

Aaron Foelske, Channahon, IL - Great Lakes Region

Hello, my name is Aaron J Foelske and I am a commercial pilot from Channahon, IL and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and tell you why I am running for the At-Large Position for the BFA HACD Board.

Ballooning has been a large part of my life since early childhood. Over my lifetime, I have been a spectator, volunteer, crew member, pilot and race official. I grew up in Indianola, IA just a couple blocks away from Simpson College. This was the longtime site of the Hot Air National Balloon Championships every summer during my childhood. I avidly followed the competition every year and tracked my favorite pilots throughout the week.

After 1988, the National Championships moved away, but Indianola continued its longstanding tradition and created the National Balloon Classic. At this point, I started to volunteer and helped crew for various pilots that would come to fly compete, and most of all, have fun. Even after I moved to Illinois, I would return every summer to crew during the event. This continued until I finally made the next step and purchased my first Hot Air Balloon in 2001 and became a pilot.

As a pilot, I have enjoyed flying and competing at various events throughout the Midwest. I enjoy the challenge of competitive flying, but I also found that I enjoyed the social aspect that Hot Air Ballooning provides. Most of my closest friends are sponsors, crew members, and fellow pilots that I have met at various events. Additionally, I was able to use my love for weather to help plan for my flights as well as fellow pilots at different events.

Within a couple of years of flying, I was asked by Bill Clemons to be his Weather Officer at an event in Waterloo, IA. I was honored to be asked and accepted the offer. This began a new chapter in my hot air ballooning life. Since then, I have been a weather officer at various events for the past 10 years in Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin where I have tried to provide the best information to the Race Director and the Competitors. For the past 5 years, I have had the honor of being the Weather Officer of the National Balloon Classic in Indianola. Each day starts by 2:30am, to compile a forecast and provide the best information to the Race Director and race officials. The information is used to help plan a safe flight and fair competition for the 75 to 100 pilots during the 9-day event.

I wanted to run for the HACD so I can give something back to the sport that I love. I want to help promote Hot Air Ballooning to new individuals, spectators, volunteers, and future pilots. I want to promote fair competitions that will foster comradery between race officials, pilots and crew and make sure Safety is held to the highest standards at every event. Finally, I want to make sure everybody has fun.

Thank you.

Aaron J Foelske