

HAI Focuses on New Affiliate Member: American Heroes Aviation Network, Inc.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMERICAN HEROES AIR SHOW FANS AND PARTICIPANTS

The Helicopter Association International (HAI) offers Affiliate Memberships to organizations which share HAI's goals of promoting the helicopter, flight safety, the principles of "Flying Neighborly," and of promoting and improving the public image of rotorcraft. Our newest Affiliate Member Organization, American Heroes Aviation Network, Inc., the umbrella non-profit 401c3 organization which coordinates a national network of American Heroes Air Shows, definitely fills the bill on all counts.

Established in Los Angeles in 1992, the American Heroes Air Show (AHAS) began as a grass-roots community effort to celebrate the dynamic role of helicopters in law enforcement, fire service, search and rescue, and national defense. Designed initially to publicly recognize the "benefits that helicopters bring to our community," and to recognize the pilots and crewmembers who serve the citizens of Southern California, this non-profit event has gone national. Today, "American Heroes" events are held in six major U.S. cities, enabling spectators from coast to coast to experience the versatility of military and civil helicopters, and to meet the pilots who fly them. As the official show profile states, these shows "feature non-stop aerial demonstrations, and excitement including;

- ★ Helicopter displays, flyovers, and tactical demonstrations
- ★ Interactive exhibits and hands-on family activities
- ★ Public safety and emergency preparedness displays
- ★ Helicopter rides
- ★ Live local entertainment
- ★ Public safety career fairs



American Heroes shows typically blend a touch of patriotism into the flight demonstrations and displays.

There are no hard figures — since none of the Heroes shows ever charge admittance fees — but it is estimated that somewhere in the neighborhood of 40,000 people attended the shows in 2008.

You do not need hard figures to know that in every way since its first show, AHAS has proven to be an outstanding good-will ambassador for the helicopter industry. It promotes safety, and the "fly neighborly"

concept, and it definitely promotes a positive public image of the helicopter. HAI is proud to announce that American Heroes Aviation Network, Inc has formally applied for and been accepted as an HAI Affiliate Organization.

An Air Show Without the Airport

Jim Paules, the founder and guiding light of American Heroes Air Show, works in commercial real estate, not

the helicopter industry, but grew up in an aviation and law enforcement family which left him with a passion for helicopters and a respect for public service. Because of that twin passion, he long ago got involved with another HAI affiliate association, the Professional Helicopters Pilots Association (PHPA). His experience with that association reconfirmed his admiration for the skill and professionalism of the pilots who fly in support of public safety. Paules is still active in PHPA, serving as Treasurer and member of the Board of Directors.

According to Paules, “The idea of an air show focusing totally on helicopters and the people who fly them came to me after watching the great work the enforcement and firefighting pilots always do out here with wild fires, and swift water and mountain rescues. It struck me that the community never had a chance to really meet these people or learn about their roles in public service, or to say “thank you.”

As a result, in the early nineties,

Search and Rescue hoist and other live demonstrations provide a dramatic view of how helicopters serve the public.



The shows were designed to allow attendees a close-up view of the helicopters and to meet the pilots and crews that serve their communities.

Paules started exploring the possibility of organizing an air show dedicated to the Southern California helicopter pilots and crews who served their local communities. In 1992, he started planning and organizing a helicopter-only air show to be staged at Santa Monica Airport in Los Angeles. The first event, in 1993, was billed as

“American Giants: A Celebration of Heroes,” and featured eight helicopters from the Southern California law enforcement community.

The event was such a success that it immediately became an annual affair. The name was shortened to “American Heroes Air Show,” but the show itself kept getting bigger and quickly outgrew its original home. As Paules says, “The increasing number of aircraft, and our desire to provide flight demonstrations that really show what these pilots can accomplish,

led us to explore other options.” Coincidentally, at the time, Los Angeles city officials were anxious to locate signature events which could be held at the Hansen Dam Sports Complex in the San Fernando Valley. Paules recalls, “It finally dawned on us that our event wasn’t limited to airports. They could really be held anywhere you could land a helicopter. In fact, holding an air show without benefit of an airport actually underscores one of our primary goals — showcasing the unique abilities and versatility of helicopters.”

As a result, in 1997, Hansen Dam became the regular home for “Heroes,” and it became an air show without an airport. It kept growing and the crowds increased in size. From the beginning, the nonprofit show has been open to the public with free admission. Costs are covered by donations from local and national businesses. More aircraft kept coming. Helicopter units from Law Enforcement, Fire and Rescue, and the military sent more and more aircraft each year as word spread of the benefits of the event. To provide balance, Paules actively sought out and encouraged participation by commercial helicopter operators in electronic news gathering (ENG) and emergency medical services (EMS). In 2008 the American Heroes Air Show in Los Angeles featured over 30 helicopters and attracted over 10,000 spectators!



