

Midwest LSA Expo returns Sept. 8-10

KR Gathering 50th Anniversary running in conjunction with expo

BY JOSH JONES

SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MOUNT VERNON — People throughout the country will once again return to Mount Vernon for one of the biggest shows for light sport aircraft (LSA) in the industry.

The 14th annual Midwest LSA Expo returns from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 8-10 at Mount Vernon Outland Airport. Airport Director Chris Collins explained that this expo allows buyers and sellers in the LSA industry to meet face-to-face and discuss and demonstrate products.

"It is an opportunity for buyers and sellers to meet at one place to demonstrate the products," Collins said. "For instance if someone is interested in a performance low-wing model, or performance high-wing model or a short take off and

land model, or a gyrocopter. This is the place where they can come, talk to the aircraft representatives and take demonstration flights. It is a comparison shopping type of event."

Over 30 LSA vendors are expected at the expo. Collins said that there are very few opportunities for LSA expos throughout the country. He said other big aviation expos/shows don't always have the adequate time or space for pilots to try out various aircraft. Collins said that another show, the DeLand Sport Aviation Showcase, in

DeLand, Florida, is likely to come back but its future is still unknown.

"It remains to be seen whether that show is going to continue on, we may be the only one now," Collins said. "Right now we think it is going to continue on."

Collins said with this being the 14th year for the Midwest LSA Expo preparations are going well.

"We think we have really developed a flow on how to set up, be ready, be prepared and we are meeting weekly tackling different things," Collins said. "I am really

pleased with the progress."

The Federal Aviation Administration will be at the expo at 11 a.m. Friday (Sept. 9) to present Leland Widick with the Wright Brothers Master Pilot award.

According to Sentinel archives, Widick, owner of Safe Education Aviators, has been involved in aviation education for many years. He did his graduate studies in computer aided instruction with a simulation specialty and was the chief

Please see **Expo**, Page 2A

Expo:

Continued from Page 1A

flight instructor for Southern Illinois University-Carbondale for 20 years. He has also educated many through the flight simulator at the airport.

"Leland is our retired designated pilot examiner and former SIU Carbondale chief flight instructor," Collins said.

Widick shared his thoughts on receiving this honor.

"It quite an honor, I wasn't expecting it at all. I am very grateful to the folks here that I can live up to their expectations," Widick said. "It is the culmination of my flight experiences from 1959 until today."

Collins said in conjunction

with the expo, the airport is happy to welcome back the KR Gathering for a milestone year. He explained what KR is in the aviation world.

"It is a homebuilt airplane. It is a two seat composite, automotive engine type of airplane. We kind of consider all the KR builders as extended family across the nation and they love coming to Mount Vernon because of the facilities, the infrastructure, the services and the hospitality," Collins said. "What is really special about this year's gathering is that it is their 50th year anniversary. The (KR) design is 50 years old this year. So this is a special one."

According to event information, each year KR enthusiasts, builders, and pilots travel to the KR Gathering to exchange ideas and learn more about the



Chris Collins



Sentinel File Photo

MIDWEST LSA EXPO — Mark Mellicker, vice president of sales of North America for G1 STOL, and his wife Sharen Mellicker, RIGHT, speak with Chuck Schultz of Ashley about the two-seat all aluminum STOL aircraft imported from France during last year's Midwest LSA Expo at Mount Vernon Outland Airport. This year's expo will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 8-10 at the airport.

KR. During the KR Gathering, people speak with other pilots, builders and share information to assist with the building process. This will be the first Gathering running parallel with the LSA Expo event in which Collins will be the host.

"What makes this special is if you are building one of these airplanes this is your chance to come and meet the builders that are maybe ahead of you or are already completed and flying, so it is a place to get all of your questions answered," Collins said.

Collins said that there will be a lot of excitement during that weekend. He thanked everyone who volunteers their time to help make the expo pos-

sible and invited the public to be ambassadors for the community.

"Please come out and welcome our friends/visitors, because they are all from somewhere else," Collins said. "If they are not wearing an orange shirt it is almost a 100% guarantee they are living somewhere else across this country. So shake their hand, tell them you are glad to see them here in Mount Vernon and hope that they will come back again. We are looking forward to having a nice, safe, friendly event."

Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners Chairman Marty Cox shared his thoughts on this year's expo.

"With aviation enthusiasts and aircraft manufacturers coming from all over the country, it's an exciting three days," Cox said. "In addition to attendees being able to demo and potentially purchase a variety of light sport aircraft, there are several free seminars that pertain to building, purchasing and flying this type of aircraft. I wish to commend Chris, Sheila and the entire MVN team, including the many volunteers, on preparing for the event."

Admission to the expo is free and open to the public. For more information or to inquire about volunteering, people may call the airport at (618) 242-7016.

jjones@morningsentinel.com