

Plane and Pilot Expo returns to King City

Airport expects to see 40 exhibitors at annual show

BY REANNE PALMER
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MT. VERNON — Rows and rows of different makes and models of aircrafts is nothing short of a plane lover's dream, and it will come true again for the fourth year in a row at the Plane and Pilot Midwest LSA Expo next month at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

The Expo is scheduled to start Sept. 6 and last until Sept. 8.

"Visualize a big car show with all different makes and models. This event is just like that, only with changes to see all the makes and models of aircrafts," said Airport Manager Chris Collins. "All of the exhibitors will have a 40 foot by 40 foot space and some will have two planes. That way, potential buyers will look at them and some [buyers] will come with particular models in mind, and others won't. They'll be able to sit in all the different ones and even have a demonstration flight."

According to the Expo's website, "The Expo was created to educate aviators about all facets related to the LSA industry, including the many different aircraft types, available engines, and LSA performance; promote the sale of LSA's, the use of LSA aircraft for flight training and in rental fleets; and promote economic development in Southern Illinois."

The event, which started in 2008, was the brainchild of four locals: Eric Evans, Curt Mower, and Benny Friar, all of Mt. Vernon, and Pete Krotje of Shelbyville, Tenn. During a steak dinner, the group was discussing the aircraft industry and wanted to have a big Expo

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Sentinel File Photo

YELLOW BIRD — Greg Gremminger stood next to a Magni Gyro two-seat gyroplane on display at the third annual Midwest LSA Expo at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport last year. A few dozen light sport aircraft flew in to the airport for the three day show.

Expo:

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closer to home.

"They asked, 'Where can we have another of these shows?' when they thought, 'Why not here? Why not Mt. Vernon?'" said Collins. "And it's gotten bigger every year since."

Collins said there will be all kinds of aircrafts there, from high performance to low wings.

Last year, approximately 750 people from all over the country visited the Expo. Collins said that the greatest need is for volunteers to work at the three-day event.

"We do need volunteers — anywhere from 25 to 30 each day — to make this thing work. We don't have that kind of manpower [at the Airport] to do this," said Collins. "What I would say is that this is your chance to be an ambassador for our community. Ninety-five percent of the people who come are from somewhere else; it's a national event. This is a chance to come out and welcome these people to Mt. Vernon."

Volunteer work includes checking on the exhibitors

and working one of the three rope gates, where the planes travel for demonstration flights.

According to Collins, volunteers don't need to have any prior experience with aircrafts to work.

"We train the [volunteers]. The training sessions are on Tuesday and Wednesday before the event. It's an hour class and we give them a shirt."

Collins said that those interested should contact the Airport, or just show up at 6 p.m. on Sept. 4 or Sept. 5 for training.

"Other than [volunteers], I think we're ready. We have a great group of exhibitors, about 40 of them, and several new ones. It'll be a good time," said Collins.

Also, this Friday and Saturday, the Airport is hosting pilots and manufacturers of Gyroplanes as a casual event. Collins said that it will be a gathering of like-minded people to swap stories and look at the specialized planes. Anyone interested in learning more about Gyroplanes is welcome to come out to the event.

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