

EAA AirVenture Cup Race arrives July 22

Race likely to be biggest event at airport this year, director says

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MT. VERNON — Airplanes will arrive at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport in droves next weekend to kick off the 2017 Experimental Aircraft

Association (EAA) AirVenture Cup Race.

The racers will arrive to the airport on July 21, with an open house scheduled from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. July 22 at the airport.

"This is probably going to be the biggest event at the airport this year," stated airport director Chris Collins.

According to Sentinel archives, the AirVenture Cup Race is a 400 nautical mile course that will begin in Mt. Vernon and end in Oshkosh,

Wis.

Collins explained how the race first came to Mt. Vernon back in 2013.

"We were handed this wonderful opportunity kind of as a direct extension of the Midwest LSA Expo. There was an airport manager from the finish line up there in Wisconsin that attended the expo and was just blown away by our community and our volunteerism, and of course our airport," said Collins.

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Continuing, Collins explained that in 2012 Mt. Vernon Outland Airport was given the opportunity to host the start of the race in 2013.

"After that first race, because of how well we did, we were offered the opportunity to do it every other year," Collins said. "In the even-numbered years it launches out of Mitchell, S.D."

More airplanes are expected to arrive in Mt. Vernon than in previous years.

"A conference call that we had Thursday night [said] 92 race planes this year, which is about 32 over the previous two years," Collins said. "Approximately 10 to 15 support airplanes — we are well over 100 aircraft for this event."

There will be a variety of planes at the event, including production airplanes, light sports airplanes and racing planes, as Collins explained.

"There are a lot of them built by the individual racer in the garage, i.e. what is called 'home built,'" Collins said. "These planes are built entirely for racing."

He continued.

"You will see what are called Thunder Mustangs, which is derivative of P51 Mustangs, the iconic WWII fighter plane," Collins said. "They won't be Mustangs from the 1940s; they will be late model versions of the Mustang where companies

have gone into production to build a modern day version of the Mustang."

Another aspect of the event will be Young Eagle rides, which will take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. July 22 and offer children ages eight to 17 with parent or guardian permission to go on a free airplane ride.

"Since this is an EAA event, we always promote our signature program, which is our Young Eagles Program, where we are introducing children to flight," Collins said. "The program is not intended to try to make everyone a pilot that takes a ride. It is more to let them see the world from a different point of view."

The pilots will leave Mt. Vernon Outland Airport at around 9 a.m. Sunday, July 23, as Collins mentioned the importance of welcoming everyone to Mt. Vernon.

"If you see one of our guests in town, shake their hand and tell them 'welcome to Mt. Vernon, welcome to southern Illinois.' Tell them we are glad they are here," Collins said. "I have said it year after year — this race could start from anywhere, and these folks chose Mt. Vernon. We want to make sure that they continue to want to choose Mt. Vernon, and just a simple handshake and a 'glad you are here' goes a long way."

For more information on the AirVenture, visit the event's official website or contact Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

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Submitted Photo

FLYING HIGH — Several planes are shown flying during the 2015 Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) AirVenture Cup Race which started at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport and featured several different types of aircraft.



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PLENTY OF PLANES — This year the Mt. Vernon portion of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) AirVenture Cup Race will feature an open house from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. July 22. Young Eagles Flights will be offered the same day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.



Submitted Photo

HEADED FOR THE SKY — Over 100 airplanes are expected to be at this year's Experimental Aircraft Association AirVenture Cup Race as the race kicks off at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport and concludes at Oshkosh, Wis.