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James Rouiller’s goal is to make Pottstown Municipal Airport a regional transportation hub, complete with air shuttle service and restaurant — serving as a valuable cornerstone and contributor to the economic growth of the Borough of Pottstown and the region as a whole.

Rouiller has always had his “eye on the sky,” so-to-speak. He jokes that he grew up smelling jet fuel and never left. As a six-year-old living on a U.S. Air Force Base in Nebraska where his dad served as a forecasting meteorologist, his destiny was set when a 2nd Lieutenant placed him into the seat of his F-15 Fighter Jet and put the helmet on. “It’s something that has affected me to this day,” Rouiller recalls. “That was the coolest experience of my life and (I knew) that’s what I wanted to do. Somebody took the time to spend a couple of minutes with me and that’s where I kind of stayed forever.”

Rouiller went to school, earned good grades, saved up his money, went flying, and got his pilot’s license before he was old enough to drive a car. His mother was still dropping him off at the airport because he had a learner’s permit (to drive) but he had a pilot’s license to fly an airplane. He went to college and received an engineering degree, graduating at a time when there were no jobs in the aviation world because fuel prices were high while the economy was low.



PHOTOS BY STYLISH IMAGES

FLIGHT TRAINING



Fly Elite prides itself on a proven record of success in training, but most importantly a consistent track record of safety.

Undaunted, Rouiller pumped gas in an airport, washed and worked on airplanes, and as the economy improved so did his opportunities for learning and advancement. “I started flying airplanes from here to there, repossessing airplanes, moving airplanes, the whole gamut. I never wanted to limit myself to one course in aviation,” Rouiller explains. “I always wanted to do all these things. There’s nothing better than taking off and going flying on a beautiful day with a beautiful view. You are up there the same place the birds are flying. There are no problems — Just quiet and serenity, and you come back and you are relaxed,” he said.

In 2013, Rouiller formed his own aviation company, Fly Elite, which as evolved into a one-stop-shop for everything aviation — from flight training and maintenance, to FBO (Fixed Base Operator) services aircraft rentals, and pilot supplies. The company began as a flight school under the name of Limerick Flight Center at Pottstown Heritage Field in Limerick PA. Along with its sister company, Fare Share LTD, they offered flight instruction, aircraft charter services, and pilot services in a variety of airplanes.

In September, 2014, Rouiller and Fly Elite took another leap forward, opening a full-service FBO at Pottstown Municipal Airport (N47), located at 1149 Glasgow Street, Pottstown PA, merging Limerick Flight Center into a full-service aviation business. The previous operator at Pottstown, TNT Air, had moved on and, as a publicly owned airport, the contract was put out to bid by the borough.

“It was a unique opportunity, something I had never tried before,” Rouiller said. “I have a lot of experience and background in running an airport. I was the airport manager at Wings Field for a number of years (Blue Bell, PA).

(Continued on page 8)



MAINTENANCE





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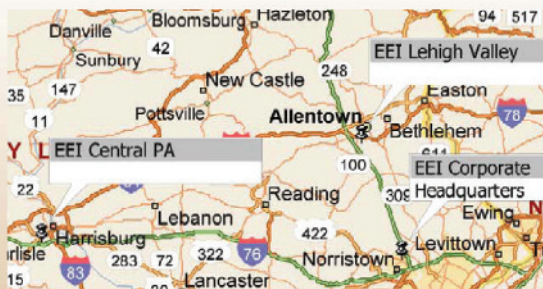
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COVER STORY

(Continued from page 7)

I decided to leave there for the opportunity to start flying professionally, and then this opportunity came along. So, I put a bid together, put all the numbers together, and after a little bit of back and forth with the borough council, I was awarded the contract to run the FBO (Fixed Base Operator), flight school, and maintenance at Pottstown Municipal Airport," he said.

Now operating out of two locations, Fly Elite owns a full-service aircraft maintenance facility, offering flight instruction to all levels of flying, aircraft rentals, FBO services such as aircraft refueling and detailing, and more. Owner James Rouiller, alongside his loving, supportive wife Amanda Rouiller and staff members Zack Trego, Alan Wilson and Andrew Giacobia, have combined experience of over 35 years in aviation.

