

Reaching new heights with Blue Skies

Young people from Lincoln have been literally reaching for the skies as part of the Jon Egging Trust's Blue Skies Programme. The Trust use the inspiring work of the RAF to help kids from across Lincolnshire and beyond work towards their ambitions.



The Jon Egging Trust was set up in memory of Red Arrows pilot Jon Egging who tragically lost his life during a display in 2011. The charity realises Jon's dream of helping young people to overcome adversity and identify their strengths – and they have enjoyed huge success. Within the next two years, the Trust will be operating in nine different counties across the UK, and by 2020 aims to be offering life-changing opportunities to thousands of young people every year.

The programmes are designed to build confidence, teamwork, trust, communication and self-belief, showing young people that with the right motivation, they can take control of their future. This was illustrated recently as students from Priory Witham Academy in Lincoln visited the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at RAF Coningsby.

The students met Spitfire pilots from the Flight and found out what it's like to fly these iconic aircraft. They were given the chance to get up close to Spitfires, a

Hurricane, Dakota and the Lancaster during a hangar tour, and learned about the roles the aircraft played in World War II.

This visit was one of the first for a new intake of students. As Jon's wife Emma Egging, who plays a major role in the programme, tells us, "The first group of students joined us at Level 1 in 2012. In 2013 they moved onto a second level which is all about leadership, and this year they're going on to do a work placement, which is at Humberside Airport. Each year we're taking on a new intake at Level 1 so we'll get to the point where we have three levels running in every region, as we do now in Lincolnshire.

"The Level 1 intake visited the Memorial Flight about five sessions into their programme, and it's all about skills building. They're particularly focusing on communication and historic teamwork, so it's ideal because they were able to access all the famous aeroplanes and hear

the stories of how they were used to save lives and protect the country. They found out about the different roles played by the members of the team and took part in a role-playing scenario involving a real life situation that happened when a plane was shot down. They also hear about the current team and their own personal stories about why they decided to fly.

"The programme is about providing young people with real life examples of teamwork and giving them opportunities to build their skills. We're delighted to have the BBMF team involved to illustrate exactly how the pilots involved dealt with high pressure situations, and we can learn from that. How can kids who are thirteen and maybe not reaching their full potential at school benefit from these real life examples? That's what the programme's all about – making links between the past and the present."

Lincolnshire Today has seen first-hand the exceptional work that goes on as part of the programme and we've been



hugely impressed. It's not just RAF Coningsby that's playing a major role, either. Inspirational individuals from RAF Cranwell, RAF Scampton, RAF Wittering, MoD North Luffenham and RAF Waddington have all been involved in guiding students through problem solving, teamwork and communication tasks which will provide them with credits towards a qualification in BTEC Workskills – and hopefully a rewarding career in later life.

The Jon Egging Trust has certainly ensured the legacy of Jon lives on. The Trust receives no government funding, however, and currently relies on donations from the public. Each Blue Skies programme costs approximately £4500 to run, and a donation of £30 would cover the costs of one young person's day on the programme. For more information, visit www.joneggingtrust.org.uk.



Photos by Stuart Wilde Photography