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Local News - Sunday, September 26, 2004

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Model planes land money for charity Fly-in collects food, funds for Salvation Army

By JOSEPH DEINLEIN Times Herald

WALES TWP. -- Gary Wilkerson just had completed dozens of aerobatic maneuvers with his Wild Hare 300 Special remote-controlled model airplane Saturday when it crashed.

The engine of the \$3,000 plane stopped for some reason, and Wilkerson, 47, of Port Huron Township had the plane heading downwind. He had two options: crash or fly the plane into a group of spectators.

"I wasn't about to let it go into the audience," he said.

But that's the life of a model airplane and helicopter enthusiast. Many were gathered at Goodells County Park for the St. Clair County R/C Propbusters' final event of the year. Admission was \$2 or a canned good. All proceeds benefit the Salvation Army Port Huron Citadel Corps.

Club President Todd Litke, 29, of Port Huron said the club has flown at the park for about five years after the county gave a portion of the park for use as a flight field. About 50 people belong to the propbusters, one of five radio-controlled aircraft groups in the Blue Water Area.

The group isn't limited to airplanes.



Times Herald photo by J. DOUGLAS BROOKS

FLYING HIGH: James Kwiatkoski, 68, of Capac checks out an in-flight picture Saturday taken by longtime friend Stan McClure, 64, of Kimball Township at Goodells County Park in Wales Township. Members of the St. Clair County R/C Propbusters and the River District Eagles R/C Club had a canned-goods drive for the Salvation Army Port Huron Citadel Corps and a fly-in for model airplane enthusiasts.



Carl Jones, 35, of Kimball Township and Mike Grant, 50, of East China Township fly remote-controlled helicopters, something they say takes a lot more attention and skill.

"It's like trying to balance two baseballs on top of each other," Grant said.

Jones agreed.

"You've always got to be on top of (the controls)," he said. "An airplane, you can let go of the sticks and it will fly on its own."

As for Wilkerson and his wrecked plane, he said he could salvage much of the \$3,000 aircraft, outfitted with a skywriter.

"Basically 99% of everything is OK," he said, looking over the smashed pieces of balsa wood and plastic.

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Times Herald photo by J. DOUGLAS BROOKS

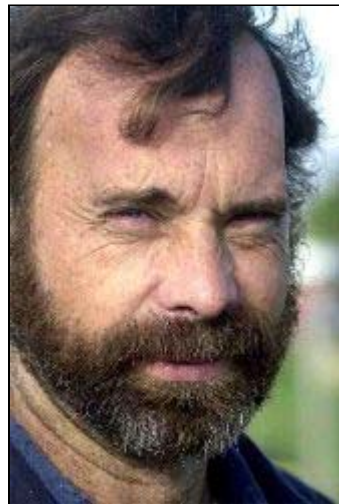
A plane flies overhead.





Todd Litke



Carl Jones



Mike Grant

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