

Airport celebrates another successful Midwest LSA Expo

This year saw an increase in demonstration flights

BY JOSH JONES

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MOUNT VERNON — Various companies and pilots were present at Mount Vernon Outland Airport this past weekend as the 15th annual Midwest LSA Expo was held.

According to Sentinel archives, the Midwest LSA Expo is an opportunity for light-sport aircraft buyers and sellers to meet at one place to demonstrate and sell products. Airport Director Chris Collins said that

this year's expo exceeded their expectations. He credited Jana Filip, who had previously assisted with the now discontinued airshows in Sebring and DeLand, Florida, which were sister shows for the LSA Expo.

"Jana and I have been friends for a long time and we have kind of partnered on this thing for more than a decade using our two shows as sister shows to help the industry," Collins said, later adding, "I asked if she would like to join our team and help us with marketing, because it is something in my position I have little time to do, being airport director."

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Collins said that he takes a stack of marketing cards to AirVenture Oshkosh in July, which he gives to the exhibitors at Oshkosh. Visitors interested in purchasing an aircraft could fill out a card for a demonstration flight at the expo, due to people not having the chance to do those flights at Oshkosh because of other activities.

"The exhibitors were listening to my marketing pitch and would hand one of the interested persons one of the cards and say 'We are going to be in Mount Vernon, Illinois, five weeks from now, come on down and you could fly one or two times, we can go out to dinner and have a face-to-face talk,'" Collins said. "And the customers really enjoy that and so do the vendors."

Collins said that while this strategy was effective, Filip and himself came up with the idea of doing a "Daily Demo Derby." He said that while the vendors enjoy seeing the public at the event, the goal is to attract serious aircraft buyers.

"They put their demo rides on the card and whoever wins the Daily Demo Derby every day gets a \$100 gift card," Collins said. "Inspire some competition among the exhibitors and that kind of makes them do this card campaign at Oshkosh and show up at Mount Vernon with 10 to 12 demo rides already scheduled."

This year's three-day Midwest LSA Expo ran from Thursday, Sept. 7, to Saturday, Sept. 9. Collins said on Thursday they recorded 30 demonstration rides, 85 rides on Friday, and 65 rides on Saturday.

Collins said that he believes the demonstration flights were up this year and while this was the first year of the Daily Demo Derby program, flight-aware.com shows spikes in activity over the weekend.

"You can see the spikes in that weekend and you can see that we flew way more than we did last year and even more (than) the year before," Collins said. "What really makes me proud is on Friday, the day we had 85, there were six companies that flew double digits. These are people that are interested and have come from a long way."

Collins said this year marked the 15th year for the Midwest LSA Expo, which tied Sebring for the longest running sport aviation show, and year 16 will mark the Midwest LSA Expo as the longest running sport aviation show in the country.

"We will just continue with doing what we do best and that is ensuring that we have a safe facility for our visitors and that we are taking care of their needs," Collins said. "We are just thrilled with the way it went."

Collins recognized the Mount Vernon Elks Lodge 819 for their assistance with cooking during the event, as well as all the volunteers and everyone else who assisted.

"Without the volunteers' help, we simply wouldn't be able to do it," Collins said. "They come out year after year and they are the true ambassadors for the area."



Chris Collins

Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

MIDWEST LSA EXPO — The Midwest LSA Expo recently returned to Mount Vernon Outland Airport for its 15th year. Airport officials said they saw an increase in demonstration flights this year.

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