

North Central Airlines Exhibit moves forward

Plane will be named
"The City of
Clintonville"

BY BERT LEHMAN
EDITOR

CLINTONVILLE — If all goes as planned there will be a North Central Airlines DC-3 named "The City of Clintonville" sometime in the next few years.

Jon Helminiak, executive director for the Aviation Heritage Center of Wisconsin, located in Sheboygan Falls, where the plane would be on display, made a stop in Clintonville on Monday, Jan. 18. He toured the Heritage House and the Four Wheel Drive Museum. He also spoke at a Clintonville Rotary function that evening.

While in Clintonville he spoke with the Tribune-Gazette about the project to create a North Central Airlines Commemorative Exhibit featuring a refurbished DC-3.

Helminiak said the Aviation Heritage Center has located a DC-3 it is looking to purchase, but a final deal hasn't been reached yet.



Jon Helminiak, executive director of the Aviation Heritage Center, speaks to the Clintonville Rotary on Jan. 18, about the North Central Airlines Commemorative Exhibit project. Jeff Hoffman photo

"When we acquire an appropriate aircraft we'll paint it in North Central Airlines colors so that it resembles an aircraft of the early 1960s that they flew," Helminiak said. "Hopefully it will have an original North Central Airlines interior from that time period. A portion of the interior will house North Central memorabilia."

The aircraft will be the primary flagship of the North Central Airlines

Commemorative Exhibit at the Aviation Heritage Center of Wisconsin.

If enough funds are raised, a North Central Airlines Library will also be constructed on the second floor of the Aviation Heritage Center building, he said. Airline memorabilia and photographs would be on display in the library.

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Helminiak didn't have a timeframe for the project, but said he hopes to have a DC-3 purchased and at the Aviation Heritage Center by the end of this year.

In December, the Clintonville City Council approved spending \$25,000 of tourism funds for the naming rights of the DC-3 plane to be purchased for the North Central Airlines Commemorative Exhibit.

"For the city of Clintonville to step forward and pledge this amount of money to name the aircraft, to me personally, is very rewarding and heartwarming because this is where it all began — here in Clintonville," Helminiak said.

"It also sends a message to other potential donors and individuals who may want to get involved in this project, that the place where this all started, the city and the current tourism committee and city council are on board with what we're doing. That lends a significant amount of credibility to this project."

Clintonville's \$25,000 pledge represents around 20 percent of the total amount of the project, Helminiak said.

"But I think it's more than money when it comes to what the city of Clintonville has done. It's the symbolism and representation that here's a community that believes strongly in the Aviation Heritage Center, and believes strongly enough in commemorating

North Central Airlines to give that amount of money. And that makes a tremendous statement to us and to other people to be talking to about this exhibit. The money is great and wonderful but it's the statement that means equally as much," he said.

For its pledge, the DC-3 will be named "The City of Clintonville." That will be painted on each side of the plane under the cockpit windows.

"We also agreed to work with the city of Clintonville to put up a kiosk inside the exhibit and perhaps within our facility as well," Helminiak said. "That will house whatever information it wants us to have to encourage people to come here."