

Rain, resilience & real conversation



Megan Stevenson – ready to enlighten!

Rain, Resilience and Real Conversations at Chapter 973 – Laura McDermid

The forecast for Saturday wasn't encouraging. Grey skies hung low over the Highveld, and toggling between weather apps only confirmed what we already suspected — this was going to be another wet gathering. And yet, aviation people are nothing if not optimistic.

Louis managed to thread his way between the clouds over the mountain from Silver Creek, while Paul and Pops did the same from Eagle's Creek. The rest of the crowd opted for the more predictable approach, arriving by car, windscreen wipers working overtime. Inside the hangar, however, the mood was anything but gloomy. Johan and Sonja, the new proprietors of 26 South, welcomed everyone



Pops & Paul from Eagles Creek

with warm bacon and egg buns — the kind of simple, comforting start that sets the tone for a good morning. Despite the weather, around 50 people gathered, a testament to the growing pull of Chapter 973.

A Platform for Knowledge: APOSA Takes the Floor

The talks began with Braam Hechter and Peter Lastrucci from APOSA — the Approved Persons of South Africa. They introduced APOSA as a dynamic and inclusive professional body dedicated to



APOSA – Pete and Braam

supporting those involved in the NTCA sector. Whether seasoned Approved Persons, trainees, or simply enthusiasts, APOSA provides a platform for connection, learning, and professional growth. Importantly, they emphasized their independence — a body focused purely on advocacy, best practice, and the development of its members, free from regulatory influence. In a landscape often shaped by complex rules and shifting requirements, their role as a unifying and empowering voice was clear.

A Story That Stilled the Room

If the morning began with knowledge-sharing, it quickly shifted into something far more personal. Megan Stevenson, CEO of Infinite Aviation, took to the floor and immediately commanded attention — not through bravado, but through honesty.

Her journey is anything but typical.

With a background in genetics, physiology, and psychology, Megan went on to earn honours in applied psychology before following her father into aviation. She built a career as an airline pilot, only to have it disrupted by a diagnosis of temporal lobe epilepsy. Unlike conventional expectations, her condition didn't present in dramatic seizures, but rather in disorientating episodes — out-of-body sensations and visual disturbances that left her exhausted. Ironically, it wasn't the diagnosis itself that grounded her, but the side effects of the medication. What followed was a pivot — from flying to



Megan, a story that stilled the room

training, from cockpit to classroom — and deep involvement in safety management systems and air accident investigations, with a particular focus on human factors.

Then, just two months ago, came another turning point.

During a training session, Megan suffered an episode that landed her in hospital. Burnout had caught up with her. What followed was a difficult but necessary reckoning: if she wanted to continue, something had to change.

Her message was simple, but powerful:

“Manage stress before it manages you.”

She spoke about embracing alternative approaches, including neuro-linguistic techniques to retrain the body out of a constant fight-or-flight state. She shared before-and-after images that told a story words alone couldn't — the visible toll of chronic stress, and the gradual reclaiming of balance.

The hangar fell silent.

You could have heard a pin drop.

Megan's story resonated because it was real. She had carried the weight of responsibility in the air, faced the identity shift of being grounded, and confronted the deeper challenge of recognising her limits.



The hangar fell silent

As she put it, she had to accept that while she still had the capability, she no longer had the same capacity.

For many in the room — particularly those wired

for performance and momentum — it was a confronting idea.

A Moment of Reflection

Megan invited the audience to participate in a simple exercise to assess their own stress levels. The results were eye-opening. A few folk later admitted that they had thought they were coping just fine — until they saw their score.

It was one of those rare moments where a talk doesn't just inform, but shifts perspective.

Outside, the weather seemed to echo the mood. Light rain came and went, occasionally parting to reveal a pale, watery sun that never quite broke through. It felt symbolic — a reminder that not everything is within our control.

Sometimes, the lesson is simply to recognise what we can change, and what we must learn to accept.

