

# Local pilots looking for 'Young Eagles'

**Children ages 7-17 can get a free airplane ride through a program offered by local pilots.**

10/24/06

**By Sarah Tebo, Young Romans Editor**

[Respond to this story](#)

[Email this story to a friend](#)



Through Young Eagles, kids can ride in the Tiger Flight airplanes, such as this one displayed by Phil Cataldo. (Sarah Tebo / RN-T)

Children enthralled by the Tiger Flight formation flying team during this weekend's air and car show have the opportunity to fly in those brightly-colored planes for free.

The pilots of Tiger Flight are focusing their efforts on the Young Eagles program that is organized nationally by the Experimental Aircraft Association. Along with Tiger Flight, pilots in the local EAA Chapter 709 provide free flights to children ages 7 to 17.

"We're going to put it at the top of our list," said Tiger Flight pilot Tom Calvanelli of the Young Eagles program.

According to the Young Eagles Web site, [youngeagles.org](http://youngeagles.org), the program was launched in 1992; since then, more than 1 million young people have received free flights.

"We want kids to get into aviation," said Calvanelli. "But not only that, we talk with them about being 'pilot in command,' getting structure in their lives."

Aviation, he continued, teaches children important lessons about trust and teamwork.

When a young person takes a Young Eagles flight, they are in the air for about 15 to 20 minutes. The pilots fly around the area, showing Rome from above, and allow the child to touch and use

the controls.

And if a child gets too scared, they will land as quickly as possible.

John Blalock, a pilot with EAA, said many children are initially apprehensive about their flights.

"But when they get back after the flight, they're all smiles," he said. "That makes it all worthwhile."

John Myers, another EAA pilot, has given about 250 Young Eagles flights.

"I enjoy taking the kids up for their first flight," said Myers. "We're hoping to encourage them to get involved. It's good for them and good for the industry."

Both Tiger Flight and the local EAA chapter participate in Young Eagles on the second Saturday morning of each month. To receive a free flight, a child must be between 7 and 17 and never have flown in a small aircraft. Parents or legal guardians must be present to sign a release form.

The next Young Eagles date is Nov. 11. To fly with Tiger Flight, children should go to the group's hangar at Richard B. Russell Regional Airport. Those wishing to fly with EAA members should visit [Eaa709.org](http://Eaa709.org) to get contact information.