



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Orange County
Program Title: Friday Night Fly-In Airport Movie Night
Program Category: Customer Service & Community Outreach

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Stephanie Straub
Title: Assistant County Administrator
Signature: Stephanie Straub

2025 VACo Achievement Award Nomination**Category: Customer Service & Community Outreach****Nominee: Friday Night Fly-In Airport Movie Night****Executive Summary:**

Orange County's airport serves as an important economic and public safety driver. While appreciated among the pilot community for its amenities that exceed others of comparable size, it was something of an unknown in the minds of our residents. Many were aware of its presence, especially given its proximity to the main youth sports complex in Orange County, but had never visited the airport or seen what makes it such a unique resource. Staff hatched a plan to address this concern, drawing inspiration from Richmond, and the decision was made to host a family-friendly outdoor movie night on the runway apron. This event gave residents, even those who had never visited the airport, a reason to check it out.

Activities included static display exhibits by public safety agencies (including a fire safety house), arts and crafts hosted by our Litter Control Committee (highlighted by an extremely popular youth paper airplane contest), snack sales by the Office on Youth, and more. Connecting so many county departments helped make clear the Orange County Airport's status as a public facility. In the interest of tying everything together, the movie chosen was *Planes: Fire & Rescue*. This family-friendly flick promoted direct, clear connections between the airport, the aviation industry, and the first responder agencies that brought vehicles and static displays to the event. The recent wildfire in neighboring Madison County, during which our airport served as an aviation staging area, was fresh in public memory. Consciously connecting all these dots through the attractions and movie choice at the event helped demonstrate the importance of the airport as a regional resource while simultaneously promoting general awareness, and fun, among members of the public!

Main Nomination:

The Orange County Airport is an important resource among our county facilities. As a general aviation airport, it is a high-quality point of operations for a variety of aircraft from throughout the region and beyond. Given the wide umbrella of general aviation, it's not surprising that the Orange County Airport plays host to some interesting aircraft, and some very important operations. In fact, according to Paul Weber, Airport Manager, there were 7,322 aircraft operations (takeoffs or landings) at the Airport in 2024 alone. It is home to Skydive Orange and has been since 1977. The club-operated drop zone is the most frequent user of the Airport, comprising about 39% of the overall aircraft operations (mostly using their 22-seat Twin Otter), but the club's use varies according to season. Among residents, their service has long been one of the most iconic elements of the Airport. After all, those who have lived in Orange County long enough are sure to have seen the many colorful parachutes floating back to earth. Other users also contribute to the economic vibrancy of Orange County. Well-situated for access to central Virginia farms, the Airport is a preferred site for crop-dusters spreading fertilizer, seed, and other agricultural compounds; it has hosted helicopters performing aerial trimming along power lines that are inaccessible to ground-based crews; and military and government contractors frequently use the facility and appreciate it as a convenient training location.



Figure 1: Skydive Orange is a longtime tenant of the Orange County Airport and often helps promote awareness of the facility.

Those interested in housing their private aircraft also gravitate to the Orange County Airport. It has easy access to a main highway (Route 20), features a 3,200-foot runway, and will accommodate

turboprop and piston engine aircraft of up to 12,500 pounds. Jet A and Avgas are available for refueling onsite, and an AWOS III Automated Weather Observation System assists flight planning. The modern terminal offers a comfortable pilot's lounge, free Wi-Fi access, a complimentary loaner car for ground transportation, and a modern conference room often used by local boards and organizations to host meetings. Perhaps most stunning are the incredible examples of model aircraft from the collection of Hubert Compton.

Availability of such amenities was an important factor when the Quaker Run Wildfire struck neighboring Madison County in November 2023, and the Airport was selected to be used for forward operations by visiting firefighting aircraft. These included an A Star B3E operated by Heliqwest Aviation and a



Figure 3: A K-Max helicopter, at the Orange County Airport, preparing to fight the Quaker Run fire.

