

# The sky's the limit for local aircraft fans

By LIZ BRENNAN  
Staff writer

VERO BEACH — It's not every day that a B-17 G World War II era aircraft arrives at Vero Beach Municipal Airport, but on Oct. 31, that's exactly what's happening, thanks to a group of local aircraft enthusiasts.

The members of the Experimental Aircraft Association of Vero Beach invite the public to witness and take a flight in this high-flying piece of history that carried General Dwight D. Eisenhower on his tour of



Hometown News file photo

The view from above during last year's B-17 tour and exposition hosted by the Experimental Aircraft Association of Vero Beach.

the South Pacific. The craft also carried General Douglas McArthur during the last days of the war.

"The whole object of the tour is to get as many people as possible to see it, especially veterans and the younger generation," said Keith Gordon, president of the 45-member Experimental Aircraft Association.

The B-17 is owned by the National Warplane Museum in Geneseo, N.Y., and tours the nation with a crew of about six, Mr. Gordon said.

When it touches down in Vero, volunteers from the local aircraft association will assist the crew with maintenance and inspections.

The event also serves as a fundraiser, and proceeds go toward maintaining the B-17 while it's on tour.

The aircraft association has been hosting the annual arrival of a B-17 in Vero for about four years. The National Experimental Aircraft Association usually sends a B-17 it owns on tour, but the usual craft suffered damage last year because of an undercarriage collapse, and is still being refurbished.

Along with the B-17 tour, the local aircraft association offers many exciting events and programs.

A large part of its mission is to spark children's interest in flying. The association's experienced pilots take children ages 8 to 17 for free airplane rides every fourth Saturday of the month. While waiting for their turn

to head into the wild blue yonder, children can practice their flying skills on a flight simulator.

"We want to expose young kids to aviation, because these days, with security and liability issues, they're locked out of airports," Mr. Gordon said.

Mr. Gordon said the association is in the process of building a new category of light sport aircraft that he credits with renewing interest in flying and making the expensive and extremely regulated activity of flying more accessible to the average person.

The Federal Aviation Administration recently approved the new light craft, the Kit Fox two-seater. The Kit Fox is simpler than the average small aircraft, because it is restricted to daytime flight that does not rely on instruments, but on visual flight rules. The craft is restricted to two seats and has a 100-horse power restriction.

"Small light airplanes were getting so sophisticated and were getting too expensive," Mr. Gordon said. "Getting back to basics

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is the object here."

Mr. Gordon said the association encourages children who are interested in aircraft construction to become involved in the building of the plane at the Vero Beach Airport.

The B-17 is scheduled to land in Vero Beach the afternoon of Oct. 31. On Nov. 1 and Nov. 2, it will be on display and rides will

be offered to the public.

Flights are \$395 per person. Reservations must be made in advance by calling (800) 359-6217. Flights are scheduled for 10:15 a.m., 11 a.m. and 11:45 a.m.

Ground tours of the B-17 will take place from 12:15 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the airport. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$5 for students, free for World War II veterans and children accompanied by an adult and \$10 per family.