

By Allison McKay

“Dream Big”

Benedikt Grasl, a 2017 HFI scholarship recipient, grew up fascinated by aircraft and always wanted to be a pilot. Grasl was born and raised in Bad Vöslau, a small town in Austria.

He started in an aviation degree program at the University of Applied Sciences FH Joanneum in October 2009. From the beginning, he was immersed in an aviation environment and surrounded by people who shared the same passion. This access to mentors and like-minded students convinced him that he was on the right path.

Grasl completed the aviation degree program with a specialization in aeronautical engineering and graduated in 2014 with a master of science degree. After graduation, he started working as an aircraft systems engineer for Grob Aircraft in Germany and was involved in the development and certification process for a two-seat turboprop training airplane.

Although he liked his job, Grasl decided to take the next step toward his dream of becoming a pilot. In 2016, he moved to Hillsboro, Oregon, to start flight training at Hillsboro Aero Academy.

Grasl is a 2017 recipient of the HFI Commercial Helicopter Pilot Rating Scholarship. Flying is unfortunately expensive, and he could only afford the training by taking out a personal loan. “The scholarship is a great opportunity to take away some of the financial burden,” Grasl says. He currently holds a private and instrument rotorcraft rating and is working on his commercial pilot rating.



PHOTO COURTESY BENEDIKT GRASL

Benedikt Grasl, HFI scholarship recipient

Grasl plans to apply for a flight instructor job at Hillsboro as soon as he has his commercial flight instructor license. In the future, he would like to fly in the helicopter air ambulance sector, but “I still have a long way to go before then.”

His advice to those looking to get into the industry? “Never stop dreaming big.”

“When I was little, I could have only dreamt of what I do right now, and somehow I managed to get to this point,” says Grasl. “You have to put a lot of work and effort into the training, but on the other hand you will get very rewarding moments.” 

Allison McKay is vice president of Helicopter Foundation International.





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