K-Max operated by North American Helicopter, which flew in from Denver,

CO, and St. Louis, MO, respectively. These choppers provided critical aerial reconnaissance of the fire's progression as well as direct suppression of the flames using "Bambi Buckets" that could drop up to 660 gallons of water where it was needed most.



Figure 2: An aerial photograph of the Quaker Run fire.

Through its supportive role, the Orange County Airport contributed to the effort against the wildfire.

Following 2023's summer and fall of particularly eventful airport use (including the aforementioned firefighting), staff were excited about the future of the facility and were interested in increasing awareness of the important role played by the Orange County Airport. A flyer for the movie night held at Richmond Executive Airport provided the inspiration. As it caught the eye of our Assistant County Administrator, she quickly sent a message to the Communications Specialist and Airport Manager, "Can we do this?"

Both team members were on board and excited to help the Airport engage with the community, and the name “Friday Night Fly-In” was chosen for the event! Actual logistics presented several challenges. Involved staff were familiar with planning outdoor movie nights, having hosted several for the Parks & Recreation Department, but the airport’s location was decidedly different. Unlike Richmond, we did not have access to an empty hangar large enough to host the screen or close enough to parking and terminal access. A showing inside the terminal was considered but would have limited participation and necessitated registration (even if free) to avoid overcrowding. Restricting attendance would have been counterproductive to the event’s purpose. Instead, we decided to use the runway’s apron, outdoors and directly behind the terminal. While presenting plenty of room for any realistic attendance level and creating a seamless flow between event attractions, the lack of hangar protection meant the large, inflatable screen was at the mercy of the weather, particularly wind. It also meant that scheduling options would be limited to April or October, since it would have to get dark enough outside (at a reasonable hour for families with kids) for the projected movie to be visible. Closing the apron also required FAA approval. During the planning stages, we evaluated the location and determined that we could secure the screen to tower framework on one side and attach it to vehicles on the other side.

Thankfully, movie selection came much more easily. Disney’s *Planes: Fire & Rescue*, an animated film about aircraft that fight fires in a national park, reinforced all the connections we hoped to make with the event. First, the film’s content was appropriate for all ages, which helped us make the event appealing to families. Of course, the film’s main characters all being personified planes and



Figure 4: Public safety agencies helped showcase departmental cooperation and promote fire safety awareness.

helicopters helped demonstrate the importance of aviation generally and by extension, the Orange County Airport itself. The airport’s recent use as a base for firefighting efforts was directly highlighted by the movie’s plot, and

helped foster understanding regarding ways such a facility can make positive impacts during an emergency. Finally, the focus on emergency response gave us an opportunity to promote cross-departmental cooperation by inviting our public safety agencies such as Fire & EMS, the Sheriff's Office, and the Orange Volunteer Fire Company, to set up displays and educational booths. Going beyond community engagement, attractions like Fire & EMS' Safety House - which simulates an actual house fire and helps illustrate ways to be safe and escape such as situation, promoted strong safety awareness among some of our youngest residents.

While the public safety connection was important and intentionally fostered, the focus on aviation and bringing attention to the airport was the true focus of the event. Creative activities helped accomplish this goal throughout the event. For example, Orange County Litter Control provided paper airplane coloring and folding lessons (using recycled paper, of course) inside the terminal. Kids were able to follow instructions to create one of a few pre-determined airplane designs or chart their own course with a unique design. Participants were encouraged to hold onto their creations for the inaugural paper airplane flight contest! The contest was hugely popular, with dozens of participants competing to determine whose design could fly the furthest. A scavenger hunt-style activity was also hosted within the terminal, which showcased the unique model airplane collection provided from the Hubert Compton Collection. At the main desk, attendees could receive a worksheet with aircraft silhouettes arranged in the same order as the actual models on display in the terminal, and blank answer lines. Those who



Figure 5: After crafting their own paper airplanes, our young attendees were thrilled to see how they flew during our paper airplane competition. Airport Manager Paul Weber observes from the far right of the image.

could identify each model aircraft (an answer bank was provided) on the sheet and return it to the desk received a special high quality punchout airplane as a prize! Further interdepartmental cooperation was demonstrated through Office on Youth snack sales. Sales of popcorn and drinks helped fund their Youth Council programs.