Back to the Fundamentals

After a 30-minute break — a chance to stretch legs, make coffee and quietly process the morning — the focus returned to the technical. Peter Lastrucci and Kevin Hopper took the floor to demonstrate the importance of correctly

weighing an aircraft, with particular emphasis on centre of gravity (CG). David Lister has generously donated a set of scales to our chapter which was on display.

The message was clear: configuration matters.

Too far forward, and the aircraft becomes overly pitch-sensitive and difficult to land. Too far aft, and the risk of a stall

increases significantly. It was a practical, grounded reminder that even the smallest details can have major consequences.

Closing the Chapter — For Now

By just before 13h00, the last of the visitors



The 973 March Workshop

began to depart. The rain had eased, and the airfield settled back into its usual rhythm.

The morning had delivered far more than expected — not just strong technical content and practical demonstrations, but something deeper. Connection. Honesty. Perspective.

Later that afternoon, a brief window in the weather opened, and I took to the skies without hesitation.

But what stayed with me wasn't just the flight.

It was the quiet realisation of how valuable this community has become — a place where knowledge is shared, stories are told, and people show up for one another, regardless of the weather.

And perhaps that's what Chapter 973 is really building.

Not just better aviators — but a stronger, more connected aviation family.

Chapter 973 – building a stronger, more connected community





The Chapter structure is not unique to EAA, it's a proven system used by many large organisations all over the world. This month we look at the strengths and advantages of this popular and successful organisational system.

Stronger Together: The Role of Chapters in Building Meaningful Organizations

Large organisations often carry the weight of vision, structure, and global reach — but it is their local chapters that give them life. Chapters are where strategy becomes action. They are the grassroots engines that translate broad objectives into real, human experiences. Within organisations like the EAA, chapters are not simply administrative extensions; they are the heartbeat of the entire movement. At their core, chapters create belonging. While a national or international body provides direction and identity, it can feel distant to the individual. A local chapter, however, brings that identity home. It offers a place where members can gather, share knowledge, ask questions, and participate in something tangible. It is where newcomers are welcomed, where experience is passed down, and where enthusiasm is sustained. In the context of the EAA, this is particularly powerful. Aviation, by its very nature, thrives on mentorship, shared learning, and community. The complexity of building, maintaining, and flying aircraft cannot exist in isolation. Chapters provide the environment where these elements come together — from hands-on workshops and technical discussions to safety briefings and social fly-ins. They ensure that aviation is not just practiced, but lived. Yet the value of chapters extends beyond the local.

Each chapter operates as part of a much larger ecosystem. While members may be focused on their immediate activities — a project in the hangar, a breakfast gathering, or a Young Eagles event — they are simultaneously contributing to a global mission. Every interaction, every lesson shared, and every new member introduced

strengthens the overarching organisation. This dual role is what makes chapters so significant. On one hand, chapters serve their local communities and, by extension, the airfields they call home. They have the flexibility to adapt to specific needs, personalities, and opportunities — particularly within the context of what each airfield can offer. On the other, they uphold the standards, values, and vision of the parent body. In doing so, they create alignment without sacrificing individuality — a balance that is not easily achieved in larger organisations. For the EAA, this alignment is critical. The organisation's mission to grow participation in aviation, preserve its heritage, and inspire future generations relies heavily on its chapters. It is at chapter level that young people first experience flight, where builders find guidance, and where lifelong friendships are formed. These seemingly small, local interactions collectively shape the future of aviation. Importantly, chapters remind us that no effort exists in isolation. A single event may feel modest, a single conversation may seem insignificant — but when multiplied across hundreds of chapters worldwide, the impact becomes profound. Together, they form a network of shared purpose, each contributing a piece to a much larger picture. In a world that often prioritises individual achievement, chapters offer a different perspective. They demonstrate that progress is not only measured by what we accomplish alone, but by what we build together. And in organisations like the EAA, that collective effort is what keeps the spirit of aviation not only alive, but thriving.



