

Club celebrates grand opening of new facility

David Willberg / Estevan Mercury

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A radio controlled plane soars through the air during a demonstration.



A plane takes off from the Sun City Prop Busters new field.



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After seven years of waiting, the Radio Controlled (RC) Club of Estevan, which includes the Sun City Prop Busters, wasn't going to allow some strong winds to prevent them from hosting the grand opening of their facility southeast of Estevan.

The club, which boasts avid RC plane operators along with RC cars and truck owners, celebrated the grand opening of their new facility on June 25. People came from across the province to help the club celebrate.

Some of the more experienced RC airplane owners navigated their planes through the heavy winds. There was also a barbecue lunch, a celebratory cake, a ribbon cutting and a flight simulator.

The club's land is located on more than 50 acres southeast of Estevan, to the east of the Shand Access Road and to the north of the Trackside Motocross Association and the Estevan Motor Speedway. There is a large field that measures 600 feet long by 350 feet wide, which gives the RC planes room to take off and land.

"It's not completely square, but it's workable, and it will allow for (model) jets and bigger aircraft to take off," said club president Art Dougherty.

Members who owned RC cars and trucks can race them on a circle track, or test them out on bumps and jumps. The club's facility also boasts a kitchen, a clubhouse, washrooms and RV parking. The entire facility is solar-powered.

The club will also hold their meetings at the facility during the first Wednesday of each month during the warmer months.

"It's fantastic," said Dougherty. "I think we're probably one of the best clubs in Western Canada right now, for the facility that we have. Not everybody has flush toilets, and we have a water system, and we have solar cells."

Their old home was to the west of their current facility for many years, but coal mining displaced them in 2008. Sherritt Coal then gave them a 20-year lease for the area that serves as their new home.

"We developed the site as you see it today," said Dougherty.

After mining started on their old land, they held meetings at the Estevan Fire Hall. And they were able to fly their planes at an area south of their new home.

Dougherty's late father, Elroy, spearheaded the construction of the current facility and put a lot of money into it.

"He set forth to bring assets, manpower and equipment to assist members to bring the new land to flight-and track-worthy status," said Art Dougherty.

The new clubhouse is named after Elroy Dougherty. The names of the sponsors are also displayed.

"Many of our members spent countless hours picking rocks, acquiring equipment for levelling and construction, as well as helping move buildings and finishing areas that members and guests use," said Dougherty.

They moved into their new area last year, and it has proven to be a great change. They wanted to make sure the facility was ready before hosting the grand opening.

Club members are always looking for ways to enhance their venue, especially the bumps and jumps track for the RC cars and trucks. They also need to improve the areas for parking and campers, so that those are suitable when they host get-togethers for flying.

The club was established in 1988 and has about 23 members. The lack of a permanent facility has hurt their membership total the last few years, but they are hopefully the new area will help them enjoy a resurgence.

“There’s a lot of interest in it in both sides of the sport,” said Dougherty. “It’s more challenging with the airplanes, of course. With windy conditions like today, it’s tough to fly. But as far as cars and trucks and everything else, as long as it’s not raining, they should be okay.”

Open houses will take place on every Thursday in July to help stimulate interest in the club.

- See more at: <http://www.estevanmercury.ca/news/local-news/club-celebrates-grand-opening-of-new-facility-1.2289053#sthash.Kha7LU11.dpuf>