Fly Elite operates 10 aircraft as part of the flight training department, allowing for all levels of training, from basic to advanced. Private Pilot training is the first step for all aspiring aviators to start with. The training includes the FAA mandated 40 total flight hours, encompassing training areas such as fundamentals of flight, navigation, emergency procedures, and preparation for the FAA practical flight test.

The instructors at Fly Elite have a combined 75+ years of flight training experience. Fly Elite prides itself on a proven record of success in training, but most importantly a consistent track record of safety. They also offer advanced license and rating training to help any pilot further his or her piloting experience, as well as Instrument training, Commercial Pilot training, Flight Instructor training, and High Performance and High-Altitude training in their state-of-the-art Cirrus aircraft. Fly Elite currently offers instruction in Cessna, Piper, Beechcraft, Cirrus, and Diamond aircraft.

Fly Elite also has a full-service maintenance shop available to meet all of your aviation needs. They offer a wide variety of services from annual inspections and oil changes to pre-buy inspections as well as major repairs. Their mechanics have over 30 years' experience dealing with Cirrus, Cessna, Piper and Beechcraft aircraft, allowing them to meet all of your needs.

Fly Elite is proud to be a key player in the economic stimulus in the Pottstown area and beyond, and to help lay the groundwork for economic growth and the creation of more jobs to help provide the boost that the area needs to emerge as a valuable player in the business community.

Rouiller is currently working with the borough to develop plans to renovate and expand the existing Pottstown Municipal Airport with a larger runway and offer air shuttle service. Funding for lengthening the runway at Pottstown Municipal Airport and the eventual airport expansion will depend on a combination of local and non-local sources, including the Federal Bureau of Aviation and other federal programs, PennDOT, and some private investment.

"It's really expensive to build these runways," Rouiller explains. "It's a more costly project than a small borough like Pottstown could undertake themselves. With the help of these other agencies, we can get that done, and then start really expanding into the future," he opines optimistically. "We're working with borough to basically revamp the entire airport and modernize everything — add more hangars, a better terminal, and include a restaurant at some point," he said, pointing out that, "Federal funds don't pay for things like restaurants and terminal buildings. That's something that we'd have to privately source funding for. Within the short term, that's something

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that we'll sit down with the borough to work through, but it's probably going to be privately funded. I foresee it as something like an Italian BYOB restaurant where you can sit on the roof and have a glass of wine and watch the airplanes take off. I think that would be kind of cool for Pottstown," he said.

Rouiller said it is Fly Elite's goal to bring daily commuter air service from Pottstown to Philadelphia International Airport back again, "Where you would check in for your American Airlines flight here in Pottstown," he said. "You'd park your car here, load your luggage on an airplane, and ten minutes later at Philadelphia International Airport, you've already cleared security, your bags are already checked through for you, and you just go right to your gate and you're done," he said.

Overall, Rouiller is encouraged by the recent spate of investment and growth in Pottstown. "The more business that come in, the more opportunity there is, and the more opportunity it creates for us," he

said, adding, "I think I found my home. I really do. Between the airplane charter and the flight school, the maintenance shop, we've had a lot of growth. I see this as the place that I want to continue to see grow. I really want to feel like, when I leave here and retire that I've put something better here than what was here before. We've done it in the right way. We're going to do our part to make the airport look attractive to these business to come in, and Pottstown Borough is doing everything they can to bring those businesses in also, and I think we're starting to move in a good direction."

Every year, Fly Elite hosts an Open House at the airport to provide a step into aviation for everyone, and has proven to be a huge community event, typically bringing in 250-500 people. "We hope to make Pottstown Muni a destination airport with great customer service as well as a flight school that everyone can afford," Rouiller said. "Aviation is an industry that needs to work with the community and help kids realize they too can fly!"

Fly Elite is located at 1149 Glasgow Street, Pottstown, PA 19464. For additional information about flight training or services, please call 610.495.6366 ext. 1, and visit www.fly-elite.com.



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