

## R A C E

# Airport to host AirVenture Cup Race

BY TESA GLASS

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The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport has been chosen as the starting point for the 2013 EAA AirVenture Cup Race.

"This is wonderful," Airport Manager Chris Collins said. "This is wonderful news for the airport and for the community too."

The race is one of the world's fastest cross country air races. According to information from EAA AirVenture, the race was founded in

1997, and has grown to be one of the most successful racing events in aviation.

"The starting point is the exciting part," Collins said. "That's where all the race planes are gathered at one time, where you can see everything and compare them side-by-side. ... It's very prestigious for the airport."

The race will start on July 28 from Mt. Vernon, but pilots and planes and aviation enthusiasts will arrive at the airport on Saturday, July 27.

"We will get them in the

community for a couple of days," Collins said. "They will be spending Friday and Saturday night in Mt. Vernon, which will help tourism, hotels, restaurants and shopping."

The race is open to experimental aircraft and pilots with at least a private pilot certificate or pilots flying light sport aircraft. The first race is 1998, started at Kitty Hawk, N.C., and many of the first aircraft in the race participate in the race each year.

The race starting point

alternates between a chosen airport in the midwest and Mitchell, S.D. Last year, there were more than 50 aircraft participating in the timed race. Collins said organizers are expecting 60 or more aircraft to be entered this year.

"From what I'm told, this is a little shorter course, so that should encourage more people to participate in the race," Collins said.

The AirVenture Cup Race is a timed race.

"They will have a timer at the end of the runway,

recording the time of takeoff for every aircraft on Sunday," Collins said. "Saturday will be an open house day, where the public can come, meet the racers, see the aircraft. The organizers want to do Young Eagle rides, and have static displays. It should be much like the EAA Little Egypt Fly-In, with roped off areas for Young Eagles. Instead of warbirds, which we have at the Fly-In, people will see the innovation and

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# EAA

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Egypt Fly-In, with roped off areas for Young Eagles. Instead of warbirds, which we have at the Fly-In, people will see the innovation and race planes, the categories and classes they have.”

Racers’ time of take-off will be recorded and will be recorded again at two turn points in the competition.

To finish the race, each aircraft will fly over PCZ at Waupaca, Wis. Municipal Airport, about 30 miles northwest of Oshkosh, Wis., in time for the EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, Wis.

AirVenture, in Oshkosh, Wis., has been dubbed “The World’s Greatest Aviation Celebration” and is the Experimental Aircraft Association’s yearly membership convention.

Each year more than 500,000 aviation enthusiasts from more than 60 countries attend AirVenture which has more than 10,000 aircraft flying in and landing at what becomes the busiest airport in the world.

The convention features daily air shows, aerobatics, pyrotechnics, a concert, forums, workshops, demonstrations and children’s events.

“We encourage everyone to come out Saturday and see the planes and pilots, but also to come out Sunday morning for the start of the race,” Collins said.

Collins said Mt. Vernon Outland

Airport was chosen as a result of contacts made through the LSA Expo.

“Having two runways, a huge ramp and logistics with the hotels and the Shell service we provide, that all stacked up together and made us hard to beat.”

This year was the first time airport officials made a try to get the race starting point.

“We want to impress them and get this opportunity again in 2015,” Collins said. “So, we need volunteers.”

Collins said volunteers won’t be called on for helping on the runway to land planes, but as “ambassadors for Mt. Vernon and Southern Illinois.”

“We need people who can work with the racers and other pilots, give directions, make sure they have everything they need while they are here,” Collins said.

“We want to make sure they get all the information they need about the community, hotels, restaurants and invite them to come back. That’s something that sets us apart from other airports and areas. ... I hear it all the time when I’m at events. The pilots remember us as the place where people check on them and make them feel welcome. That goes a long way. It doesn’t happen anywhere else.”

Collins said organizational meetings are

in the works to identify roles and needs for the event to utilize the volunteers. “Much like at the

LSA Expo, we will need people helping in the buildings, terminal and static areas,” Collins said.