



Dayton Airport Fuels Air Campers' Passion for Flight

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- *What's the largest plane that's been here?*
 - *How do you get the conveyor belt to curve?*
 - *What does a bomb look like on a TSA scan?*
 - *How do you monitor bird activity?*
 - *How often do you strip the rubber off the runway?*

You might not expect a group of 50 pre-teens to come to Dayton International Airport armed with tough questions like these, but that's exactly what happened when Air Camp visited the airport this week.

Not only were airport staff ready for the visit, they relished the opportunity to show off their aviation careers to a group of future aviators, scientists, engineers and mechanics.

The group was the third Air Camp delegation to visit Dayton International this summer. Air Camp, a



week-long, experiential aviation program for middle school students from across the country (and a few foreign countries) brings young people to Wright State University to experience all the Dayton area has to offer in aviation and aeronautics.

The stop at Dayton International is just one-half day of their six-day Air Camp experience, which culminates in each camper co-piloting a plane at Dayton-Wright Brothers Airport, the City of Dayton's general aviation airport.

"To hear these kids talk, they have such passion and knowledge of the subject matter," said Terrance Slaybaugh, Dayton International Airport director. "They don't just know what they want to do, they know exactly how they want to get there."

Zion Franz, a 12-year-old from Tipp City, Ohio, for example, knows he wants to be a mechanic.

"A diesel mechanic," he said enthusiastically. "But I could do some work on airplanes too." Zion's favorite part of the day: looking at the massive diesel engines on the airport fire station's firefighting equipment. He also knows he wants to be a pilot. "I am getting my pilot's license as soon as I turn 16."

The fire station was just one of the stops the campers made while touring the airport. Campers also took turns getting a behind-the-scenes look at TSA baggage inspection, helping to direct planes from the control tower and watching planes take off and land from the runway itself.

Jolee Hatfield-King, a 13-year-old attending Toledo School for the Arts, doesn't have a plan as specific as Zion's, but she knows she wants to do something in the math and science field. She said she thought Air Camp would be a great opportunity to explore her options, so she wrote an essay to win a scholarship and was thrilled with the airport touring experience.

"I just love airplanes," she said. "I loved looking out over the control tower and seeing everything down below--everything going on all at once."

Slaybaugh said he was eager to fuel the passions of the campers by giving them an all-access pass to areas of the airport not usually seen by the general public. It requires a lot of moving parts and pieces, as well as the cooperation

of several departments to make it happen, but it always ends up being a fun and inspiring day.

"It's a great opportunity at that age," Slaybaugh said. "Who can say they've been at an airport on an active runway? Not everyone gets to do that."

Each session of Air Camp is open to 44 students, each of whom is chosen through a competitive application process. For more information on Air Camp and how to apply for next year's sessions visit aircampusa.com.

To learn more about Dayton International Airport, go to flydayton.com.

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