



View From The Couch

# Take flight from near or far with the New England Air Museum

The Museum has three aircraft that cannot be seen anywhere else in the world including a Sikorsky VS-44 Excambian Flying Boat, a Burnelli CBY-3 Loadmaster, and a Goodyear ZNPK-28 Blimp Control Car.

BY LAURIE HANSON

**T**he romantic fascination of flight is preserved for future generations in person and online at the New England Air Museum (NEAM).

"I am not a pilot, but I am fascinated with all things that fly," said Director of Advancement and External Affairs Ron Katz, who works at the NAEM and has a background in

## THE SIKORSKY VS-44 Excambian Flying Boat.

supporting nonprofit organizations that provide STEM related education.

First opening in 1960, the museum and a large part of its collection were subsequently damaged by a tornado in 1979, but they rebuilt on a different location near the airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut.

Since June, the NEAM has been open but social distancing with its wide, open spaces allowing visitors to spread out over the 90,000 square feet of its extra-large hangars and five acres of open land. Their collection includes 115 aircraft, dozens of engines and artifacts with thousands of other items including news articles, photographs and more, all of which is viewable online.



a Sikorsky VS-44 Excambian Flying Boat, a Burnelli CBY-3 Loadmaster, and a Goodyear ZNPK-28 Blimp Control Car."



"We have three one-of-a-kind aircraft that cannot be seen anywhere else in the world," Katz said. "These include

THE NEAM collection boasts the oldest remaining aircraft built in Connecticut, a 1912 Curtiss Pusher Replica.

The NEAM collection ranges from the oldest remaining aircraft built in Connecticut, a 1912 Curtiss Pusher Replica, up to Air Force jets such as the F14 and modern helicopters like the Kaman SeaSprite, and the even more modern Sabreliner private business jet.

"We also have an engine built by the Wright Brothers that still runs!" Katz said.

Up until the pandemic, the museum's educational programs were all onsite and included tours of their gigantic exhibit hangars. Now the museum offers online educational programs that give virtual tours, has a professionally produced video, and with one of their museum educators they can field questions from students live in real time.

"Teachers receive information and activities that they can use in their classrooms, and we connect directly with the students to provide an educational program on the science and history of flight as well as [give] a virtual tour," Katz explained. "We also

offer our flagship educational program SOAR for STEM as a virtual program [online] now as well."

More recently, the museum created a page on their website called NEAMathome which offers informative content and activities that allow the public to safely connect with them during COVID-19. They can visit the entire aircraft collection online, access online photos and information. This has been extremely popular among aviation buffs of all ages.

"There are many [popular planes here], depending on whether someone is more interested in civil aviation or military," Katz said. "The Sikorsky VS-44 Excambian is very popular, as is the F-14 Tomcat which was made famous by Tom Cruise in Top Gun."

All the planes in their collection were donated to them through several private and military sources. Restoration of the planes are painstakingly undertaken by a crew of more than 100 volunteers who work onsite at the museum.

"We have aircraft that were nearly destroyed and needed complete restoration that lasted 10 to 20 years, and others that simply require limited work to make them exhibit-ready," he explained.

With plans for greater future expansions and new additions, the museum is now showing two new exhibits, the New England Women in



THE JAXS HACK restored B-29 Superfortress at the NEAM.

Aviation, and the Kosciuszko Squadron. An exhibit underway will tell the story of the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II. They also installed a full motion Redbird Flight Simulator, a new augmented reality in their Kaman exhibit, and have a new app available on the Apple Store or in Google Play that offers remote activities people can do from home. More remote activities are in planning for the future.

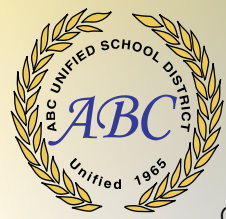
For more information about the New England Air Museum, please visit [www.neam.org](http://www.neam.org). To donate, please visit online or call Director of Advancement and External Affairs Ron Katz at 860-623-3305, ext. 317.

THE FULLY RESTORED pilot console of the Burnelli CBY-3 Loadmaster.



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