

AirVenture Cup race to begin in Mt. Vernon

*Nationally recognized event
to begin with activities at
Mt. Vernon Outland
Airport before 500 nautical
mile race to Oshkosh, Wis.*

BY REANNE PALMER
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MT. VERNON — Hundreds, maybe even thousands, of spectators, racers and supporters of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) will be flocking to the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport this summer for the annual AirVenture Oshkosh fly-in, which is scheduled to begin in Mt. Vernon and finish about 30 miles northwest of Oshkosh, Wis. at Waupaca Municipal Airport — some 500 nautical miles away.

Airport Manager Chris Collins said that the racers and crews will arrive at the airport on July 26. On July 27, an open house of the airport with a meet-and-greet aspect for the public to meet the racers will be held, followed by a banquet. The racers and aircrafts will then take off around 8 a.m. or 9 a.m. July 28.

“Friday will just be the arrival day. People can still come out and see everything; all of the aircrafts and racers coming in. On Saturday, we will have an open house — meet the racers — see the planes deal. The EAA will also want to do some Young Eagle rides then too. We’re still hammering out all of these details,” said Collins. “It will



Chris Collins

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be nice to have some people here though to greet everyone. My guess is that takeoff times will be about 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock Sunday morning.”

In addition to the new starting point, the race will also feature several new aircraft classes to draw in more aviators to participate, including production-built aircrafts, vintage airplanes and warbirds.

MT. VERNON FIRST-YEAR INVOLVEMENT

Collins said that the Mt. Vernon airport was approached by officials with the AirVenture Cup race to see if they were interested in hosting the event's starting point.

“They came to us at first because the airport manager in Waupaca, [Wis.] was here at the first LSA [Light Sport Aircraft] Expo, and when the race officials started thinking about changing the southeastern course, he volunteered us for the starting point. He contacted me in November about it and I said we are definitely interested. We've been working on this off and on for a while now,” said Collins.

He further explained that every year, the starting point for the AirVenture Cup race alternated between Mitchell, S.D. and Dayton, Ohio; however, due to weather issues in Ohio, the race officials decided to look elsewhere. Upon further investigation, Collins said that the distance in nautical miles from Mt. Vernon to Oshkosh, Wis. is about the same distance as Mitchell Airport in South Dakota to Oshkosh, Wis. — approximately 500 miles.

“There were 50 aircrafts last year, but we could have more than that because our course is a bit smaller and there are more classes. At least, that's my anticipation,” said Collins. “The race isn't like a straight lines. There are waypoints to fly over for the racers along the way.”

Collins also wanted to thank everyone who helped get the LSA Expo started in Mt. Vernon many years ago — the Mt. Vernon Tourism Bureau, the Jefferson County Development Corporation and the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce — as the AirVenture Cup race came to the air-

port due to officials' previous experience with the area.

“Those other entities are just as responsible as we are for this coming here. This is a big deal, not only for this airport, but for this community. We have the opportunity to interact with the racers and the crew on a first-hand level,” said Collins. “It's a big deal for all of us. It's a chance for us to show off our town. We will be getting some meetings going to get some volunteers to help the racers and the crews. This is another one of those opportunities to step up and be an ambassador for our community.”

He added that the first meeting for volunteers will likely be in second week of July, though no dates have been set.

Airport Board Chairman Mike Ancona also commented on the race coming to Mt. Vernon during the Tuesday Airport Board meeting.

“Chris [Collins] has really pushed this forward and this is how it comes back. Why else would we get the chance to host something like this? It's just another notch in our belt,” said Ancona. “You can see what happens when you take control of something and make it work. This can be a contribution to our community. I'm just pleased to be a part of it. We've put together a team that just hard to beat.”

HISTORY OF THE RACE

Information from the AirVenture Cup race states, “[the race] is a timed race where participants are competing against the clock. For 2013, each aircraft's time will be recorded beginning on its takeoff from the Mt. Vernon Airport, as well as at each turn point. To finish the race, each aircraft will fly over the Waupaca Municipal Airport to obtain a finish time before circling to land. Each class has a first, second and third place award.”

This year is the AirVenture's 16th year for the race, which began in 1998 in Kitty Hawk, N.C. with 10 aircrafts. The race was founded the year before, in 1997, with the hopes of recreating the old Bendix Trophy Race. The Bendix Trophy was first awarded in 1931, sponsored by Vincent Bendix of the Bendix Corporation, for a transcontinental, point-to-point race. The last race was held in 1962.

In 2012, the race started in Mitchell, S.D. with more than 50 aircrafts participating.

On the day before last year's race, AVC volunteers and race participants partnered with Mitchell airport to host an airport open house, during which over 250 Young Eagles rides were given, states information from the AirVenture Cup race.

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