
HIGH-FLYING HOMEWORK

High school class builds an RV-12

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EAA CHAPTER 1328 IN North Vernon, Indiana, has two Young Eagles days each year, and we have flown hundreds of kids. Getting them involved in building an airplane seemed to be the next, most logical step.

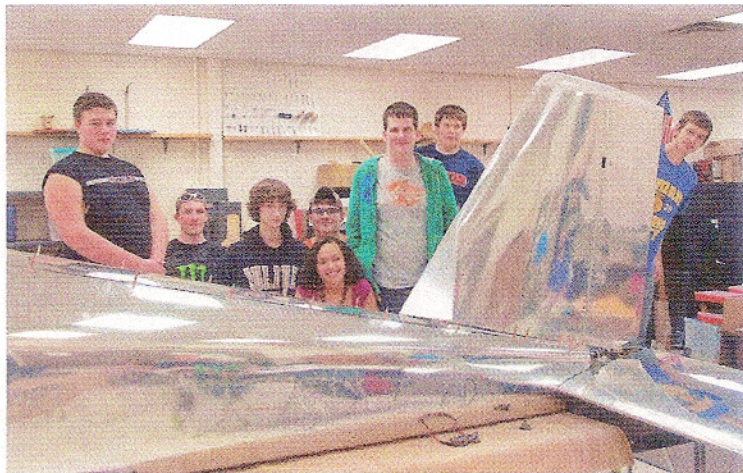
I talked with Dick VanGrunsven, founder of Van's Aircraft, about the idea at AirVenture the first year Van's Aircraft displayed the RV-12 prototype. During this time, Van's began the Teen Flight program. Following the Teen Flight blog, it was obvious that the RV-12 was the right choice. (For more on Teen Flight, see page 110.)

Fast-forward to early September 2010. I got a call from Andy Doboze, the engineering teacher at Jennings County High School. "When do you want to start?" I asked.

"How about Tuesday?" Andy replied.

I had five Van's practice kits and enough tools to get started, so Tuesday it was. Later on, one post on www.VansAirForce.net brought the donations necessary to buy all the tools we needed.

The empennage and tail cone kit arrived during Christmas break. The kids took the practice kits seriously, but it was nothing compared to working on the real thing. We found the Hints for Homebuilders videos on the EAA website a big help in getting up to speed. Even the mentors learned from them.



A happy group of builders with a finished tail cone.

We plan to have the fuselage and wings finished by the end of summer. Some of the kids will be at AirVenture 2011, and I will share a forum with Scott McDaniels, supervisor of the Van's Teen Flight group.

The kids? All have had their first airplane ride and are Young Eagles. Some have joined EAA and our local chapter. Five want to get their pilot certificates, and two are considering aviation-related careers. All plan to be part of the Eagle's Nest Project during the next school year.

View from the Perch

The Eagle's Nest Project is a first-of-its-kind aircraft building program being done by JCHS students, in JCHS! Training began in September, 2010 and building of the airplane began in January. As you can see, it is progressing well. The students have worked through the summer here at OVO, North Vernon Municipal Airport. A big THANK YOU to the airport for use of their facilities.

The tail and everything behind the passenger compartment is finished (except for minor details) and is stored at the high school. The wings are nearly done, and are here. We will resume work on the fuselage this week at school, and will later add the engine and instruments. We expect to be flying by the end of the school year.

This is a project whose time has come. Pilots realize we need to get kids into aviation; we need them and they need us. The pilot population is shrinking to the point where the airlines will soon be hiring pilots from Saudi Arabia.

While Eagle's Nest is only a start, big things are happening. An organization originally formed to restore a piece of aviation history has decided to support aviation education. **Friends of the RV-1**, founded by Paul Dye, Chief Flight Director of the space shuttle program (now Flight Director of the the International Space Station,) "Hoot" Gibson, five-time shuttle astronaut, and several others is putting its efforts into programs such as this. We are joining forces with them. Several very large companies have expressed an interest in supporting this activity.

