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New license puts the fun back into flying

Flight school opens at Piper Airport

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LOCK HAVEN Piper Airport is now home to a flight school that gives more area residents the chance to earn their wings.

The new flight school offers light sport aircraft training which is more affordable, more accessible and easier than training for a Private Pilot License.

Dr. H. Paul Shuch, founder and chief flight instructor of AvSport of Lock Haven, introduced his business to City Council at its Monday work session.

He also invited the public to a free seminar about sport aviation Saturday at 10 a.m. in the flight instructor room of the airport's Hanger One.

AvSport, which opened Jan. 1, specializes in training in modern light sport aircraft, he stated, and students can earn the FAA's new Sport Pilot License with half the training time and at less cost than other licensing.

Shuch is a retired aeronautical engineering professor, a lifelong pilot and a resident of Cogan Station. He said his dream has been to run a flight school, and he chose the city's airport because, among a variety of reasons, it is the home of the Piper Cub which started light sport aviation.

He calls the school's newly acquired Evektor SportStar plane "relatively slow, docile, cost-effective, fuel-efficient and easy to learn to operate."

The SportStar was built in the Czech Republic, Shuch said, but with Piper Aircraft now holding a controlling share of the company, an almost identical aircraft will soon marketed under a new Piper name.

"I see it as a great opportunity for the people in our region," Airport Manager Edward Watson said. "There's nothing like this within a hundred miles; the closest may be at Lancaster."

The local facility has had been no formal flight training available for at least eight years, Watson said.

The Sport Pilot License allows pilots to fly at 10,000 feet and below, during daylight and in weather that allows at least three miles' visibility since visual contact with the ground must be maintained. The pilot may take only one passenger and may not fly for business.

"We're hoping to start people back into fun flying," Shuch told council.

The training behind the license counts toward higher license ratings, Shuch said.

His plan is to train 10 students in the first year, flying six hours a week during Lock Haven's 40 weeks per year of good flying weather on average. He has three students on the waiting list, he said, and hopes to serve Lock Haven University's summer aviation program.

At three lessons per week, the student can expect to solo in about four weeks, at a cost of about \$2,000. He can become fully licensed in about three months at a cost of less than \$4,000.

Once licensed, pilots can rent the SportStar or look into buying a plane of their own. A used Cub can be purchased for \$35,000, Watson said, and a new light sport plane could run from \$50,000 to \$100,000, depending on instrumentation. These amounts compare with the price tag of \$200,000 for a Piper Archer.

Shuch started flying in 1961 in an Aeronca Champ which he said is similar to a Cub. An Air Force veteran and commercial pilot, he has a Ph.D. in Air Transportation Engineering and taught at Lycoming College.

He also is the volunteer FAA Safety Team lead representative for Lock Haven.

The free seminar on Saturday will include a chance to look over AvSport's curriculum, training materials and its new airplane.

On the Web:

www.AvSport.org

Article Photos



Dr. H. Paul Shuch tells City Council about his new flight school, AvSport of Lock Haven.