

Skies 'Thunder Over Nampa'

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By: Jon Meyer

NAMPA — Saturday's Thunder Over Nampa Airshow held special significance for veteran aviators Bruce Nicholes and Ben Russell, who earned their pilot's licenses in 1941 and 1981 respectively.

"It's fun. We try to come to these as often as we can," said Dot Nicholes, Bruce's wife, while socializing in the VIP area. The event was a special partnership this year between the city of Nampa, the Nampa Municipal Airport and the Idaho Meth Project.

Also at the airshow, Brandon Powell, a recovered meth addict of nearly a decade, said he was touched by the collaboration.

"I was actually addicted to meth for almost eight years," said Powell. "I've been now clean for about a year."

He said that when he heard about the airshow and the Idaho Meth Project taking donations, he tried to bring as many people as he could find. Coming through the gates with eight people, Powell made sure to donate "a few extra bucks" for the anti-drug campaign.

"It's a great cause," he said. "They need all the help they can get and I'm on their side."

Looking up at his dad, his 7-year-old son Mason said: "I'm on their side too."

To benefit the Idaho Meth Project as much as possible, all of the performers at the airshow thrilled spectators free of charge. Even after recently performing for nearly a quarter-million people in Washington D.C., acrobatic pilot Greg Poe of Boise said it was great to come back to the airport where he got his start in aviation.

And benefiting the Meth Project while crossing the sky at nearly 275 miles an hour in his custom Fagen MX2, he said, was an added bonus.

"It's the right thing to do," Poe said while relaxing after his third show of the day. "It's a program that's very much needed."

Micron CEO Steve Appleton flew overhead in a "Hawker Hunter" fighter jet much to the joy of visitors to the show. Throughout the event, folks could view model and real aircraft and take in food and flight information.

Idaho Meth Project Executive Director Megan Ronk said that from all perspectives, the show was a great success. And with an estimated yearly budget of around \$2.4 million, the project needs funding to keep promoting its slogan — "Not even once" — through an aggressive advertising campaign.

"This is not a problem we're going to solve overnight," Ronk said. "We really have to look at the next generation of Idahoans and inform them about this horrible drug."

One of the largest advertisers in the state of Idaho, the Idaho Meth Project is targeting teens and young adults with numerous ads, convincing them to never even try the stimulant drug.

"We know airshows are a big draw," Ronk said, explaining that secondary to their ads is the project's grassroots fundraising campaigns.

"It's great to see full families here having fun and enjoying food. Hopefully it opens the door for parents to talk to their kids about meth and the things it can do to you."