



Submitted Photo

STATE AWARD — Mount Vernon Outland Airport recently won an Airport of the Year award from the Illinois Department of Transportation in the category of "Aeronautical Event of the Year." Accepting the award was Mount Vernon Airport Administrative Assistant Sheila Jolly-Scrivner, RIGHT. Also pictured is Jeff Hurst, Bureau Chief of Aviation Safety and Education, Division of Aeronautics, for IDOT.

Mount Vernon Airport honored with state award

Award recognizes airport for its eclipse event in April

BY TRAVIS MORSE

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MOUNT VERNON — Mount Vernon Outland Airport was recently honored with a prestigious state award, pertaining to its Midwest Eclipse Homecoming event this past April.

Specifically, the local airport was one of seven airports in the state to receive an Airport of the Year award this year.

Mount Vernon's award was in the category of "Aeronautical Event of the Year." The award, which comes from the Illinois Department of Transportation, was presented to Mount Vernon Airport officials last week.

"Any time that we in southern Illinois can go upstate and accept an award at a state conference and bring an award back to southern Illinois is a big deal," said Mount Vernon Airport Director Chris Collins. "So we're very thrilled."

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In April, the local airport hosted the Midwest Eclipse Homecoming for pilots who had participated in past aviation events. In addition, the general public was also allowed to come to the airport parking lot areas and around the airport lake to watch the Great North American Eclipse.

More than 100 airplanes visited the local airport that day from across the nation. There was also a parking lot full of people and campers who viewed the solar eclipse, Collins said.

"I wasn't entirely surprised (by the award), because IDOT staff came to the event and basically told me, 'we're probably going to give you an award for this event because we love the structure and how it's organized,'" Collins said. "There were so many visitors from so many locations and they enjoyed it and were made to feel welcome."

Collins gave a special thanks to all of the airport volunteers who helped put on the eclipse event.

"We couldn't do it without them," Collins said.

According to an IDOT news release, the annual airport of the year awards reflect the outstanding achievements of the state's aviation community. They also celebrate the contribution of airports to the state's overall economy and transportation system.

"Airports are an essential connection between communities large and small, providing landing space for medical transporters and enhancing local quality of life," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman in the release. "Our airport system in Illinois is diverse, flying tens of millions of people each year for both business and leisure. We're proud to recognize these airports and grateful for the many services (that) they provide."

The winning airports were selected because of their many accomplishments, including an outstanding partnership with IDOT and a strong commitment to customer safety and satisfaction, the news release states. Among the award considerations are cooperation and coordination with the state, safety record, maintenance of the facility, as well as promotion of aviation and educational events.

In addition to Mount Vernon Airport's win for Aeronautical Event of the Year, other award winners this year included Gen. Wayne A. Downing (Primary Airport of the Year), St. Louis Regional Airport (Reliever Airport of the Year), Jacksonville Municipal Airport (Large General Aviation Airport of the Year), Crawford County Airport (Small General Aviation Airport of the Year), Wolford's Airport (Private Airport of the Year) and Brussels Heliport (Heliport of the Year).

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