

Student creates Web site to find cheapest fares



Jay Pickthorn / The Forum

Mark Becker, a senior at Fergus Fall High School, has created a Web site called airfareidg.com. He is also working on earning his pilot's license and may pursue a degree in aviation from the University of North Dakota next year.

It's just the ticket

By Tracy Frank
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In his spare time — when he wasn't doing homework, participating in track or playing in the orchestra — Mark Becker created a Web site that tracks airfare deals.

Traveling, especially by air, is the Fergus Falls High School senior's passion. He has traveled more in his 18 years than many people do in a lifetime.

In one year, Becker's been to Guatemala, Hawaii, France, Chicago and Los Angeles. He

Online

► www.airfareidg.com

travels for school trips, church mission trips, family vacations, business trips with his mom and to run marathons with his dad.

"I like seeing different things from what we live in," Becker said. "Being able to fly from snow-covered ground in Minnesota to France where there's totally different people, they talk different, just the culture in general."

It's that passion for seeing

new places and learning about different cultures that led Becker to create airfareidg.com. He would dream about places he would like to visit, and then scour the Internet for the cheapest fares.

"The goal of airfareidg.com is to help consumers find good deals on fares," Becker said. "I look for the fare sales that airlines are offering that usually aren't well-known."

Becker said he goes to airline Web sites to look for sales that won't show up on search engines like Expedia and

Travelocity. He posts a full description of the sale on his site and where consumers can book it.

Since he was in junior high, friends and family members have been asking him to find them cheap flights.

"The prices that he finds us, you can't really beat them," said Doug Becker, Mark's dad.

"He'll just zip through things and he'll come back to me 15, 20 minutes later," said Barb Becker, Mark's mom. "He's found some good deals."

SITE: Page C3

SITE: Business, aviation entice teenager

From Page C1

Tiffany Thanel of Fergus Falls recently searched for a plane ticket to France but couldn't find anything in her price range.

"He found one for \$100 cheaper than we were finding and we'd been looking for three weeks," Thanel said.

Becker created his Web site in fall 2004, when he was 15 years old. He was too young to take a Web design class in school or through community education, so he figured it out on his own.

The site suffered a brief lull in 2005 when he ran into problems with his server and he became too busy with schoolwork to keep it up. In summer 2006, he started adding new features and researching servers that could handle more traffic.

"It's been an interesting few years just seeing what he's come up with," Barb Becker said.

Becker now spends about an hour or so a day probing travel search engines and airline Web pages.

"Every chance I get, I'm tweaking it a little bit, fixing it up and doing my best to promote it," Becker said.

"It's pretty in-depth," said Doug Becker. "It kind of baffles me because I'm not very good on computers."

As he prepares for the University of North Dakota, Becker finds himself divided between a career in business or aviation.

Besides maintaining his Web site, running

marathons, playing the viola and being a member of the National Honor Society, Becker is also earning a pilot's license.

The Web site isn't bringing in much income, but Becker is looking for ways to increase that. If he can continue to boost the number of people who use his site, he will keep it up while he's in college.

"I think eventually it will be successful and it will generate money, but like any business it's in the early stages," Becker said.

Whether he pursues a profession in aviation or business, one thing is certain. Becker wants a career that will include a lot of traveling.

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