

OLD MEETS NEW IN THE AIR



MARK LEFFINGWELL / Daily Camera

Cody Sutherland taxis one of eight planes Journeys Aviation acquired when the company purchased Air West Flying Club.

Flight schools join forces

Journeys, Air West Flying Club unite at Jeffco airport

By Greg Avery

Camera Business Writer

The oldest and newest airplane flight schools at the Jefferson County Airport consolidated last week, sharpening competition at the airport at a time when the industry is rebounding.

Journeys Aviation, a 3-year-old flight school, bought the Air West Flying Club at the airfield outside Broomfield, trimming the number of airplane flight schools at the airport to three.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The cash purchase boosts Journeys from 16 planes to 24 — the largest number among schools at the airport — gives it a flight simulator and raises



MARTY CAIVANO / Camera file photo

Ray Bly pilots a Journeys Aviation plane over the southern area of the Indian Peaks Wilderness, with Arapahoe Peak in the background, west of Boulder in August.

its number of pilot-trainers to 34. Bringing on Air West roughly doubled the number of students for Journeys Aviation.

"This acquisition will give us

a big shot in the arm," said Cody Sutherland, a former telecommunication industry executive who launched Journeys in mid-2002.

It also allows Journeys to move its offices across the tarmac to the 3,400-square-foot, more-visible space that had long been Air West's.

Jean Fonden founded Air West at Centennial Airport in the south end of the Denver metropolitan area in 1977. She bought out another flight school at Jefferson County Airport and opened a second branch there in 1983.

She sold the Centennial branch two years ago.

The flight school business historically was steady, but things had been flat since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the bankruptcies that rippled through the airline industry, she said.

"Now the airlines are hiring again, so we're seeing interest again," she said.

Sutherland's background in business will help Journeys be

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a success, Fonden predicted.

Consolidating Journeys and Air West into one operation

makes it rival the other two Jefferson County Airport airplane flight schools, McAir Aviation and Western Air Academy.

"Having competitive flight

schools is healthy for the airport," said Kenny Maenpa, airport manager.

The airfield logs 180,000 landing and takeoffs annually, making it the fourth-busiest air-

port in the state and among the 60 busiest nationally, he said.

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