The hangar will be open every Saturday for coffee, breakfast available at 26 South Restaurant
PLEASE MONITOR OUR 973 WHATSAPP CHAT GROUP FOR UPDATES ON FLY-AWAYS, FLY-INS AND OTHER EVENTS



Saturday 11th April | ALL THINGS CHICAGO!

Join us @ Jack's for a fun morning as we discover Chicago. Arnie Quast, President Chapter 932, Galt Airport, Chicago will be delivering a presentation on their chapter activities, past and future, as well transforming the humble hotdog into the famous **Chicago Hotdog** with ingredients specially flown in from Chicago!

Later, we join the Krugersdorp Flying Club for a short fun rally. Briefing and planning will take place in our hangar, whether you're flying, navigating or just want to be part of the fun, please join us for coffee, breakfast and lots of aviation activity!

Our **Monthly Workshop** will take place during the morning – replacing brake linings and how to use the brake lining tool properly. This simple task can be easily performed by NTCA owners. Our hands-on workshop series are planned to help members save money and maintain safe standards in operating their aircraft.

Saturday 9th May | Chapter Monthly Gathering | 09h00

Chapter 973 Monthly Gathering, Pieter Geldenhuys' presentation will feature another incredible local product, an anti-poaching drone, designed and built right here in South Africa, followed by our **Monthly Hands-on Workshop** by Kevin Hopper



Saturday 23rd May | FAKR

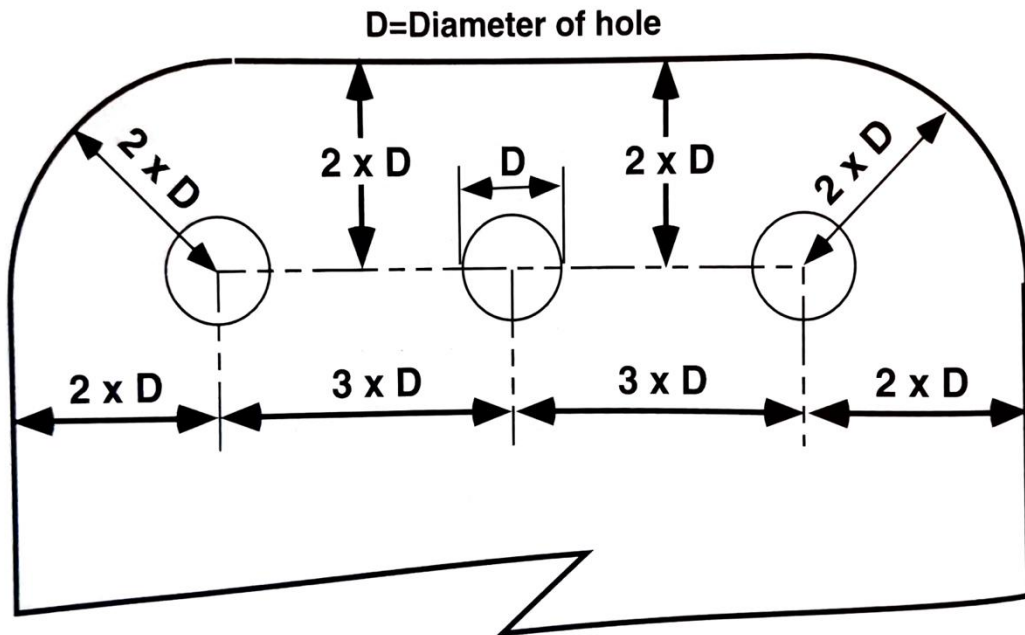
The Chippie turns 80! Join us at FAKR as we celebrate this iconic de Havilland aircraft!

Saturday 13th June | Monthly Gathering & Young Eagle's Rally | FAKR

It's International Young Eagles Day, join us as we join the world in Mission 2.5, a mission to have flown 2.5 million Young Eagles by the start of Oshkosh 2026!

