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2009 Soaring Youth Grant Essay

### What Soaring Means to Me

Two years ago, in the summer of 2007, I began learning how to fly in gliders. Although I have to give some credit to my father for getting me into the sport, my interest in gliding has really taken off. In the summer months I try to get out and fly during as many weekends as I can, and each time, I take away something new. At the beginning of the winter seasons I help out with tearing down the gliders for storage. To me, this is what learning to fly is all about.

I have always been interested in aviation for as long as I can remember. Every year my family and I travel up to Wisconsin and spend nearly the entire week filling our minds with the wonderful world of aircraft at the Oshkosh fly-ins. In fact, during the summer of 2007, I was accepted into the EAA Young Eagles Air Academy and attended flight school for a week. Although the main focus was power planes, I was still able to maintain my love for gliding by participating in workshops that were hands-on with aerodynamics. I spent the week meeting other student pilots from all over the country who helped to further spark my interest in aviation.

From there, I have made numerous trips to Sky Soaring for ground training and instruction. I have taken multiple lessons in the aircraft, and have also attended the annual safety seminars hosted by Sky Soaring. Each seminar and gliding lesson brings on new challenges and opportunities for me. It pushes me to go beyond my limits by testing my skills thousands of feet up. To me, learning to fly is not just being airborne, but also attending classes, seminars, and training. Becoming a pilot means taking care of the aircraft, so the aircraft will take care of you.

Being a student pilot keeps me on my toes, while teaching me patience, obedience, and technical skills I would not have otherwise acquired. Choosing to become a student pilot has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. For most, flying gliders is considered a sport, but to me, it's pure enjoyment and thrill. I love the feeling of being in an entirely different world than what I live in. I get to view the world from a totally different perspective while doing so in peace. By continuing my lessons, I am hoping that this coming summer I will finally be able to solo in the glider.

Getting into a glider and taking off into the open sky gives you the most freeing feeling in the world. From a few thousand feet up on a clear day, you can see for miles around you. The feeling that it's only you and the aircraft keeping you airborne is truly amazing. You are able to soar among the birds, and know that whatever else might be happening on the ground, is going to remain on the ground. Flying in gliders not only gives me the feeling of freedom, but it also gives me the feeling of being in control, with not much to control! To sum my flying career up, my motto that I live by is "Live to soar, soar to live." Soaring is what makes me the person I am today.