The red-white-and-blue firefighting water drop is always a big hit at the Los Angeles Heroes event.

More Than An Air Show

Over the years, as AHAS matured and grew, it became more than just an air show. However, it still features a wide assortment of helicopters in static display and crowd-stirring flight demonstrations such as the Los Angeles City Fire Department's three-helicopter, patriotic red, white and blue firefighting water drop, and the exciting winch rescue demonstration by the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department's S-61 Sea King.

But along the way, law enforcement and fire-fighting agencies discovered that it was not just a fun-filled picnic opportunity to show off their fancy machines. They discovered that the American Heroes Air Show could also be an outstanding public education and public relations outreach tool in the communities they serve.

Bryan Smith, an officer with the Gainesville Florida Police Department who went on to become the organizer of the Gainesville American Heroes Air Show, was first attracted to the idea because of its public education and outreach potentials.

Smith sums it up by saying, "Despite all our efforts, the aircraft, capabilities, and mission of airborne law enforcement still remain a mystery to many in the general public and standard law enforcement. Our air shows offer more than just a chance to come and look at some helicopters. Education is the goal. Units that attend bring along materials to display alongside the aircraft or at a booth. Spectators learn about what

each aircraft does for them and how the job gets done. They can hear pilots' war stories and look at the equipment up close and have their questions answered. Kids learn about aviation and young adults interested in being a pilot, police officer, soldier or medic can get information on how to join our ranks. Above all the noise and commotion, you can hear the sound of helicopters giving rides. It is the kind of event that people bring their families to. There is something for everyone and the education is delivered under the more appealing guise of having fun."

According to Smith, "It works! There are few, if any, methods to showcase public service helicopters in a positive light better than "Heroes." In one day, we educate more citizens than in the rest of our other yearly public relations events combined."

In addition to the public relations and education benefits, agencies have also discovered that "Heroes" can be a valuable recruiting opportunity. Paules states, "Four years ago, we formally added the CODE3 Career

PROMISE" Emergency Preparedness Fair provides city, county, state, and federal agencies an opportunity to showcase community emergency preparedness information on how to respond to and recover from natural disasters of all kinds.



Firefighting demonstrations showcase the capability of the helicopter and excite the thousands of spectators who attend the Heroes shows every year.

A Local Air Show Goes National

Although it started out as a local Southern California event, AHAS was too successful to avoid notice in other areas. Early on, Paules started getting calls from people who had attended or heard about his air shows and who wanted him to stage something similar in their home areas. Typically, he would turn the callers' request around and he would ask them if they would like to organize a show of their own.

Some said they would and, in turn, Paules provided the help and advice they needed to get “Heroes” shows started in their area. The result is that, in addition to the original L.A. event, American Heroes Air Shows are now held annually in Austin, Texas; Seattle, Washington; Canton/Atlanta, Georgia; Gainesville, Florida; and Frederick, Maryland.

Before authorizing any potential local volunteer organizer to join the “network” and to use the American Hero brand name, Paules insists they agree to abide by his “5 golden rules.” The rules are:

- ★ “360 degree safety” must be observed during event operations. The “360 degree safety” term is Paules’ shorthand reference to his rule that safety be the top priority at every show from the time the first aircraft is expected until the last one leaves.
- ★ Shows must be “all helicopters/only helicopters,”
- ★ No admission fees or parking fees can be charged,
- ★ There must be no vendor or sponsor connection with the tobacco or alcohol industries,
- ★ Event management must be non-compensated volunteers.

After Paules identifies a local volunteer organizer, he provides them with advice and guidance — starting with a fifteen page “how to” paper, along with forms, sample safety plans, pilot briefings for show operations, contact lists of potential participant operators, sponsors, and volunteers.

Pat Robinson, who produced his first Heroes show in Frederick Maryland in 2008, says that, “Jim Paules doesn’t just sign you up and then set you adrift to do it all on your own. He forwards you reams of information and “how to” manuals and he follows up with lots of personal contact and guidance. He always seems to know just where you are in your planning and what you need at the time.”

Obviously, much of the success of AHAS stems directly from Paules and his own seemingly endless enthusiasm. However, he is quick to point out that

he gets a lot of help and support from other volunteers and sponsors. “I am constantly stunned by the willingness of people to freely volunteer their time and efforts to make these air shows possible,” said Paules.

