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The Evening Star

Vintage aircraft group aims high with '08 plans

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AUBURN — Vintage Aircraft Association (VAA) Chapter 37 hopes to be able to help the community learn more about vintage aircraft during 2008, the DeKalb County Board of Aviation Commissioners heard Friday.

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The association, part of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), spent much of 2007 renovating a hangar and building a small clubhouse inside the structure. The hangar was a rusting, banged-up structure with peeling blue paint when the VAA began. The group tore the hangar down to its framework and rebuilt it with new steel and insulation.

Inside, in addition to the hangar space for their vintage aircraft, members built a meeting room that includes video and computer equipment, plugs and computer terminals every 6 feet and wiring for surround-sound speakers. The walls are made with wood from an old barn and corrugated steel and are adorned with airplane memorabilia, including tin, wood and neon signs of aircraft and airplane nose art.

The VAA chapter now hosts movie nights every other Friday in the clubhouse. Members of the association invited the airport board and the public to stop in on a Friday night to watch a film about aviation. The next movie night is scheduled for Feb. 1.

The VAA had a good year in 2007, according to president Tim Fox. The organization hosted three small Young Eagles events, which are geared toward children; hosted a chili cookout fly-in; assisted with the Kruse Auction and Fly-in, Hoosier Air Museum fly-in and ramp control for the Kruse International auctions; helped airport manager Russ Couchman maintain equipment; and sponsored a Christmas family.

The association is working to restore a Monocoupe aircraft flown by air racer and acrobatic pilot Harold Neumann. The wings and tail have been restored and are currently in Oshkosh, Wis., headquarters of the EAA. The group is now working on restoring the fuselage and interior of the aircraft.

The VAA chapter has big plans for 2008.

The EAA has confirmed that the "Aluminum Overcast" B-17 Flying Fortress bomber will visit Auburn Sept. 1-3. The B-17 was used heavily during World War II.

"We're really looking forward to this," Fox said. "It creates quite a sensation when it comes in."

The Midwest Regional Stinson Fly-In, which will feature Stinson aircraft, will be in Auburn the weekend of Sept. 13, Fox added. The fly-in is organized by the International Stinson Club. Fox explained that Auburn

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will be a great site for the fly-in, because former Auburn Automobile Co. president E.L. Cord was once heavily involved with the Stinson company. Stinson manufactured airplanes between the 1920s and the 1950s. The Hoosier Warbirds will host a breakfast, and there will be a fish dinner. The organization is also planning spot landings and flour bomb drops.

In other business Friday, the board:

• heard a report from remodeling subcommittee member Couchman. He and fellow members Lara Zook Gaerte, owner of fixed-base operator Century Aviation, and board secretary George Wappes showed a tile they were considering for the terminal. Couchman said that the remodeling is still in the planning stages and that drawings will be submitted at the next meeting on Feb. 15.

• appointed a subcommittee of board treasurer Brad Stump and board president Jim Mason to investigate what to do about tying down aircraft outside on the airport tarmac.

• heard from Couchman about difficulties in getting the fuel farm repaired. A Chicago-area company had been contacted with the problem and visited the airport approximately a month and a half ago, but has not yet submitted a proposal or sent a part that would temporarily fix the problem.

“You probably ought to get a little firmer,” said board vice-president Jeff Turner.

The board told Couchman he could use his discretion to contact another vendor if needed.

• reappointed all board officers for 2008. Officers are: Jim Mason, president; Jeff Turner, vice-president; George Wappes, secretary; and Brad Stump, treasurer.

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