

# Cloudy weather, sunny spirits at LSA Expo

BY TIM JOHNSON  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — Persistent rain and clouds put a damper on the first day of the third annual Midwest LSA Expo, though Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Director Chris Collins said the light sport aircraft exhibitors who made the trip were pleased with the welcome they received from the city.

"The volunteers have been outstanding," Collins said. "A lot of people came out and stayed with us the whole day. The community's really stepped up and helped out."

About 30 light aircraft graced the tarmac on Friday afternoon, their bright paint schemes contrasting with the dull gray of the skies above. The LSA Expo is a gathering for aircraft vendors to tout the virtues of their machines to potential customers, but it's also an opportunity for local aviation enthusiasts to get a close-up view of the planes, including some rather unusual models.

Greg Gremminger of Magni Gyro USA was there to exhibit one of the company's two-seat gyroplanes, a bright yellow, open-air machine that uses an unpowered rotor and a rear mounted propeller to achieve flight.

Gremminger, a member of the St. Louis Rotorcraft Club, has been a gyroplane enthusiast and advocate for more than 20 years, working to enhance the image of the machines perceived as dangerous and temperamental.

He said technology has come a long way since the spread in popularity of the more primitive versions of the machines in the mid-20th Century.

Modern gyroplanes, he said, are

## Expo:

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relatively easy to fly and highly predictable even as they offer the same fun as their older counterparts.

"I kind of evolved into these from ultralights," Gremminger said. "I could just fly in the middle of the day and have fun. You can feel the wind and move with it, and watch the buzzards and the hawks doing the same thing."

He said, "I can turn this around on a dime. I can go from 80 mph to zero in just a second or two."

While the show may be geared toward aircraft enthusiasts and potential buyers, Collins welcomed local residents to come out to hear guest speakers Denis Murphy and U.S. Air Force Col. Matt Swanson before the show ends.

At 2 p.m. today, Murphy will recount the tales of how he survived two emergency water landings, known as ditchings, in the Caribbean Sea as a charter pilot.

At 1 p.m. Sunday, Swanson

will speak on his experiences during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Swanson was present at the Pentagon when it was struck by a passenger jet.

"When the plane hit they called me down," Swanson said. "The smoke drove us out of the building."

Swanson will recount the heroism of the the security and maintenance personnel who went back inside the building as everyone else was evacuating.

"When the building was on fire, they were trying to shut off air conditioning ducts, trying to shut off water," he said. "These were guys who don't get paid a whole lot running into the building when everyone was running out of it. What I try to do is show that ordinary people do pretty extraordinary things."

The Missouri History Museum's 1934 Monocoupe, once owned and flown by Charles Lindbergh, will also be on display today.

The show will continue today from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A fee will be required to enter. On Sunday it will be open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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Sentinel Photo/TIM JOHNSON

**YELLOW BIRD —**  
Greg Gremminger stands next to a Magni Gyro two-seat gyroplane on display at the third annual Midwest LSA Expo at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport on Friday. A few dozen light sport aircraft flew in to the airport Friday for the three day show, which continues today and Sunday.

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