Outside and alongside the displays hosted by our public safety agencies, the Virginia Department of Aviation (DOAV) brought their Icon A5 educational aircraft and simulator trailer. These interactive elements allowed youth attendees to do more than just look at airplanes. Rather, they were able to climb inside an actual aircraft or use software to get a taste of what flying is actually like! So popular was this attraction that a line developed as young aviators waited to take to the (virtual) air, but the DOAV staff members elected to stay a bit later to ensure that everyone got a turn.



Figure 6: A DOAV employee shows a young aviator around the Icon A5 cockpit.



Figure 7: Mario from Skydive Orange prepares to take off with the movie tucked safely in his jumpsuit.

industry partners and the importance of aviation in Orange County. Skydive Orange, a longtime tenant and the most frequent airport usergroup, volunteered to dive the movie into the event. Mario, one of their most experienced jumpers, was happy to oblige. The crowd was in awe as he descended to the ground and delivered the DVD to staff so they could start the night's main feature.

However, as the show went on, staff were faced with the return of one of the event's initial challenges, wind. Although not an exceedingly windy evening, wind speeds did reach about 10 mph at times. Despite being secured to several vehicles and a



Figure 8: Despite being secured to several vehicles, wind was still problematic for the inflatable screen.

tower, the screen acted as a sail whenever there was even a slight gust. Demonstrating teamwork, some of the staff from the Fire & EMS display made the trek back to the nearby Public Safety Building to retrieve dumbbells from their workout room. Similarly, Skydive Orange allowed us to borrow some kettlebells from their hangar. Working together, we were able to shore up the securing lines with additional weights at critical points, which greatly improved the situation. This moment of camaraderie exemplified much of the original intent of the event, to showcase how the Orange County Airport is an important resource that works with other departments and private partners for the benefit of our residents. Occasionally, the wind would pick up a bit and require staff to grab some of the lines and hold on as best they could until the gust passed. Despite these weather-related challenges, the movie was extremely well-received and drew a significant turnout of hundreds – in fact, one attendee took the Friday Night Fly-In name literally. He flew from a neighboring locality in his private aircraft, mentioning to organizers how he had seen the flyer and wanted to learn more about the event and hopefully do something similar in his area. The film itself neatly tied together all of the evening's attractions and helped cement the event in the memories of our residents, making everything that went into its planning and execution fully worth it!



Figure 9: The crowd begins to gather on the airport's runway apron in preparation for the movie start.



Friday Night *Fly-In*

movie night at the
airport presents:

Planes: Fire & Rescue



April 26, 2024

Orange County Airport (KOMH)
11275 Aviation Way, Orange, VA

Event Opens, Kids' Activities Begin at 6:00 p.m.

Outdoor Movie Begins at 8:25 p.m.

FREE

Notes for Parents and Caregivers:

- Planes: Fire & Rescue is rated PG.
- Runtime is 1 hour 23 minutes. Approximate event end time: 10:00 p.m.
- Attendees must bring their own blankets and lawn chairs.
- Movie will be outdoors, at night, on the airport terminal apron (asphalt). Please dress accordingly.
- Bathrooms nearby in the airport terminal.
- Parking at the Airport and Skydive Orange.

More Than Just a Movie Night:

- Exhibits by
 - Virginia Dept. of Aviation
 - County of Orange Fire & EMS
 - Orange Volunteer Fire Company
 - Skydive Orange
- Paper Airplane Folding & Flight Contest
- Snacks & Popcorn Onsite
 - Sold as a fundraiser for Charlottesville Civil Air Patrol

Questions? Call (540) 672-2158

Figure 10: The event flyer.