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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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From Classroom to Cockpit: Master's Academy Students Explore Aviation Careers at Piper Aircraft

Week-long externship provides immersive training, industry mentorship, and behind-the-scenes exposure to aircraft manufacturing and operations.

VERO BEACH, FL - Two **Master's Academy** students recently completed a week-long externship at **Piper Aircraft**, gaining valuable hands-on experience and firsthand exposure to the aviation industry through the company's annual **Externship Program**.

Rising seniors **Alex Gerwien** and **Zachary Porchia** spent the first week of June immersed in the world of aviation manufacturing, engineering, flight operations, quality assurance, safety, and workforce development at Piper Aircraft's Vero Beach headquarters. The experience provided a unique opportunity for the students to explore aviation careers while learning from industry professionals.

Throughout the program, Gerwien and Porchia were guided by **Harry Brubaker, Piper Aircraft's Senior Production Trainer**, and received instruction in the fundamentals of aircraft sheet metal assembly. Their training included bucking and riveting techniques—core skills used in aircraft construction—as well as lessons in safety awareness, personal protective equipment (PPE), tool control, precision workmanship, and teamwork.

Working with training materials in a controlled environment under direct supervision, the students gained an appreciation for the craftsmanship and attention to detail required throughout the aircraft manufacturing process. The experience also connected classroom learning to real-world applications in engineering, physics, design, and technology.

In addition to manufacturing instruction, the students participated in hands-on learning activities including model aircraft projects, flight simulator sessions, facility tours, and discussions with team members representing numerous Piper departments.

A highlight of the week included time spent with a Piper M700 aircraft, helping the students connect the manufacturing skills they were learning with a completed aircraft ready for service.

"This externship broadened my understanding of aviation far beyond the cockpit," said **Zachary Porchia**. "I gained valuable knowledge in areas including avionics, engineering, final assembly, flight operations, and management. More importantly, I learned how critical communication, attention to detail, and teamwork are to building aircraft safely and successfully. Growing up around aviation, I always thought my future was limited

to becoming a pilot. This experience showed me the incredible variety of careers available within the industry and opened my eyes to opportunities I had never previously considered."

For **Alex Gerwien**, the opportunity provided a deeper appreciation for the complexity and innovation behind modern aircraft. "My favorite parts of the externship included avionics, the paint shop, the flight simulator, riveting, and visiting the flight line," said Gerwien. "Seeing how aircraft systems are tested and how every stage of production comes together gave me a new perspective on aviation. From the initial metal structures to the final finished aircraft, I realized just how much expertise, coordination, and technology are involved. The entire experience was incredibly enriching and strengthened my interest in the aviation field."

Master's Academy Head of School, **Dr. Rick Brewer**, expressed gratitude for Piper's ongoing investment in local students and workforce development. "We are deeply grateful to Piper Aircraft for once again opening its doors to our students and providing an exceptional educational experience," said Brewer. "Partnerships like this allow students to see firsthand how classroom learning translates into meaningful careers while exposing them to the innovation, professionalism, and craftsmanship that make Piper a global leader in aviation. Piper's continued commitment to enriching our community and investing in the next generation of talent is truly appreciated."

The externship program reflects Piper Aircraft's dedication to developing future aviation professionals while providing local students with valuable career exploration opportunities. Throughout the week, Gerwien and Porchia represented themselves, their families, and Master's Academy with professionalism and enthusiasm while gaining insights that will benefit them as they continue their academic and career journeys.

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ABOUT MASTER'S ACADEMY of VERO BEACH

Master's Academy is a fully ACSI-accredited private school serving Pre-K through Grade 12 students in the Treasure Coast region of Florida. Since 1998, the school has been committed to spiritually developing and academically challenging students to impact their world for Christ. With a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum and a dedicated, caring faculty, Master's Academy provides a Christ-centered education that equips students for success in college and beyond.
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