

# Soar to the Punta Gorda air show

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PUNTA GORDA — The Florida International Air Show soars into Punta Gorda from Oct. 21-23, featuring fireworks and an array of aircraft.

Some elementary students will have a chance to earn their wings to the event, which will feature U.S. Army Golden Knights, Walkabout Tigers Aerobatic Team Yak 52s, Wild Blue RV8 “Jive” Kirby, Franklin’s Flying Circus’ “Dracula,” and McCart Jet Motorsports “Homewrecker” Jet Truck.

Scott Yoak will fly a P-51 Mustang; Jim Tobul will be in Corsair F4U; and Randy W. Ball will fly a MiG-17. There will be a Warbird review to salute veterans, as well as a Kid Zone, and a selection of Florida craft brews on tap.

County Commissioner Chris Constance said kids could “earn your wings,” for Charlotte County elementary students to be able to earn their way into the airshow with a commemorative certificate. Schools are invited to take part in the program.

Entry to the program depends upon the children’s abilities. Younger children will be read a story in class, and they can draw a picture that relates to the story to earn a certificate, while older children will write essays.

“East Elementary has a whole corner in their library with a big airplane and books laid out for kids to check out,” said Dana Carr, communications co-chair of the Florida International Air Show. “Students can read a book from the library, write a paragraph about what they read, turn it in to their teachers and earn a certificate, which will give them entry into the show.”

The air show also features community members, including Charlotte County Sheriff’s pilots Shane Engelauf and Robert Steht. They fly a helicopter that has recently been installed with a new Surveillance Infrared Thermal Electro optical unit.

“It is comparable to what I used in the military,” Engelauf said. “It runs spectrum, TV and thermal imaging. Whether it’s a criminal, an Alzheimer’s patient, or a child, if we are looking in the bushes, it shows where their body heat might be.”

The Controp SITE 20 is the first in the country.

“It’s an Israeli camera that is used overseas, and they wanted to break into the U.S. market. They were looking for a police department to test their product, and they came to us with a sweet deal,” Engelauf said. “The sheriff’s ability to get us this camera will improve the product we are able to give the community.”

In daytime mode, the screen appears like a full-color television. In black-and-white setting, heat shows up as a visible element on the screen. Car wheels heat up as they are driven down the road, leaving an image of heat where a vehicle recently had been driven.

In addition to traditional police duties, Engelauf and Steht also fly the helicopter to help with fighting fires, using a bucket system, which can be dipped into a water source and released onto fires.

“The most I have had to fill the bucket to fight a fire was 75 times in one day,” Steht said. Mirrors underneath help the pilots be able to see if the water is being released on the fire.

Local pilots will have their aircrafts on display at the air show. Jim and Michelle McDevitt own and operate Gulf Coast Flying Circus, which offers scenic and aerobatic flights from the Charlotte County Airport. The Vietnam veteran has built three aircrafts himself, and offers flights in his Pitts S2A, a two-place open cockpit, for aerobatic flights involving rolls, loops and some inverted flight for \$225; scenic flights are \$185.

For more information, or to buy tickets, go to [www.FloridaAirShow.com](http://www.FloridaAirShow.com).



**Jim and Michelle McDevitt offer scenic and aerobatic flights in this Pitts S2A, which was manufactured in 1981 and rebuilt in 2015, at the Punta Gorda Airport.**



**The board of directors stand in front of a North American Trainer T-28. From left are: Dana Carr, Ricki Markle, Sammy Sanders, Pam Brown, Lynn Julliard of Cheney Brothers, Tyler Ezzi, Boris and Netasha Nekrasova (APG Avionics owners), Raymond Laroche, Jennifer Smith and Jamie Trudeau.**



**Veterans will be saluted in a Warbird Review at the Florida International Air Show, where a variety of warbirds will fly together, including North American Trainer T-6 (Army), the SNJs (Navy), and T-28 Trojans (Air Force and Navy).**



**Shane Engelauf is a Charlotte County deputy sheriff pilot who served in Afghanistan and Iraq.**



**Students from Southern Technical College, along with Program Chair Dorene McAfee, volunteered at APG Avionics to help with the pre-organization of the Florida International Air Show on Wednesday.**