

4TH OF JULY: Annual event funds aviation programs

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signature event, the Great Rubber Chicken Drop, will take place at 10 a.m. This unique raffle-type event is performed aviation-style. Participants can purchase two-by-two-foot numbered squares which are chalked on the runway for \$5 each. The Outlaw Aviation plane flies over the matrix, and rubber chickens are flung out. Each chicken represents a specific prize. Prizes are donated by Sisters-area businesses, and range in value from \$15 to \$400. The person who purchased the square that each rubber chicken lands on wins that prize.

A 50/50 raffle, helicopter scenic rides, and tandem sky-diving will add to the entertainment. Outlaw Aviation will have their two airplanes and new simulator on display, as well as popular apparel sales.

At around 11 a.m. following the raffle awards, the runway will be closed to aircraft and taken over by hotrods. Drag races down the runway pits unlikely pairs of dragsters, such as the hot-off-the-line Tesla against a 1963 Corvette, or a Subaru vs. a tow-truck. The fun is open to participants in any type of vehicle, from the family car to the champion dragster. The pancake grill will be taken over by burgers for lunch around 12 p.m.

The Rally on the Runway event is a fundraiser for the Sisters High School Flight Science program, which has grown to three classes and 52 students. The unique program is attracting attention as one of the only high school aviation programs in the country. While many schools offer ground-only instruction, few have access to flight training.

Through a collaboration between SHS, the Sisters Airport, and Outlaw Aviation, Sisters students are able to earn their pilot licenses while in high school.

“Flight training is normally very expensive,” said Julie Benson, co-owner of the Sisters Airport. “This event provides scholarship funds for students learning to fly. The community support is very evident when so many people come to the event and participate. I’m glad to make the airport available to bring the community together to celebrate the Fourth of July, and help our students become the next generation of pilots.”

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— Julie Benson

The next phase of aviation opportunity for SHS students is an “airplane build” project. The Sisters Airport has agreed to host a new Career Technical Education program where students will build an airplane from a kit. “It will be a hands-on class where students will learn metal-working and machining skills, as well as learning how airplanes are structured. We are trying to get all the pieces together to offer it starting next fall,” says Curt Scholl, Sisters School District superintendent. Donations toward the airplane kit are being sought. Details will be available at the Rally on the Runway celebration.

Admission to the Rally on the Runway is free. More information can be found at www.SistersAirport.com, and Facebook page “Sisters Eagle Airport.”

WATER: Drinking water can be affected by algae blooms

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Chapra led a team including scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in one of the most comprehensive studies to date of the interplay between global warming and the blooms, published in 2017.

Because they prefer warm water, higher summer temperatures and more frequent heat waves help the organisms. More frequent droughts also cause reservoirs to be shallower in summer, causing them to warm faster.

And more intense rainstorms, also conclusively linked to climate change, can wash more nutrients into lakes and reservoirs, especially from farms where nitrogen and phosphorous-rich fertilizers are used, Chapra said.

In Utah, a 2016 algae bloom in a recreational-use lake sickened more than 100, and when the story made national headlines other states reached out.

“We started getting calls from other health departments all over the country saying, ‘Hey, we’re dealing with an algal bloom in a

lake that has never ever had one before,’” said Aislynn Tolman-Hill, a spokeswoman for the Utah County Health Department.

Officials only recently started carefully logging the blooms, but they seem to be becoming more intense, said Ben Holcomb, a biologist for Utah’s environmental agency. “They’re starting earlier, they’re lasting longer, and their peaks seem to be getting bigger,” Holcomb said. “I don’t think any state is isolated.”

In Lake Erie, a major bloom in 2014 caused authorities to warn against drinking tap water in Toledo, Ohio, for more than two days, cutting off the main water source for more than 400,000 people.

Now blooms happen every year in Utah and Ohio. Officials in both states say they’ve largely been able to stop them from toxifying drinking water, but they can still sicken people and pets that go in the water, and often hit recreation businesses that depend on lake access.

Other blooms, including flare-ups affecting drinking water, have been logged in recent years in New York, Florida, and California.

In Oregon, officials lifted the capital city’s drinking water advisory after several days, but then had to re-issue the warning.

The water supply serves

a population of just over 150,000 in the city, along with residents outside city limits.

“These things like you’re seeing in Lake Erie and in Oregon are kind of like the canary in the coal mine.”
— Steven Chapra

Officials also warned that dozens of other water supplies could be vulnerable, and indeed, when workers from the city of Cottage Grove inspected another reservoir, they found a bloom, according to a report by Oregon Public Broadcasting.

Officials pointed out that testing for the blooms isn’t required by either federal or state law.

Researchers say that needs to change because blooms are likely to become more common, including in states where low temperatures had previously provided a buffer against the blooms.

“These things like you’re seeing in Lake Erie and in Oregon are kind of like the canary in the coal mine,” said Chapra, the Tufts researcher.

“It’s going to get worse, and it’s going to get worse in a big way.”

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The quilt is on display at the Furry Friends office (204 W. Adams Ave., Ste. 109, at Sisters Art Works), from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

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