This month, under the auspices of our chapter technical officer, Kevin Hopper, Chapter 973 begins a regular series of shop tips, aircraft construction and repair tips to help with safety and doing things right.

EDGE Margin: The minimum distance a hole should be placed from either the edge of a piece of metal or another hole.



| Diameter (D) | 2 x D | 3 x D |
|--------------|-------|--------|
| 3/32 | 3/16 | 9/32 |
| 1/8 | 1/4 | 3/8 |
| 3/16 (AN3) | 3/8 | 9/16 |
| 1/4 (AN4) | 1/2 | 3/4 |
| 5/16 (AN5) | 5/8 | 15/16 |
| 3/8 (AN6) | 3/4 | 1 1/8 |
| 7/16 (AN7) | 7/8 | 1 5/16 |
| 1/2 (AN8) | 1 | 1 1/2 |

Young Eagles

Mission 2.5



us we were, after all, at Krugersdorp airfield. This event was the result of a collaboration between Chapter 973 and JJ le Grange, director of the NPC Youth Aviation Network. JJ established the organisation in response to a very real challenge within South Africa's aviation sector: a shrinking pipeline of young people entering the industry. Across both civil and general aviation, there is growing concern about ageing pilot populations, a shortage of technical skills, and limited exposure for young people to aviation careers. Initiatives like this are not simply "nice to have" — they are essential if the industry is to sustain itself into the future. JJ's passion for creating opportunity for youngsters aligns perfectly with the ethos of the EAA, and his enthusiasm proved infectious.



Author Laura McDermid with budding young aviator Nina

EAA Young Eagles – 28 March 2026
A special buzz filled @Jack's, the Chapter 973 hangar on 28 March. The much-anticipated prelude to the international Young Eagles Day had arrived at Jack Taylor Airfield, and we were proud to host it in our home at Hangar E10. At last, the weather played along — an endless Highveld blue autumn sky stretched above us. Fields of Cosmos nodded their approval in just enough of a breeze to remind

He was soon joined by Janine Loubser — a principal at Welridge Academy and the ever-supportive "co-pilot" to her husband Johan — who embraced the challenge of identifying

young candidates. The brief was simple but meaningful: find children with both aptitude and curiosity. Janine reached out to neighbouring schools, including Bastion, which has a strong technical focus in its curriculum. The aim was not just to inspire future pilots, but potential engineers, builders, AMO's, instructors — the full spectrum of aviation.



Janine & students

Of course, curiosity alone was more than enough to earn a seat. But the broader aim was clear: to create a platform that could be replicated and built upon — one that identifies and nurtures future aviation talent in a meaningful way.

In the weeks leading up to the event, a call went out to the pilot community for volunteers. The response was overwhelming. Among the generous contributions was Martin Steer of Excellentia Aviation, who offered a Sling 2 training aircraft complete with instructor Ali and the Sling Factory with pilot Devan



Theo & Vanessa

On the day, @Jack's came alive with the

excited chatter of 40 children. While parents and guardians completed indemnity forms, the Chapter 973 committee moved seamlessly into position.

Vanessa Hopper managed registrations with her usual efficiency, and once complete, Chapter President Neil Bowden officially opened proceedings with a warm welcome and safety briefing. From there, chapter secretary TC Schultz and tech guru Kevin Hopper took over, carefully allocating children to aircraft.



TC Schultz & Kevin Hopper did a fine job allocating pax to aircraft

Newly appointed safety officer at Jack Taylor, Reyno Coetzer, played a key role in guiding pilots safely into the sky, no small task when managing a collection of strong Type A personalities.

We were fortunate to have a mix of aircraft available, including two RV-10s and a Jabiru J430, allowing multiple children to fly at once. The two-seaters worked steadily through multiple rotations — not that a single pilot seemed to mind.

In fact, quite the opposite.

My young passenger asked thoughtful, curious questions throughout the flight and was absolutely delighted when I handed over the controls. Her touch on the controls was gentle and intuitive — smoother, I dare say, than many seasoned pilots!

