What Soaring Means To Me

By Megan Hart

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From the exhilarating tow to the challenging touch down, soaring is a thrill that will last a life time! Beyond the thrill however, I have learned flying heightens responsibility, elevates discipline, improves focus, and grants me the chance to reach out to others. To me, soaring is an overall character builder, and has helped mold me into the person I am today.

My name is Megan Hart. I am 15 years old and a freshman at McHenry West High School. I am an honor student, a member of the Student Council, a member of the Key Club (Community Service), active in my church, and starting guard on the freshman basketball team. Being involved with my school, community and church are all top priorities in my life, along with learning to soar.

I soloed on September 24, 2011 at Sky Soaring Glider Club in Hampshire, Illinois. We continue to work on my Private Pilot ground school and I fully intend to finish my license. My future goals include positioning myself for a possible appointment to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

When soaring, it seems there is much more to the experience than the pure enjoyment of flying, including the safety of myself, passengers (someday), and of those on the ground. I had assumed there would be responsibilities for the technical aspects of flight, but I am also beginning to appreciate my responsibility for the mental and physical readiness as a pilot.

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Attributes essential to flying also involve discipline and dedication. From the academic requirements of learning something new, to paying close attention to weather and the condition of your aircraft, soaring demands I exercise careful planning and preparation. It takes great effort to keep up with all the tasks one faces when in the air and on the ground.

I have learned that gliding takes focus and the ability to react quickly and calmly in different situations. It requires me to be aware and alert at all times because it takes place in a constantly changing environment. I enjoy the fact that you always have to be ready with a “plan B” and that it takes concentration to keep your mind thinking of multiple things at the same time.

One of the most important experiences I have enjoyed in soaring is the making of new friendships and having the opportunity to “give back” by volunteering in something I love. Chipping in for a day at the glider field is hardly like work! I get to spend time with new friends and my instructors have become true mentors. Through my involvement with Sky Soaring, I had the opportunity to spend a week at the EAA’s Airventure/Kidventure, volunteering on behalf of the Soaring Society of America. I worked with Scott Manley teaching other kids to fly the Condor Flight Simulator. It was amazing to see their reactions when they learned to control the aircraft on their own and knowing I might have influenced someone’s life in a positive way. The feeling was priceless and I am looking forward to participating again this coming year.

Gliding through the vast blue sky, looking down on the quilted landscape below, watching the breathtaking white clouds float by like weightless pieces of cotton, and the soft sound of air flowing by the canopy, is what stands out most in soaring. Additionally, flying provides so much more such as responsibility, discipline, focus, and the opportunity to influence other young flying enthusiasts. To me, soaring is much more than an activity; it is a way of life.