

MAKING LIFE MORE FUN

The Web Can Help Aviation Dreams Take Flight

(NAPSA)—Ever since the Wright brothers made their historic takeoff, people have dreamed of flying a plane. Today, 104 years later, there are a number of online resources available to help those aviation dreams take flight.

For example, the nonprofit Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA)—the world's largest pilot organization—has launched a Web site called ProjectPilot.org. The site offers short videos and a wealth of information for prospective aviators—everything from what it takes to earn your wings to what you can do with your pilot's certificate.

To help you take that first step, the Web site offers contact information for more than 3,500 flight schools nationally. Many of those schools offer discounted "introductory flights," during which you'll get to actually fly an airplane for around 30 minutes with a licensed flight instructor. Often, that first flight costs between \$59 and \$99.

"The introductory flight is a great way to see if flying is something you'd like to pursue, since it puts you at the controls right from the start," says Phil Boyer, president of AOPA. "You'll get to see firsthand the thrill of learning to fly, and how you may be able to incorporate flying into your lifestyle, for business or recreation purposes."

Becoming a pilot is easier and more affordable than most people think. A dedicated student can earn a private pilot certificate in



three to six months, or can spread out lessons over a year or more. A flying education costs from \$6,000 to \$9,000, depending on where you live and how frequently you take lessons, but typically you can pay as you go, so you don't have to cough up a lump sum.

Once licensed, you don't have to buy an airplane in order to fly. According to AOPA, more than half of all pilots rent aircraft, which can cost as little as \$65 per hour. And you only pay for the time the engine is running.

People fly for many reasons. Family trips are fast and fun by air and businesspeople can fly themselves to meet with far-flung clients and vendors. Many pilots simply find local flying to be a great form of relaxation, or enjoy traveling to other cities for a good meal. There are many career opportunities for pilots as well.

Taking to the sky starts with that first lesson. It may launch a new hobby or even a career. To learn more, visit the Web site at www.projectpilot.org. Additional piloting resources can be found at both www.beapilot.com and www.flighttraining.aopa.org.