the instructor and school where they have taken flying lessons. This year's survey included 972 aviation schools and more than 1,800 instructors. This is the first year that WMAA has joined this elite list of high-performing aviation flight training schools. "This award highlights our ongoing commitment to excellence," says George Pavey, Dean of Aviation for WMAA. "We have three pillars in our aviation program: safety first, professionalism, and the pursuit of excellence. This award validates that we are not just teaching high school students to fly and earn their private pilot license. We are laying the foundation for their future success in the aviation industry at a very high standard. In light of the projected industry demand for the future, our school continues to ignite passion in the next generation of pilots."

WMAA is a private charter school that was started in 2010 by Dick DeVos in response to the shortage of airline pilots and aerospace professionals. During its relatively brief history, the school has graduated 81 students with a private pilot license, many of whom have gone on to fly professionally. Students can also pursue classes related to aircraft maintenance, engineering, and other related fields. WMAA just introduced its first Build a Plane class in the fall of 2019. Over the course of two years, students in this class will build a Carbon Cub EX2. The plane has more than 8,000 parts and will require roughly 800-1,000 hours to build.

WMAA is a public charter school, open to any student. Although it receives a per-pupil stipend from the State of Michigan, the aviation program budget and other high-level STEM programs exceed the funding provided by the state. "We have developed many significant relationships with companies and individuals in the aeronautics industry," says Meggan George, Development Director for the WMAA Foundation. "These organizations share our passion for cultivating the next generation of flight professionals, engineers, aircraft designers and more. Thanks to their support, we are able to offer our students amazing experiences in aviation, engineering, and other STEM fields. They graduate high school with solid career goals because we have given them the exposure and experiences they need to make confident choices."

About West Michigan Aviation Academy: WMAA is a tuition-free public charter high school located on the campus of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, MI. WMAA is the only high school in the nation where a student can earn a private pilot license as part of the high school curriculum. With a curriculum rich in aviation, STEM (science, technology, engineering, math), and robotics, WMAA provides a unique educational opportunity for students to focus specifically on high-growth employment fields during their high school education. This better equips them to pursue higher education or technical degrees, and find employment in their chosen field. Learn more at www.westmichiganaviation.org.