Where Now?

What is in the future for AHAS? American Heroes Air Show has shown dramatic



Heroes shows are family oriented events with something for everyone and provide a great opportunity to introduce children and adults to aviation and public service.

growth since the first event in 1993. Paules would like to see that growth continue. “In terms of growth we’re looking at two aspects really,” says Paules. “There’s what I call horizontal growth where we grow the event into more communities across the country; we have six sites now and I’m looking for a Volunteer Event

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HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO, AMERICA ?



The American Heroes Air Show Network 2009 Event Schedule

Join us at the nation's premier Helicopter - Only, admission - free aviation experience

March 28th	Gainesville, Florida
POC Bryan Smith	(352) 328-4248 Email: SmithBG@CityofGainesville.org
April 18th	Austin, Texas
POC Brian Johnson	(512) 925-6337 Email: Brian.johnson@heroes-airshow.com
Date TBD	Atlanta, Georgia
POC Mike Grier	(404) 451-2212 Email: FLIIFR@AOL.com
June 20th	Seattle, Washington
POC Barry Pomeroy	(206) 321-7997 Email: Barry.pomeroy@Heroes-airshow.com
July 11th	Los Angeles
POC Jim Paules	(818) 631 - 8132 Email: Jim@heroes-airshow.com
Date TBD	Frederick, Maryland
POC Pat Robinson	(571) 438-8595 Email: PRobinson@Heroes-airshow.com

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Director for Denver and St.Louis right now for 2009.”

“Although the focus of the American Heroes Air Shows is the public service sector of the helicopter world, in the end, the positive public image of helicopters projected by the AHAS events benefits us all.... In essence, HAI and AHAS have been partners since the first Heroes show.”

Matt Zuccaro, President of HAI

Paules also thinks in terms of what he calls “vertical growth” where new elements are added to the events themselves, such as the CODE# career Fair program that was added four years ago. “Right now,” says Paules, “I’m working with and have invited the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services to attend our events around the country and help us produce a new Citizenship Ceremony to allow qualified candidates for citizenship to take their oath and officially become U.S. Citizens at our air shows in front of their family and community.”

Aside from the potential for vertical and horizontal growth, Paules, in large part due to his own admirable insistence that the events be provided free of charge to the public, and the other Volunteer Event Directors face the constant challenge of locating and recruiting sponsors to help defray the costs of the existing events, and locating volunteers to provide manpower. They have found that Civil Air Patrol cadets

and PD Explorers are wonderful assets at many of the shows for crowd control, parking management, and

general assistance. But the search for volunteers and sponsors is a constant and ongoing effort. **If you are interested in helping support an American Heroes Air Show near you, either as a sponsor or a volunteer, by all means let Jim Paules or the appropriate**

Volunteer Event Director know. (Contact information is available at www.heroes-airshow.com.)

Trading Cards

Among the highlights of the American Heroes Air Shows are the popular, collectible, “Event Trading Cards” that are issued commemorating specific aircraft participating in the shows. The event trading card program is designed to provide attendees something to take home with them as keepsakes. However, the program also is intended to serve more serious purposes; to highlight recruiting opportunities in law enforcement, profile new technology related to airborne law enforcement and security, and enhance community awareness and public support for aviation resources.



HAI Salutes AHAS

For sixteen years, Jim Paules and the American Heroes Air Shows have promoted the unique versatility of the helicopter and have celebrated the professionalism of the pilots and crews who keep them flying.

HAI President Matt Zuccaro welcomed Paules’ and AHAS’ application for affiliate status by saying, “For years, AHAS has been providing people across the U.S. with an opportunity to learn firsthand about the value and benefits of helicopters in their daily lives. Although the focus of the American Heroes Air Shows is the public service sector of the helicopter world, in the end, the positive public image of helicopters projected by the AHAS events benefits us all.

“In essence,” Zuccaro continued, “HAI and AHAS have been partners since the first Heroes show. Now, we are just formally recognizing and enhancing that partnership by making American Heroes Air Shows an official HAI Affiliate.”

HAI salutes AHAS, wishes them all the best, and looks forward to working closely with them, as our newest HAI Affiliate Member, in the years ahead. 🌀

David York is Vice President of Regulations & International Affairs for **HAI**.

Author’s Note: American Heroes Air Shows are very entertaining, but they are also very photogenic affairs. If you would like to see more photos or videos of the AHAS events, visit www.flickr.com; www.YouTube.com; www.freqofnature.com and do a site search for American Heroes Air Show, or visit www.heroes.airshowjournal.com/2003 for an eye full of outstanding photos from AHAS fans.