

Mount Vernon airport earns recognition

Named 'Best Stop' in the 2022 Air Race Classic

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The Southern

MOUNT VERNON — Mount Vernon Outland Airport was one of the stops in the 45th Air Race Classic which ran from Lakeland, Florida, to Terre Haute, Indiana. At the conclusion of the race, the Mount Vernon Airport was chosen as the "Best Stop."

The Air Race Classic is the epicenter of women's air racing, drawing female pilots from age 17 to 90. Race teams, consisting of at least two pilots, must fly during daylight hours and are given four days to make flybys at each stop and land at the terminus airport. They travel approximately 2,400 miles during the race.

Mount Vernon was this year's eighth stop. Chris Collins, director of Mount Vernon Outland Airport, said this is the third time the airport has been part of the race. They were a stop in 1969, when the race was called the Powder Puff Derby, and again in 1990.

"It's sort of prestigious because so many airports compete to be one of seven or eight stops every year," Collins said.

Collins goes to AirVenture each year in Osh Kosh, Wisconsin. Every year he stops by the Air Race Classic booth and puts the airport's name in for a stop.

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They finally told him Mount Vernon would be a stop in the 2020 race. Then the race was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We'll put in for future stops and for the air terminus," Collins said. He added that the terminus airport has a banquet each year and racers are all there at the same time. Racers rarely stop at the same time on the route.

This year's Air Race Classic started June 21 at Lakeland Linder International Airport in Florida. Other stops included Moultrie Municipal Airport in Georgia, Muscle Shoals Airport, also known as Northwest Alabama Regional Airport, in Alabama, Hattiesburg Bobby L. Chain Municipal Airport in Mississippi, Pine Bluff Regional Airport — Grider Field in Arkansas, Ada Regional Airport in Oklahoma, Lawrence Municipal Airport in Kansas, Tullahoma Regional Airport — William Northern Field in Tennessee, and Daviess

County Airport in Washington, Indiana. The race ended at Terre Haute Regional Airport, known for many years as Hulman Field, in Indiana.

Collins said when Mount Vernon knew it would be a stop for the race, Sheila Jolly Scrivner was their chairperson. She set the goal of winning the Best Stop award. The award is voted on at the end of the race by the pilots, so giving them a good experience at the airport was the key.

Jolly Scrivner held weekly meetings to iron out all the details. Col-

lins said a lot of minor details were done very well in Mount Vernon.

Points are awarded due to several factors such as: organized fueling process, ground crew assistance, hospitality and enthusiasm, food and drinks, and interest from the public.

"Considering the caliber of the other stops, this is a tremendous accomplishment! The volunteers and staff at MVN are friendly, welcoming, and enthusiastic about aviation and Southern Illinois. The racers recognized this as they considered their votes. I am

very proud!" Collins said. "Most of the credit goes to Sheila and the volunteers who worked the hot ramp."

He added that this award is a great way to put Southern Illinois on the map again.

For more information about Mount Vernon Outland Airport, visit www.mtvernonairport.com.

More information about the Air Race Classic can be seen at www.airraceclassic.org.

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