

## Aviation Day takes flight at Vero Beach airport

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VERO BEACH - For Aviation Day, most attendees arrived by land, but others took to the air.

Lars de Jounge flew to Vero Beach Municipal Airport last weekend, making a 10-minute flight from an airfield west of town in a restored 1931 biplane.

To keep the de Havilland Tiger Moth in top condition, "you have to fly all the time," Mr. de Jounge said.

Dozens of other pilots shared the sentiment: More than 50 aircraft arrived for display during the daylong event. All told, almost 4,000 spectators turned out for Aviation Day, held Feb. 9.

Members of the Experimental Aircraft Association, Chapter 99, organized the event.

"It's the biggest Aviation Day we've ever had," said Keith Gordon, an Experimental Aircraft Association member and media coordinator for the event.

Mr. de Jounge cruised from the Indian River Aerodrome, an airfield about five miles southwest of Vero Beach. He spent his Saturday answering questions about the red-and-yellow Tiger Moth, which he restored from 1976 to 1980.

European forces used the Tiger Moth for training during World War II. Today, only 300 of the aircraft remain, 100 of them in North America.

Other attractions focused on modern-day aviation.

A helicopter swooped low every 15 minutes, picking up passengers for aerial tours. For adventurous attendees, flights in the domed cockpit of a Beech T-34 Mentor were available.

Vendors at the Piper Aircraft tent hawked T-shirts recalling the iconic Piper Cub and other memorabilia. Piper, based at the airport, is set to deliver its first jets in 2010.

Meanwhile, elected officials are waiting to hear whether a bid to retain Piper will be successful. The aircraft manufacturer is considering a move to Albuquerque, N.M., or Oklahoma City.

Missionary Flights International, based in Fort Pierce, sent its Douglas DC-3 for tours. Since 1968, the organization has flown relief missions and supplies to the Dominican Republic, Haiti and other struggling nations.

Pilots from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration exhibited a plane used to help NOAA meteorologist forecast weather.

But a Navy Sikorsky MH-53E helicopter, which organizers hoped to exhibit, was unable to make the trip. The helicopter, nicknamed the Sea Dragon, is one of the largest used by U.S. forces.

But other helicopters were part of Aviation Day, including the Indian River County Sheriff's Office chopper.

Organizers moved Aviation Day to the Sun Aviation facility from the airport terminal building this year, as a \$6.1 million airport renovation project moves ahead.

"The whole airport really pulled together," Mr. Gordon said.

Renovation of the airport terminal building is set to be complete by the end of the year.

In July, the 43-year-old terminal building closed. Since then, construction crews gutted the building, and launched an expansion that will increase its size to about 21,000 square feet, up from about 12,000 square feet.