

STEP ‘N OUT

*Travel back in time
to the days of pin-ups
and big band sound*

Heavy Bombers Weekend 2016

By ERICA PENNINGTON
Staff writer

JANESVILLE — The roar of vintage war planes will soon be heard passing over the Stateline Area.

Heavy Bombers Weekend, an event celebrating aviation history, is being held in Janesville for the first time. All of the fun will take place from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. July 22-24.

“This is a World War II history event, but it’s more hands-on,” said event coordinator Pete Buffington. “It’s not a full-fledged airshow; it will focus on the aircraft with rides and ground tours.”

The idea for Heavy Bombers Weekend came about five years ago. Chapter 93 of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) in Madison decided to sponsor a visit from “Alumnium Overcast,” a B-17 that travels around the country. The group then invited the Commemorative Air Force, based out of Texas, to bring more airplanes to the show.

“We then approached the EAA, since it has its headquarters in Oshkosh, and asked if they’d be interested in doing a joint show before AirVenture (a large airshow held annually in Oshkosh),” Buffington said.

As the event and crowds have continued to grow, the need for a new host site became apparent. That is why this year’s Heavy Bombers Weekend is being held in Janesville, and there’s a possibility that it may become an annual staple at the Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport.

“We’re really inclined to keep it in Janesville, because we need a large venue where airspace really isn’t an issue,” Buffington said.

Visitors to Heavy Bombers Weekend can expect to see a variety of World War II aircraft, including a Doug AC-47 Spooky Gunship, Grumman C1-A Trader, several different TBM Avenger Torpedo Bombers, the P-51 Mustang, Grumman OV-1 Mohawk, Fairchild PT-26, Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan and much more.

“All of these aircraft are flying museums and all of their owners have really worked hard for 20-30 years to restore them (the planes) back to their pristine condition,” Buffington said. “I think the air rides are really what makes this event so special.”

Many people who take air rides may simply be aviation enthusiasts who want to support the restoration of the beautiful aircraft. Something special is that there also are World War II veterans taking their flights on planes that are the same type they interacted with during war time.

It can be a very emotional experience, Buffington said.

“About half come back in tears and you can see the gauntlet of emotion running through their minds,” he said. “For some, it’s a healing opportunity.”

Want to go?

Tickets to Heavy Bombers Weekend are \$15 for an individual pass or \$25 for a family pass that covers two adults and kids under 18 years old. The pass is good for all three days of the event.

DON’T MISS THIS...At noon on July 23, a group of 100 Beechcraft Bonanzas will be flying over the airport on their way to AirVenture in Oshkosh (weather permitting). A group of parachute jumpers may also make an appearance or two throughout the weekend.

Photos provided

Heavy Bombers Weekend is to take place July 22-24 at the Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport, 1716 West Airport Road, Janesville.



Plan your visit

Most aircraft on display at Heavy Bombers Weekend will be static, meaning they will be parked on the runway so visitors can get an up-close look. Some aircraft, including a KC-135 Refueling Tanker, will be available for tours on the ground.



War II reenactors and hear the sounds of the 1940s. Food and snacks will be available for purchase so families make a visit to the airport an all-day activity, or even stop by multiple times.

Visitors who really want to take their experience to the new heights can purchase a flight on “FIFT” a B-29 Superfortress, B-17 “Aluminum Overcast,” a T-6 Texan, P-61 Mustang, a CAF PT-13 Boeing Stearman, “Yellow Rose,” a B-25J Mitchell and a CAF C-45 Expeditor.

In addition to the plane displays, visitors can enjoy checking out helicopters, see World



Erica Pennington/Beloit Daily News

“Aluminum Overcast,” a B-17 Bomber, will be on display at Heavy Bombers Weekend. It is one of only 12 remaining B-17s that are still able to fly.

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