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It's a bird. No, it's a plane

Southeast Iowa Air Show 2012 expected to draw thousands.

By WILLIAM SMITH
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David Camp, an organizer for the Southeast Iowa Air Show 2012, wants to get one thing straight.

This is not the kind of show you can watch from your backyard - no matter how close you live to the airport.

"To get the full effect of this air show, you're going to need to be on the grounds (at the Southeast Iowa Regional Airport)," he said.

Camp, who is the president of the Southeast Iowa Aviation Promotion Organization, has been helping plan the event for two years. Since it costs about \$100,000 to put on the two-day event, which is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, the air show is a biannual happening.

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"This is going to be the biggest event Burlington has seen for quite some time," Camp said.

The last air show in Burlington, which took place in 2010, attracted about 5,000 people, despite the intermittent rain showers throughout the day. Camp is expecting even more people this year, and the air show will go on, rain or shine. Though the name of the show has changed from 2010, Camp said the makeup of the group organizing it is very similar.

A good portion of the show will take place after the sun goes down - a first in Burlington's long history of air shows.

"People don't know how unique a night air show is. There are just a few performers in the country who will perform in a night air show," Camp said.

One of the highlights of the show will be the B-17 Flying Fortress, which will be at the air show both days and will be available for viewing starting at 3 p.m. Friday. Rides in the World War II bomber can be purchased for \$425 each on both days, and former B-17 co-pilot and Burlington resident Don Current will get a free ride in the plane Friday afternoon.

"In World War II in the 1940s, they had 12,000 of these flying, and there are only nine of them left now," Camp said.

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The B-17, which is called the Yankee Lady, will go on 45-minute flights, which must be reserved ahead of time by calling (734) 483-4030.

"Once it's at cruising altitude, passengers are able to move throughout the aircraft. Only the pilot seats, tail gunner's position and ball turret are off limits," said Dave Wright with the Yankee Air Museum.

On Friday evening, the sky over the airport will be lit by several dazzling performers and a spectacular fireworks show. Camp said the fireworks, which will close the show at 9 p.m., will be a sight to see. The show will start at 6:30 p.m. Friday.

"We're going to have a 1,000-foot-long wall of fire. I've seen it once before, you can feel the concussion," said fellow air show organizer Rodney Botts. "It's about 200-foot high,"

Matt Younkin, son of legendary air show pilot Bobby Younkin, will perform his Magic by Moonlight show in a Twin Beech 18 aircraft. The act has been called one of the most unusual on the air show circuit, especially considering the Beech 18 never was designed to perform aerobatics.

"He is in the only guy in the world who does it," Camp said. "The plane is lit up like a Christmas tree. It's really cool."

Younkin's sister, Amanda Franklin, performed at the 2010 Air Show in Burlington with her husband, Kyle. Amanda, who was well known for her wing-walking act, died in May 2011 after suffering injuries from a plane fire while performing at an air show in March of that year.

Considering stunt pilot Glenn Smith (part of the Hoppers Flight Jet Team) died in a crash at the Quad Cities Air Show earlier this month, there's no doubt being an air show performer comes with certain risks.

"Safety is our No. 1 concern," Camp said. "We give each air show performer 60 minutes before their flight time that is sacred. They are by themselves, and they can think about their routine. They're not doing interviews or anything at all."

Air show favorite Bob Carlton also will perform Friday night. Carlton is one of the most versatile air show performers in North America and over the years has continued to add innovative performances such as barnstormin' biplane aerobatics, the helicopter sailplane tow, night aerobatics with strobes and pyro from the world's only twin jet sailplane.

"He'll be flying a little jet-powered glider. It's the neatest thing, because he has those flares on the wing tips, and at night, it leaves this trail of fire like a comet," Camp said.

Two L-29 jets from the University of Iowa will perform Friday night and Saturday, and the Vanguard Squadron, consisting of four RV-3s, will perform Friday and Saturday. Sam Ives also will perform in his famous jet car.

"It's a sheriff's car with a aircraft engine in it," Botts said.

The nighttime performances are only the tip of the iceberg. Starting at 7:30 a.m. Saturday, the Burlington Kiwanis Club will put on a pancake breakfast at the airport, very much like the one they organize every year for the Snake Alley Criterium. The ramp will open at 9 a.m., and the air show will resume at noon, featuring a variety of performers piloting everything from a Panz! S-330 to a Pitts S-2B. World War II planes and other acrobatic aircraft will crisscross the sky throughout the day.

The VIP area is going to be quite a bit different this year as well and will include an outdoor patio with wine coolers, snacks, beer, pop and water and will be just 80 feet away from the runway.

Camp stressed the air show is focused just as much on kids as it is adults, and there will be plenty for children to do besides watch the planes.

"We'll have the most incredible kids aviation center set up in the south hangar," Camp said.

The kids zone will include a flight simulator from the University of Iowa, an exhibit from Western Illinois University, a live chat room with flight instructors and a television studio that will be showing the "The Aviators" TV show.

"When they get tired of looking at all those things, they can play in the bounce houses," Camp said.

A few of the performers will be displaying their ultra cool toys in the days leading up to the air show. Bob Carlton will assemble his jet-powered glider inside the gymnasium of Edward Stone Middle School and show it off during an assembly there at 1:30 p.m. Thursday. Matt



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Younkin and Sam Ives will be talking to children at Aldo Leopold Middle School at 1:30 p.m. Friday, and the kids can come out to see Ives' jet car during their lunch break.

The air show will end with a 1940s Big Band and Dance Show from 7 to 10 p.m. Saturday and will take place right under the nose of the B-17 bomber. A Stearman aircraft from the 1940s will be parked in the hangar, and an 18-piece orchestra will play songs from Sept. 22, 1944. Everyone will be encouraged to wear 1940s attire.

"I think this is going to be so much fun," Camp said.

Ticket information can be found in the special insert promoting the air show in today's paper, and some ticket deals can only be had online. To learn more or order tickets (which are available at the Hy-Vee on Agency Street), visit <https://sites.google.com/site/seiowaairshow>.

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