

Young Valley aviator gets spirits lifted

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A group of aviation enthusiasts around the province are helping the region's youngest aviator from Waterville to mend his broken wings and fly again, after his airplane got badly damaged in a windstorm last October.

"We're super keen to support him. I think what he's doing is just extraordinary for a young person," said Jeremy Dann, a member of the Kings Aviators. "We have to do what we can to keep young aviators going. There's not as many as there used to be, so we all just really want to support him any way we can," said Dann, who used to be a flight instructor at the Waterville airport before it closed.

Dann and some other local hobby aviators started a crowd-funding campaign called Jordan's Broken Wings (gofundme.com/jordans-broken-wings) to assist Jordan Reimer, 18, fund the necessary repairs to his beloved second-hand 2009 Challenger II C-IIOE advanced ultralight plane. In the campaign's first month, \$4,000 of a \$5,500 goal was raised.

The two-seater aircraft was parked in the field beside his father's farm until fierce winds dragged it upside down, with the concrete blocks that anchored it to the ground still attached. Reimer had only purchased the plane last spring as a fixer-upper and flew it all last summer, but it



Shown here is Jordan Reimer in his Challenger II C-IIOE advanced ultralight plane in late summer 2018.

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wasn't insured for the extensive damage it incurred.

"It was the worst time of my life," Reimer told the Valley Harvester. "I'd always tell my buddies life couldn't be better because I have a plane right next door." Reimer said he really appreciates the support of the local aviation community, both with funding and the know-how they're passing on. "They're a great group of people. Even though they're older than me, it doesn't matter.

They've given me a big boost," he said. Because his plane is a common model, it makes it easier to source parts locally, too.

Reimer is doing the repairs in the family farm's heated shop because he doesn't have a hangar. He said he'll know by the end of March whether he'll be able to fly again this year, maybe as early as May.

"So far, so good," said Reimer. "I got the wing that was the most badly damaged and built a new

one; that's ready for fabric. I've done some repairs to the fuselage," he said. "I'll have to do a thorough inspection when I'm done. There are so many little parts." Recovering and painting the plane are the biggest expenses, he said.

Reimer developed his interest in flying when he used to ride his bike to the former Waterville airport. He struck up friendships with the pilots, who would let him ride once in a while, and he star-

ted building model planes. Reimer started the process of getting his pilot's licence when he was 15 years old, but a technicality of an hour's flying time prevented him from finally getting it for two more years at the age of 17.

Although he's taken steps to become a pilot, being a commercial jet pilot isn't his career path as it is with other young aviators, said Reimer. "It looks interesting, but I still like the little ones better. Flying for me is a fun thing. In those big jets, you're just typing into computers and only hand-flying a little bit here and there," he said.

His parents own Reimer Gardens, farming raspberries, blueberries and strawberries with commercial and pick-your-own crops, as well as potted rose plants. "I plan on carrying on with that. Airplanes, I think, will always be my winter job," he said. "I'm not a big fan of the lifestyle of a commercial pilot, always going somewhere."

Reimer said he feels a change in himself when he climbs into the plane and latches the door.

"I always tell people they don't know me until you've flown with me," he said. "When that door shuts, nothing else matters. In general, it's great in life to have that time where you shut your door and nothing matters but what you're doing right now," he said. "I love the freedom when I pull back on the stick and fly off."

(Regina King)

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