

# Norwood Record

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## A beautiful day for flying

Hundreds attend first ever Norwood Wings and Wheels event

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By Rich Trombetta

“Ladies and gentlemen. You’re about to see a plane takeoff,” announced Katie Seastedt, assistant director of recreation for the Town of Norwood.

The propeller of a single-engine plane slowly began to turn, its speed increasing until the sound was a loud and consistent hum. The pilots, visible in the cockpit, appeared to make last minute checks as the plane turned to the left and made its way toward the runway. Over 100 spectators, mostly families with young children, watched and waved good-bye, close enough to make eye contact with the pilots but far enough away to remain safe.

The first ever Norwood Wings and Wheels event, organized by Norwood Recreation Department in cooperation with the Norwood Memorial Airport, was about to begin.

Groups of children, many visibly excited and some seemingly a bit nervous, were accompanied by parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and escorted by a volunteer guide past a security gate and down the tarmac. Various trucks, a police car with its lights on, a firetruck, a number of planes - including a jet and pontoon plane - and helicopters awaited them, the trucks

available to be touched and climbed upon and the planes and helicopters ready for a perfect photo opportunity on a gorgeous Saturday morning.

“I really liked the helicopters. They look a lot different when you see them close up,” said Jafar Alaoui, an eight-year-old boy who attends Callahan Elementary School and has been on “like five airplanes.” While Alaoui was impressed by what he saw, he is not sure a career in aviation is for him.

“I want to get into something that pays good money,” the second-grader said before going to climb on a monstrous-sized excavator.

In addition to the planes and trucks, there were inflatable bouncy houses and slides for children to play on as a DJ spun upbeat tunes; Tom Petty’s “Learning to Fly” blared as the first group made its way past the security gate and other songs like Frank Sinatra’s classic “Come Fly With Me” and the Foo Fighters’ “Learn to Fly” could be heard in the background through the event. Police officers and firefighters also engaged with kids and families, encouraging visitors to ask questions and even sit in the front seat of a police car.

“This exceeded our expectations,” said Seastedt, who, along with Russ Maguire at the Norwood Memorial Airport, were the brains behind the idea for the event. “Our vision was to start small but within two hours [of people being able to enroll] there was a waiting list.”

The free event brought out over 300 Norwood residents who, in groups of about 75 and for approximately 45 minutes, had access to the tarmac area. One of the challenges Seastedt and the staff at the event faced was ensuring they followed all FAA safety and security guidelines, particularly since the airport remained operational while families enjoyed the experience. To the delight of the attendees planes and helicopters were taking off, landing and flying overhead.

“This is really cool,” said Norwood resident Miguel Malena. “It’s really impressive to see the planes still coming in.”

Although this is the first Wings and Wheels event, Seastedt expects the Town to run it again next year or possibly in the spring.

“I like seeing the community coming together,” Seastedt said. “And this wasn’t just for families. We had a 77-year-old sign up. There is something for everyone, and it’s such a beautiful day.”