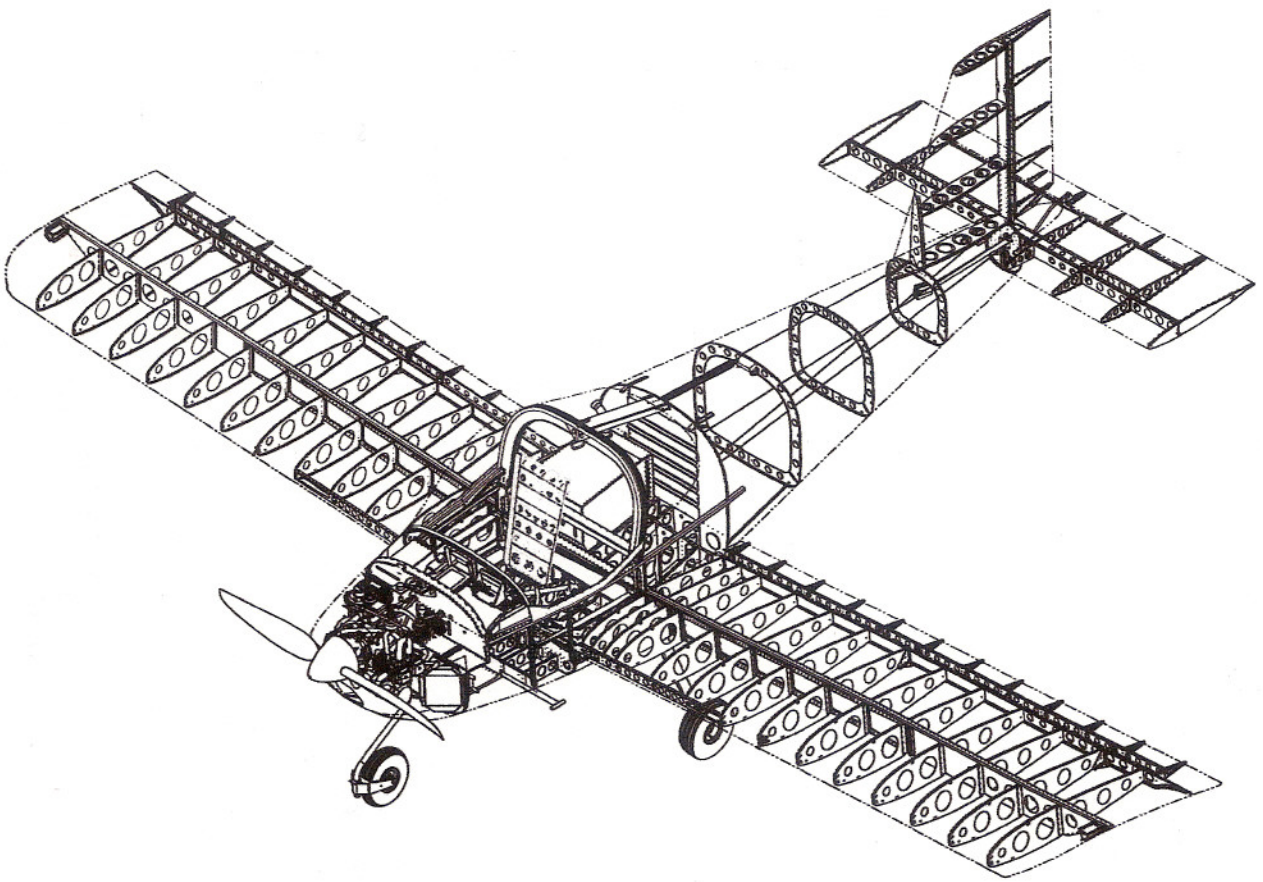
As a non-profit 501(c)(3,) you can make dedicated donations to this cause through them. Each project will cost around \$65,000, and they hope to have ten started per year. Plans are that students participating in these programs will be able to get their pilot's license—FREE! They will probably do it in the plane now being build at JCHS, pending FAA approval. While much remains to be done, this organization is building on the base formed here in Jennings County.

Ask the student builders about their recent trip to AirVenture Oshkosh. It was quite a field trip, and they made a good impression on the aviation community.

JCHS, OVO, EAA Chapter 1328, and you, residents of this area, have reason to be proud. Not only are we offering our students an exciting new opportunity (just ask 'em,) we may be starting a process than will help revive this element of our economy. Please come visit our program, either here at OVO, or at the school. Contact the school or airport for times, or give me a call.

Bob Kelly,
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for the chapter members, students, teachers and all involved.

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The Eagle's Nest Project at Jennings County High School represents a step forward in public education. By offering practical applications for many of the skills taught to today's student, concepts take form and reasons come to life. Beyond just aircraft construction, the students learn teamwork, leadership, craftsmanship, and pride. The students ARE the factory.

All Eagle's Nest Projects utilize the Van's RV-12 aircraft. Choice of the RV-12 was brought about not only by the quality and performance of the aircraft, but also by the completeness of the kit. This greatly simplifies logistics. Even tool selection is thought out with a group in mind.

While the RV-12 kit is one of the simplest available, it teaches true aircraft construction techniques and demands concentration and skill. It requires a positive mindset and attention to detail well beyond the most high school activities. When completed, it produces a better, more well-rounded group of students, as well as a nice airplane.

The Federal Aviation Administration states that all experimental aircraft must be built for "the education and entertainment of the builder." Eagle's Nest projects do both. Ask the students if they are having fun! Ask them if they are learning!

Follow our progress at mykitlog.com/bobkelly See the article in the July, 2011 edition of Sport Aviation. Visit our project. Don't be afraid to stop by; you won't bother the kids a bit. They will hardly look up from their work.

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