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Sunday, November 20, 2005

Turkey bombing challenge to continue at Skyhaven Airport

By **JOHN QUINN**
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ROCHESTER — About a dozen area residents hoped to win a free turkey by attempting to hit a target while airborne above Skyhaven Airport on Saturday.

The inaugural "turkey bombing" challenge continues today from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the airport, located at 238 Rochester Hill Road — Route 108. All are welcome to watch or try themselves.



Megan Horne, 11, of Ossipee, throws a pumpkin from a plane at 400 feet during the turkey bomb contest at Skyhaven Airport in Rochester on Saturday morning. (Craig Osborne/Democrat photo)

Participants have three chances to drop a pumpkin into a barrel inside an inflatable swimming pool, which is marked by a 25-square-foot box, from a plane flying at 500 feet above the ground. A ground spotter informs the pilot and the contestant how close they came between throws to allow them to adjust.

"It's a great first start — everyone's having fun," said Mike McMahon Jr., a pilot from Barrington. He added that next year the organizers hope to work with a charity, which should bring in more people and the proceeds can be donated to help others. McMahon said if no one hits the target, a winner is drawn from a list of participants.

"The closest we've gotten is about 2 feet from the left side (of the target)," Lynn Lentz, of Stratham, said, adding there are plenty of chances left since Scamman's Home & Garden Center in Stratham donated 180 pumpkins and the turkeys will be donated by the Dover Meat House.

The cost is \$60 to throw three pumpkins from an airplane or \$15 if participants bring their own plane. Lentz said the idea arose when pilots at Ossipee Valley Aviation were brainstorming how to get some attention while having fun.

"You want to encourage young aviators and try to get them to go up at a young age," Lentz said.

McMahon's children, Adam, 11, and Hannah, 13, and his mother Alma, 72, of East Millinocket, Maine, all attempted the challenge and learned how difficult it is.

Adam McMahon said after his attempt, estimating the distance to the target is part of the challenge.

"You don't win, but it's fun — you get to drop stuff out of planes," Adam McMahon said, adding he came within eight feet of the target.

"That's what it's all about — having fun" said Alma McMahon.

Tony Kiley, a pilot from Barnstead who has previous experience with flour bombing contests, said it's a matter of timing. Even with his expertise, pumpkins proved to be just as challenging, he said.

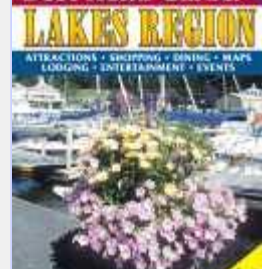
"Whenever you fly, you have a good time," Kiley said.



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