Belle Glade, Florida: The plan began a year ago when the Future Farmers of America treated our organizations (Florida Cub Flyers & Florida Antique Biplane Association) to a wonderful lunch at the Glades Day School during our vegetable farm tour. We sought to try and repay these squared away kids for their efforts. To accomplish the task, we pulled together a group of folks we knew who would and could make things happen. The lead person in that category was Willie Lee of Aerial Crop Protection. There are those who ride the wagon and those who pull it. Willie is definitely a puller.
Our mission was to educate the kids as to the opportunities available for their future in the Glades and particularly to promote agricultural aviation as a career. What better organizations to "light that fire" in that realm than the Florida Cub Flyers, Florida Antique Biplane Association and the Experimental Aircraft Association? So, with the help of Willie Lee, Mike Swindle (FFA Coordinator at Glades Day School), Linda Minton (Executive Director of Florida Agricultural Aviation Association), Rick Golightly (EAA Chapter 203), Bart Perryman (Aerial Crop Protection) and Norman Harrison (Glades Central HS Ag Program Director) we set the plan in motion with the culmination occurring on February 21st, 2015. That's the back story in very brief format. I can assure you that nothing like this occurs briefly with the planning and execution of such a complex undertaking.

The actual result of the planning occurred with a day of aviating at Belle Glade, Florida. Planes, pilots, kids and parents began arriving at 0730 on a chilly, breezy morning in February at the beautifully maintained ag airstrip in Belle Glade. A wide variety of aircraft were on hand. All manner of Cubs, Cessnas, Stearmans, a Howard DGA, Robinson helicopter and a Beech T34 hauled kids on a pre-planned route over points of interest in the surrounding countryside.
We were welcomed with southern hospitality. Coffee, donuts and fresh orange juice was supplied by Judy Sanchez of U.S. Sugar Corp. Our aircraft covered the grassy ramp with a broad spectrum of types to be used introducing kids to the realm of the air. There were a lot of smiling kids in evidence as they completed their aviation adventure. Hopefully we lit the fire in a few of the kids who came from as far as Sebring High School, Okeechobee High School and Glades Centeral High School. The State and District Officers of the FFA were in attendance and rode the zephyrs with us.

The aerial application operators have made this airstrip a showplace for the industry with a nice paved runway and acres of manicured grassy ramp. This was a perfect spot to fly the kids while getting to observe the comings and goings of pristine Air Tractors involved in aerial application missions.

All this visual and auditory experience not to be forgotten even by the well seasoned aviators amongst us. If you participated in this day of aviating, you are richer for it. Thanks to all for devoting your time, effort and treasure to this worthwhile day to introduce the kids to our realm.

Things officially kicked off with Tyler and Bill Ulrich of Van Wagner Aerial Media picking up a banner and circling the field welcoming the FFA to the day of aviating.
A safety briefing with explanation of our pre-planned flight route over points of interest was conducted along with a briefing by Rick Golightly of the EAA. Then the fun began with kids being paired with loaders and pilots for the aerial missions. Planes were in the air continually until noon when we were chauffeured by bus to Glades Day School across the street for lunch. Chauffeured across the street! Did you get that? Maybe they thought we were too old to walk that far? Anyway, just another example of how well planned and executed was this day. Every detail far exceeded the plan thanks to the folks involved.

During the safety briefing, Brandon Pena of Jacobs Flight Service explained to the kids that there was a pilot training program right there local at Air Glades Airport in Clewiston.
The John Deere and Case Dealers were kind enough to bring examples of their BIG farm tractors to display and allow the kids to crawl over them. Thanks to Mike Schlecter of Eveglades Farm Equipment and George Cooper of Glades and Grove Supply.

Lt. Kevin O'Brien of the Palm Beach County Sheriffs Department brought their Jet Ranger to the function and answered the many questions put to them by the kids, parents and our pilots. We also had a vintage Bell Huey helicopter, piloted by Terry Robertson, on site for the kids to tour.
At lunch we were treated to a presentation by Meghan Pasken of Glades Crop Care. Meghan introduced us to yet another opportunity for good jobs in the Glades. Meghan's business involves close inspection of crops, determining what ails them and making specific recommendations how to remedy any problems.

The agribusiness in this farming area is actively looking for educated young folks to help produce food for the nation in the most efficient manner possible. There are opportunities here and the leaders of agribusiness want to retain the talent available. Especially the squared away kids to whom we were exposed. One and all are exemplary products of their parents and community.

Wrapping things up, we were all presented with a goody bag of fresh produce grown right there in the Glades supplied by Paul Orsenigo of Growers Management, Inc. Grown with the help of the aerial applicators to maximize production per acre of cultivated land.
This was a great day for all involved. In all we flew 29 kids and their families with 21 aeroplanes showing up for the event. Many thanks to all the wagon pullers amongst us.