

# Not a cloud in the sky as area turns out for annual EAA Fly-in

10-22-06 BY DANIELLE TYLER  
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MT. VERNON — It was a perfect day to fly the skies Saturday, and thousands of visitors agreed when they gathered at the 10th annual Experimental Aircraft Association Fly-In at the Mt. Vernon Airport.

The event, sponsored by EAA Chapter 1155, brought in approximately 50 vintage, from military to civilian, experimental aircraft and helicopters.

The star of the show was the U.S. Air Force Thunderbolt II, which Mt. Vernon Airport manager and EAA member Chris Collins explained was an aviator enthusiast's treat and noteworthy sight for a small airport. The plane made the journey, Collins said, from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana.

"To have a plane like this here is really rare," Collins said. "You might see a plane like this in a big, big city at a military flight show, but it's really special to see it here. We've been working to get this aircraft here for seven years."

According to information from the EAA, the aircraft is famous for destroying nearly all of Saddam Hussein's tanks, armored personnel carriers and military vehicles during Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The A-10 was designed for close air support of ground forces and is a simple, twin-engine jet aircraft that can be used against all ground targets. It has excellent maneuverability at low air speeds and altitude and is a highly accurate weapons delivery platform, the infor-



Sentinel Photo/DANIELLE TYLER

**STAR OF THE SKIES** — The U.S. Air Force Thunderbolt II is the star of the show at the 10th annual Little Egypt Fly-In Saturday. The plane journeyed from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana and arrived just in time to be seen by the thousands of visitors who attended the event.



Sentinel Photo/DANIELLE TYLER

**FUTURE AVIATORS** — Brothers Cotton, Dakota and Dylan Kracht of Centralia prepare to take to the skies for their first-ever flight on a Warrior II with Young Eagle pilot Rich Griffith. "It was a lot of fun," Dakota said.

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mation states.

In addition to flight tricks and a tour of many types of aircraft, more than 300 children, ages 8 to 17, were given the opportunity to visit the sky themselves with a free plane ride thanks to the EAA Young Eagles program.

Young Eagle flights, volunteer Sheila Antoon said, are provided by licensed pilots and the experience is designed to bring children closer to the world of aviation. In addition to touring the plane and get-

ting a look at the cockpit, they are shown an up close and personal view of their communities from above.

"If they live close enough, the pilot will fly over their house," Antoon said. "It makes them realize that they are part of something bigger, they are connected. It also tells them they have a place in this world and they matter."

Karen Spieth, who earned her pilot's license in 1978, just began working with the Young Eagle program and says the opportunity to bring children a little closer to aviation is an incredibly rewarding experience not just for the child, but for the pilot, as well.

"This is a wonderful program," Spieth said. "This gives

you such a good feeling. I love doing this because I love to fly. These kids get so much out of it. This is the perfect opportunity to give them their very first plane ride and introduce them to aviation. Aviation is a growing field and it's wonderful to expose children to this. The children are excited and happy — there are no frowns going through that door. It's a joy."

"For many of these kids, this is their first ride," Collins said. "The idea is to introduce aviation to kids and inspire them to shoot high in life. We want to inspire them to get a good education and also let them see the world from a different perspective."

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