

Flying Club Now Forming at St. Louis Regional Airport in Bethalto: Hill, Harding Lead Effort

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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BETHALTO - Seasoned flight instructors with a combined 105 years of flight experience - Don Hill and John Harding - announced today they are in the process of forming a Flying Club or Aero Club at St. Louis Regional Airport in Bethalto. Hill has been a pilot for 60 years and Harding for 45 years.

Hill and Harding invited all interested parties who have always wanted to fly, get back into flying, or just want to learn to fly, to attend a meeting from 6 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, March 9, 2023. The meeting will be held at the Airport Managers Building, which is just south of the St. Louis Regional Airport Control Tower and Fire Station.

Hill said the Flying Club will be formed under the guidance and recommendations of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) and the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA)

“In general, owning an aircraft can be an expensive hobby, as are many others, however, by joining a Flying Club, those expenses can be minimized and members can still enjoy their hobby by having affordable access to an aircraft,” Hill added.

Presently there are more than 600 Flying Clubs active in the United States, with most having operated for more than 20 years with an average membership of about 50 each. There are now more than 200,000 General Aviation Aircraft and more than 600,000 General Aviation pilots in the United States. It is estimated that the United States will need an additional 80,000 pilots, flying either in General Aviation, Commercial, or Airline.

Proposals are to be discussed and questions will be answered concerning the details of the Flying Club formation. The Flying Club is to be organized as a non-profit, Limited Liability Corporation (LLC). Membership pledges will be considered during the meeting for a future buy-in for shares of ownership and acquisition of selected aircraft for the Flying Club.

Hill was a pilot for the Civil Air Patrol for many years and he started his pilot career in the Civil Air Patrol cadet program in junior high. He has been a flight instructor for many years and is also an instructor affiliated with Lewis and Clark Community College.

“We have nine candidates already pledged for the new club and we are looking for at least 20 to get the club formed,” he said. “We haven’t had a flying club for 15-20 years at St. Louis Regional Airport. I have been a pilot in many search and rescue missions with the Civil Air Patrol. Now, one of the latest tasks by the Civil Air Patrol is to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to many small towns across the state.”

Harding has had more than 3,300 hours as a flight instructor. He agrees the flight school would be special at St. Louis Regional Airport. Harding was even a crop duster pilot for 13 seasons, something he said he enjoyed.

“I guess you could say I have been a flight instructor with all different types of instructing,” Harding said. “The Flight Club would help people get to fly at a reasonable cost and I think would be a great addition to St. Louis Regional Airport.”

For more information, contact: Don Hill - dhill@lc.edu and John Harding - jharding.pt17@gmail.com