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Man versus machine

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July 20, 2007

By Emily McFarlan Staff writer

Man will take on 75,000 pounds of machine Saturday at the Law Enforcement Torch Run Plane Pull at the DuPage County Airport.

That's a lot of metal.

Ten-person teams will have two attempts to pull a Gulfstream IV-SP airplane 15 feet. At 25 feet high and 89 feet long, that's 8.9 feet and 7,500 pounds each. The plane also has a wingspan of 77 feet.

Prizes will be awarded to the top three teams that pull the plane that distance in the shortest amount of time, as well as the team that raises the most money for Special Olympics Illinois.

"It's a really fun event," said Jeff Henson of Special Olympics Illinois. "... All to raise money for the Special Olympics and raise awareness."

For those wishing to face the challenge, registration begins at 8 a.m. Saturday, and each team member is required to raise a minimum of \$50. All proceeds go to Special Olympics Illinois, a nonprofit that provides free year-round sports competition and training to 20,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities across the state.

Henson said teams with fewer than 10 people are encouraged to register and will be partnered with similar teams.

The plane pull is part of the DuPage Airport's Community Days this weekend.

The four-day long event takes place Friday to Monday at 2700 International Drive in West Chicago.

Community Days will feature the Collings Foundation's Wings of Freedom Tour, a nationwide tour of historic World War II aircraft. A B-24 Liberator, B-17 Flying Fortress and B-25 Mitchell will fly into the airport Friday and will be available for display and walk-through tours from 2 to 5 p.m.

"If you fly the plane or walk through it, you get a sense of what it must have been like," said Nollie Srivastava of the Collings Foundation. "While we don't go to 30,000 feet and shoot at anybody, it's still the experience many of these men had. You can see and feel and hear for yourself."

The World War II bombers also will be on display from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and from 9 a.m. to noon Monday. Flights are available to visitors for a tax-deductible donation to the Collings Foundation, which organizes and supports "living history" events such as Wings of Freedom that educate Americans about their heritage through participation.

"It's more of a hands-on experience than you'll ever get in a museum," Srivastava said.

For more information about the Law Enforcement Torch Run Plane Pull or to register a team for the event, contact Jeff Henson at jhenson@soill.org or 800-394-0562. For more information about the Collings Foundation's Wings of Freedom Tour, visit www.collingsfoundation.org.

Contact Emily McFarlan at emcfarlan@scn1.com or 630-416-5196.

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