The children ranged in age from 7 to 18, but the outcome was universal: wide smiles and bright eyes on every return to the hangar. After their flights, they were treated to hot dogs and cold drinks by Carolyn and Brenda,

while Neil and Vanessa prepared personalised certificates. The final flight of the morning went to a mother and her two four-year-old twins — a fitting and heartfelt conclusion.



Brenda and her Hotdog Stand

In just two hours, we flew 38 children (and one very happy mom). As the last aircraft returned, the clouds began to build — perfect timing for our pilots to make their way home ahead of the blossoming cumulus. Each child was called forward to receive their certificate, along with a small wooden set of wings. If the flights themselves weren't reward enough, the pride on their faces certainly was.

It is quite another to realise that, in doing so, you may have quietly shaped the trajectory of a future career — and perhaps even the future of aviation itself.

If we are to secure the future of aviation in South Africa, the focus must remain on creating meaningful access and sustained interest among the youth.



Hangar E10 door

Days like these are where that journey begins - not measured purely in how many take to the skies, but in how many leave with a spark that refuses to fade.



Ian & Theo with their RV 10 and pax

Having been involved in similar initiatives before, I have no doubt that something meaningful was sparked in at least a few of those young minds. It is one thing to offer a child the opportunity to experience flight.



Mission 2.5 starts with you. One mission. One milestone. Countless futures in flight.



Pilot Grant Raubenheimer & YE's Rueben, Esias Kyla



Martin Steer (Excellentia Aviation) & YE Blessed



Eldoreign receives her certificate



Pilot JJ le Grange & YE's Andre, AJ and Hendre



Pilot Dave Lister shows off his LongEze



Pilot Ali Mohammed & YE Sydney



Proud YE graduates show off their certificates



Grant Raubenheimer, Geoff Sprenger & Stuart McDermid



Excited Young Eagle awaiting their flights±



Pilot Francois Tolmay and YE Ruan



A beautiful summer morning @ Jack's!



Ground Crew Ricardo and TC



Pilot Darryl Beira with YE Nthabeleng



CHAPTER 973 Merchandise



NEW!



Show your colours! EAA Chapter 973's **Merch Shop** offers a range of bright golf shirts, caps, hats and *now!* – a range of warm hoodies in different colours for those crisp upcoming winter mornings. Cash or cards accepted, come and visit us @ **Jack's**, we're open every Saturday morning for coffee, camaraderie and perhaps a breakfast at 26 South!



JOIN OUR CHAPTER!



Become part of our dynamic EAA Chapter! Chapter 973, based at one of Gauteng's best run and most friendly GA airfields, Jack Taylor, Krugersdorp, is open for membership. Our homebase, overlooking the runway, offers a warm and friendly place to hang out with fellow aviators and aviation enthusiasts.

JOIN HERE

MISSION 2.5

The Next Generation Is Ready to Fly – Are You?

Each year, 20 percent of our Young Eagles volunteer pilots retire. To keep this incredible program soaring, we need new pilots to step up and share the magic of flight. There will always be kids waiting for their first flight; all that's missing is you.

Join the greatest volunteer force in aviation and help inspire the next generation of aviators. EAA makes it easy to get started.

EAA.org/YEPilots

(Sport pilots and private pilots can fly!)

Fly 25 Young Eagles This Year and Make Your Mark on Mission 2.5

Pilots who fly 25 Young Eagles from October 1 to August 1, 2026, earn a limited-edition cap, courtesy of Sporty's.

Every flight changes a life, and together we can give 2.5 million kids the chance of a lifetime.



JIMMY GRAHAM
EAA YOUNG EAGLES CHAIRMAN



To learn more and be part of Mission 2.5, go to

EAA.org/Fly25YE



Chapter 973 Young Eagles Days 2026

- 13 June FAKR (International Young Eagles Day)

Pilots, planes, marshals and admin crew needed!