

Air Show lands new manager

Mike Hennessy hopes to boost
annual Watsonville Fly-In

By TODD GUILD

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — The 48-year-old Watsonville Fly-In and Air Show is under new management, and will get a new look and a new name for the 2013 event.

New manager Mike Hennessy is an automobile repair shop owner-turned promoter who, among other things, runs the Hot San Jose Nights car show and the Car Guy Channel, an automobile-based public access show that runs throughout the Bay Area.

Hennessy will be running the show along with his wife, Susan Hennessy.

He said his fondness for Watsonville and a desire to relocate here coupled with his promotional skills, compelled him to breathe fresh life into the event, which has seen a decline in the faltering economy.

Hennessy said he wants to boost attendance to the popular Watsonville event with a massive advertising blitz designed to turn Watsonville into a tourist draw.

"Here is an event that has been going on for 48 years and a lot of events need to be refreshed," he said.

In addition to the weekend air show, Hennessy plans to add an automotive and aviation swap meet, a Richie Valens tribute show, a carnival, cooking demonstrations, a zip line and a Friday night drive-in movie, among other things.

Hennessy said his fresh approach to the Fly-In also includes an expanded classic car and train show that has inspired the event's new name, "Watsonville Fly In, Trains Planes & Automobiles."

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A U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III lands at Watsonville Municipal Airport in 2009 for the Fly-In and Air Show.

Tarmo Hannula/Registrar-Pajaronian file

FLY-IN

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"In an effort for the Watsonville Fly-In and Airshow to gear up for the Iconic Golden (50th Anniversary), the event has contracted with Mike Hennessy,

a proven San Jose promoter to assist the board in the prequel 49th Anniversary (Labor Day, 2013) celebration," Watsonville Event Manager Doug Mattos stated in an email.

"Mike has a large following in the car show industry and is offering an expansion of the event to include a world class car show, showcase of local and regional entertainment while continuing to showcase our airport and the aviation industry," Mattos stated.

The car portion of the show will include such luxury and classic cars as a 2013 McLaren,

a Callaway Corvette and an Austin Martin. The show will also feature high-end cars by Watsonville car dealers.

More than 160 cars have already been signed up, Hennessy said.

"This is really about getting families to come," he said. "I'm trying to cover everything for everybody."

In retooling the Fly-In, Hennessy said he wants to look beyond the economic woes that have plagued the show.

"Some people look at rain and see rain, but I look at it and see a rainbow," he said.