

Airplane group sets organizational meeting

Twin City aviation buffs are hoping the idea for a vintage aircraft museum will fly in Bloomington-Normal, and have already set their sights on acquiring a "war bird" at bargain basement prices.

Norman Wingler, 2007 Benjamin Lane, Bloomington, is a member of Heritage in Flight Museum, Inc. and hopes to start a Bloomington-Normal chapter of the Springfield-based organization.

Wingler, who has scheduled an organizational meeting for 7:30 tonight at the Bloomington-Normal Airport, said about 15 aircraft aficionados are needed to start the chapter. He said the purpose of the organization is to "relive our aviation heritage."

If the organization is a success, the first project will be to acquire a DC-3 airplane that was built in the late 1930s and used chiefly to carry paratroopers during World War II.

Wingler said surplus planes such as the twin-engine DC-3 are owned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and are available to the non-profit organization.

He said the "Gooney Bird," as it was once called, can be purchased for less than \$5,000. That figure includes the asking price of \$1,000, plus state charges and the cost to fuel the plane and get it flown here.

The Bloomington-Normal Airport Authority is expected to take up a request to provide space for the airplane at its Thursday meeting.

Wingler said a second organizational meeting is set for Monday to accommodate those who cannot attend tonight. Membership fees would include \$30 for the national organization, with about \$5 added for local chapter dues.

Money to buy the DC-3 would come from private donations, which are tax-deductible, he said.