

# Civil Air Patrol Provides Education, Emergency Services

By **Jerry Jessick**, senior engineer, ETMS

Born a week before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the [Civil Air Patrol](#) became an organization of volunteers who put their planes and flying skills to use in defense of their country. Assigned to the War Department under the jurisdiction of what was then called the Army Air Corps, CAP members logged more than 500,000 flying hours while performing critical wartime missions.

In 1948, Congress established the Civil Air Patrol as the auxiliary of the new U.S. Air Force. Its three primary mission areas remain the same: aerospace education, cadet programs, and emergency services.



I got involved in CAP when my stepson, Colin, was in a grade school science project called [Rockets4Schools](#) in

Sheboygan. When the participating school teams fire their rockets out over Lake Michigan, the airspace above is patrolled by this auxiliary, while groups representing the Coast Guard, NASA and Tripoli Rocket Association help students with ground control, target tracking, water recovery, and so on.

After the school science project, and seeing what the auxiliary cadets were doing to support the event, Colin got excited and got involved. Minimum participation age is 12 years old, and he was 13. I was so impressed with the leadership training and moral character of the group that I decided not to just drive him to the meetings – but to go ahead and join myself. Now Colin's in college and his little brother Noah is 11, so I'm looking forward to more fun experiences with him starting next spring.



Major **Jerry Jessick** (right) presents a cadet with a certificate for completing an aircraft manufacturing academy. Jessick also serves as Character Development Officer for the Fox Cities Composite Squadron.

I've had several roles over the years. In my current role locally, I provide monthly [character development training](#) sessions to a squadron in Appleton. There are additional squadrons in Green Bay, Shawano, and Marinette/Menominee.

In my current role nationally, I am activity director of an Aircraft Manufacturing & Maintenance [Academy](#) that occurs each summer at the Cessna Aircraft Company in Independence, KS. Cadets selected from a competitive national roster spend a week assembling, commissioning, and flying Cessna aircraft and participating in additional

events with Delta Airlines, Lockheed-Martin Company and others. The Cessna site produces Mustang personal jets and the popular 172, 182, and model 206 propeller aircraft.

My dad was regular Air Force, and I registered with Selective Service when I was old enough. I guess my little hometown wasn't on anyone's radar, because no recruiters ever called. I got involved in engineering, and never thought much about flying again until I helped my father-in-law build his plane recently. He's a skilled metalworker; I did the avionics. Now, of course, I fly privately and wonder why on earth I didn't join the Air Force and get involved sooner.

Are you interested in [learning more](#) about the all-volunteer civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force? My children have found that it's a great way to build community service hours!

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