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Jobs

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Almanac 2007

Douglas County

Park & Recreation

Activity Guide

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Teen takes flight

 by Sharlene Irete, sirete@recordcourier.com

June 22, 2007

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Calvin Harris was excited to get his license on his birthday, but unlike most 16-year-olds, the license he received on Monday is to fly an airplane.

"I was a little nervous, but when I got up there, I was more confident," said Calvin about his first solo flight. "I was trying to concentrate - I was really excited."

Calvin's priority has been flying, so he doesn't have a license to drive a car yet - someone needed to drive him to his flight lessons. He has been training in a Cessna 172 SP, a 180-horsepower, single-prop plane at the Minden-Tahoe Airport with Bill Schroeder, one of four master certified flight instructors in Nevada.

"Calvin getting his license at 16 is very rare. I've been an instructor for 22 years and I haven't seen this since 1999," said Schroeder. "He has a real diligence about flying and learning various disciplines."

Flight training includes both in-air and classroom instruction and Calvin flew with Schroeder about twice a month. He had to pass two presolo written tests before his instructor could give the OK for the half-hour solo flight test, which was three take-offs and landings, all within sight of the airport.

"He was really prepared for his solo," said Schroeder. "Everyone was prepared - we were looking forward to it. He knew what he had to do and he did it."

"Now he will continue with his training with a mix of solo and duo flying. He'll do cross-country flying between airports, a minimum of 50 miles," he said.

Calvin will be a junior at Douglas High School in the fall and is the son of Kirk Harris and Melissa Capps. He said he was always interested in flying and has his eye on earning his rotor craft rating.

"It started with a gift certificate from my parents," he said. "They got me into because they knew I wanted to fly."

"My main goal is to be a helicopter pilot. I love Alaska and would like to do logging or fly extreme sports because my friends are extreme skiers."

Schroeder said the accomplishment of earning a pilot's license could be an considered an investment or could lead to a new career.

"Learning to fly costs less than buying a motorcycle - you don't have to replace a license every few years. Calvin told me, "This is the beginning of my career,"" said Schroeder. "Calvin is setting an example for what young people can do. He's making a career."

Having a student pilot's license means he may fly solo and his only passengers have to be instructors. On his 17th birthday, Calvin will be able to take a private pilot check ride so that he will be able to carry passengers.

"The guys are going to have to fight over who will be the first to go up with me when I get my private pilot's license," he said.

For more information about flight instruction, go to www.flightsafetycounselor.com.

Shannon Litz/The R-C Sixteen-year-old Calvin Harris took his solo flight in a Cessna 172SP on his 16th birthday.

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