

The Heather McRoberts Memorial Scholarship

Heather, or "Tinkerbell" as she was called by many of her co-workers at Mile High Gliding in Boulder, Colo., was inspired and motivated to excel in every aviation endeavor. From soloing in a Schweizer 2-33 glider upon turning 14, to obtaining her commercial and seaplane rating four years later, she always achieved her goals as a birthday tradition.

Her enthusiasm and energy toward the world of flight inspired Heather's parents, David and Jan McRoberts, to create a scholarship in her name, a memorial tribute following her death at the young age of 19 in a plane crash. "She absolutely loved flying," said her father, Dave. "Heather took every opportunity to share her passion. Flying was in her blood from day one!"

Heather continually motivated aviation enthusiasts, young and old, to become more involved in exploring the skies above. Heather focused this devotion after visiting Oshkosh, Wis. during EAA AirVenture 2003. While there, she noticed few teens and young women in attendance. "Heather and her friend, Scooter Mainero, decided they wanted to promote youth and women in aviation by flying cross-country and giving free rides using the EAA's Young Eagles program," wrote Heather's aunt, Lana Morgan.

"Raising the money all on their own, these 17-year-olds created 'The Young Luscombes.' With their dispatcher, Arnold Peckar, three Luscombes swept the skies of the Midwest giving over 60 rides and promoting their passion...flying." Their cross-country tour ended under the stars, camping out during AirVenture 2004. "We get a much more intimate feeling of being in Oshkosh when we camp during AirVenture," said her father. "That was Heather's favorite part, come rain or shine."

"They did pre-air show fly-bys most of the week," wrote Lana. "Heather did a "greaser" landing in the rain just as a thunderstorm was approaching. They closed the airport after she landed. She said, 'I had strangers asking me for days afterwards if I was really the same girl who did that 'beautiful landing.' Catching the attention of the media, 'The Young Luscombes' were featured in several television news segments and newspaper stories."

Before she passed away, Heather attended the University of North Dakota, studying aviation. She worked two seasons as a tow pilot at Mile High Gliding in Boulder, Colo. Her dad remembered the organization's owner saying she was the youngest pilot he had ever hired and the best they had ever had. "We have all been inspired by Heather's spirit, life and aviation itself to 'give wings' to future generations," he observed.

The aviation community's response to Heather's death was extraordinary, resulting in a vast amount of contributions and a plaque donated to EAA by her friends at Antique Airplane Association of Colorado. The scholarship, funded through donations made after Heather's passing, will promote women and youth in aviation. Her parents felt it would be the perfect tribute to an inspiring life, too-short lived.

"A lot of people have the desire to fly but not the funds or the direction," said her mother, Jan. "EAA can provide that direction and support. I think that this scholarship in her honor is something that she would really, really want. Her death shouldn't be a reason not to promote aviation. She would want her life to inspire others, not deter them from flying."

This endowed scholarship is a memorial tribute to Heather "Tinkerbell" McRoberts. It was generously established by donations made in her name to the Antique Airplane Association of Colorado. Each year it provides a \$500 award to a "Women Soar You Soar" participant age 21 or younger that expresses a commitment to pursuing aviation as a profession or as an avocation in adult life.

This scholarship will be awarded during this year's Women Soar You Soar event

To apply, please answer these two questions in writing, one paragraph per question. Please limit your response to one typewritten page. Applications must be received by June 30, 2009.

1. What are you now accomplishing that evidences your sincere interest in the world of aviation?
2. Identify the one or two adults who have been most influential to you thus far in pursuing your dreams of flight. Describe what makes that connection special in your life and what you aspire to do to continue the legacy of Heather's passion – promoting youth and women in aviation.

Please submit to:

Dr. Lee Siudzinski, Manager, Education Relationships

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