

'Ground show' offers variety



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Airshow action is on midway, not just in the sky

Staff report

At the California International Airshow Salinas, don't just look up — look around. Action and excitement abound on the midway as well as in the skies.

This year's "ground show," as it's known, includes returning favorites such as a NASA display, a kids' play area, and more than 100 military and civilian aircraft that visitors can view from close range.

"We've got something for everybody," said Airshow Executive Director Harry Wardwell. Also, several "war birds" or warplanes that have flown in armed conflicts will go on display on the tarmac at Salinas Municipal Airport.

The kids' play area will feature jump houses, stage shows, a Frisbee toss and a games booth.

Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System will again sponsor a National Aeronautics and Space Administration tent with an exploration theme.

While NASA films play throughout the day, Airshow patrons can meet NASA astronaut Stephen K. Robinson, who flew most recently on NASA's Return to Flight mission in 2005.

Robinson, born in Sacramento, has flown three space shuttle missions, including Discovery's STS-114 Return to Flight mission, which resupplied the International Space Station and evaluated new procedures for shuttle inspection and repair techniques.

Robinson, on Discovery's flight, performed three spacewalks, including an unplanned and unprecedented repair of the shuttle's heat shield. He also flew on STS-95 in 1998 and STS-85 in 1997 and has logged more than 830 hours and 14.1 million miles in space.

"The NASA exhibit is always a highlight, because people are just fascinated by space," Wardwell said.

Local vendors will sell hot and extra-cold foods, including barbecue dishes, pizza, churros and snow cones, plus beverages including beer and wine.

"The midway is going to be like an air show and a county fair all in one," said Wardwell. "It will be a fun place for all."

Crowd and static displays are seen at the California International Airshow Salinas in 2002. This year's 'ground show,' as it is known, includes a NASA display, a kid's play area and more than 100 military and civilian aircraft that visitors can view from close range.

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