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CLGC Youth Grant
1-26-23

What Soaring Means To Me

Soaring gives me an opportunity to pursue what I love at a young age. It is allowing me to gain aeronautical experience for future careers, it presents me with opportunities to challenge myself and my styles of thinking, and it grants me membership in a community of generous people who are willing to share their wisdom and experience.

My first airplane flight was from Lexington, Kentucky to Denver, Colorado-I was hooked! I knew the instant the wheels left the runway that I wanted to spend my life pursuing that feeling, but cost and age restrictions kept me from being able to fly. Soaring offered me an opportunity to experience the euphoria of flight while being (somewhat) less expensive than powered training. During my final year of Junior-High, a friend told me about a scenic ride she had received as a gift-I was immediately interested in the idea of less expensive flying that would let me solo at 14 instead of 16 in powered aircraft. After researching some Soaring clubs near me, I decided to join Sky Soaring and I began my flight training that summer. Around thirty flights later, my instructor gave me the green light to solo, and I went up. The feeling of my hands on the stick, surrounded by nothing but sky, and watching fields spread over the horizon as far as the eye can see stands as the greatest feeling of my life. I certainly would not call my flying incredible, but I was able to control all phases of flight and land safely. I had barely gotten out of my cockpit when two members of the club initiated me with a bucket of water-I was overwhelmed with feelings of pride as my Father took photos.

Soaring also gives me aeronautical experience at a young age. After graduating High School, I would like to join the Navy and carry on my family's three-generation history of Naval service; more specifically, I would like to become a Naval Aviator. My first step to accomplishing this dream is to receive a commission from the United States Naval Academy. Soaring gives me flight experience and also makes my USNA application more attractive by conveying I am responsible, willing to learn, and willing to push myself to accomplish a dream. The flight time I gain functions to give me an edge over other applicants that are trying for a pilot's commission, and it will help make flying aircraft a less steep learning curve.

Furthermore, Soaring challenges me, my skills, and my way of thinking. I enjoy learning new skills, either physical or mental, and Soaring gives me a plethora of opportunities to learn both. From mastering high-angle turns in thermals to learning to read the weather, I always leave the club with more knowledge than I started with. I love the feeling of triumph when I learn to do something new, and it's also nice to know that I am simultaneously practicing my ability to learn and grow; both things I can take into my everyday life.

Finally, flying lets me join and be around a community of people that are kind, wise, and more than willing to share that wisdom with me. At my club, I learn not only from the CFI-G's

that teach but also from the private pilots who are waiting for their next tow. Everyone has something that they can teach to me, and everyone is more than willing to teach it. The advice they give is not limited solely to flying, however, and I often receive words of wisdom on how to walk through my life outside of the airstrip. The guidance from CFI-G's and club members alike helped me reach my goal of soloing in the 2022 season, and I could not have become the pilot I am without their help, their wisdom, and their willingness to teach.

However, I was almost unable to begin flying last year due to a lack of income. Both of my parents work in ministry and explained to me early on that they would be unable to contribute any money towards my flight or club dues. I knew I needed to fly that summer, so I obtained a work permit from my middle school and searched for a job. I found work at a small pizza place near my home, and I worked all winter to save money for flight expenses-but even working all winter and summer, I had to borrow money from my Grandparents in order to fly regularly. I am applying for scholarships this season so I can fly often and progress my skill instead of worrying about how I will be able to afford my next tow.

Soaring grants me an opportunity. An opportunity to learn, gain experience, and grow as both a person and as a pilot-as well as a chance to pursue a dream at a younger age than most are able to. Soaring is also a source of unexplainable pride, knowing that my work and dedication to flying resulted in my solo, and eventually will result in a license.