

LSA Expo comes to Mt. Vernon

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MT. VERNON — Light Sport Aircraft fans and vendors will descend on the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Sept. 10 through 12 for the Plane and Pilot Midwest LSA Expo.

Dubbed as "the place to be for sport aviation this fall," the event has grown over the past seven years to include more than 40 light sport aircraft as well as the latest in aviation gadgets, seminars and forums throughout the event as well as demonstrations.

"We put the shoppers together with the sellers during the Expo," said Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Manager Chris Collins. "This isn't really a family airshow type of event the community is used to coming out to the airport to see. This is a target audience situation."

Regardless, Collins encourages the community to come out and be ambassadors for the county and city.

"People from across the country come to shop or exhibit at the Expo," Collins said. "One hundred percent of them will be spending the night at a local hotel or camping on site, eating in our restaurants and shopping at our businesses. ... We have a strong hospitality industry in Mt. Vernon, two interstates intersect here and it's an easy drive or fly here, which makes it the perfect location for a national aviation event. ... The industry could hold this event anywhere, but they like us, we have become known for our hospitality and welcoming of visitors. We want people to come out, shake some hands and let the people here know they are welcome and we are a friendly place."

The Mt. Vernon event is only the second of its kind held in the U.S., with the first in Sebring, Fla., held in the spring.

"We are the only two places that have the Expo and allow demonstration flights, where you can see it and try it out at the same time," Collins said. "That's what makes these two shows so special."

According to information from Mt. Vernon Outland Airport, new light sport aircraft are about one-third the cost of legacy training/recreational aircraft such as the Cessna Skyhawk and Piper Cherokee.

"A sport pilot license is approximately 50 percent of the cost of the traditional private pilot license," information states. "Although light sport aircraft have prohibitive regulations such as no more than two seats and daytime operation only, they offer some great benefits like incredible fuel efficiency and generally newer technology such as glass cockpits. Traditionally trained pilots can fly light sport aircraft using only their driver's license as certification they are health — allowing many an opportunity to continue flying."

Seminars will be included in the three days, and the public is invited to participate in any of them.

New seminars include "Zero time to certified pilot" and "TFR Avoidance" by U.S. Air Force NORAD. In addition, for those who want to get information on light sport aircraft and piloting, the Division Aeronautics seminar will be held.

Saturday, the Popular Rotocraft Association, St. Louis Chapter 35 will be presenting displays, the St. Louis Women With Wings will hold an aircraft wash and the Ercoupe Owners

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Club will have aircraft on display.

Collins said he is excited about the SW-51 "Mustang" by Hansen Air Group, which will be at the expo. Collins said from a distance, the aircraft looks just like the World War II P51 Mustang.

"They unveiled it at Osh Kosh, (Wis.) a month ago, and we're hoping to see it flying for the first time at the LSA Expo," Collins said. "We're not sure if they will, because they have to put in a certain number of required hours at its home airport, and if it has, then we will see it fly; if it hasn't it will still be here and in the No. 1 demonstration spot."

Admission and parking are free to the event.

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