

## RUSTY ENGINES & KIDDIE PLANES: RCAF ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEERS HELP OUT

By Norm Marion, 441 (Huron) Wing, RCAFA

Inside a hangar at a small airport near the village of Edenvale, Ontario, several people in blue coveralls are busy working on small aircraft and engines, doing whatever it is that aircraft technicians do inside an aircraft hangar. This could be a typical day at any small airport in the country. Except that, in this case, some of the aircraft and engines are older than the people working on them, and the workers are volunteers from the Royal Canadian Air Force Association (RCAFA). This group of five or six volunteers belong to 441 (Huron) Wing and 429 (Georgina) Wing of the RCAFA.

*"It all started when a gentleman donated an old aircraft engine to the [Edenvale Classic Aircraft] Foundation,"* says Murray Conley, a volunteer and member of the Board of Directors at the Foundation. *"It came in boxes and boxes of old, rusty, bits and pieces."*

Murray, who is also a retired member of the Royal Canadian Air Force and member of 441 (Huron) Wing, happened to mention the donation at one of the 441 Wing meetings. The word quickly spread among the association that there was a restoration project sitting in a nearby hangar, waiting for volunteers. Was anyone up to the challenge? *"So all of a sudden,"* says Murray, *"five or six guys popped-up out of nowhere and got to work at cleaning-up parts and reassembling the engine. Next thing you know we have this remarkable work of art that we can put on display. And it just sort of snowballed from there."*

Encouraged by the success of the first project, more engines were acquired by the group and brought back to life, so to speak: *"They don't run, but they're very nice display engines,"* says Murray. *"Now the guys are working on another one that came out of a DC-3 out of Yellowknife."*

The engines that the team restored are, for the most part, of the radial type, out of Second World War era military trainer aircraft, like Avro Anson or Stearman. The team even restored a Gipsy Major engine, the type that powers the Foundation's iconic Tiger Moth aircraft. *"The Gipsy Major was restored to display conditions, but turned out to be very useful. We used some parts to fix our Tiger Moth engine when it had troubles."*

The 441/429 Wing volunteers are not the first ones to do this kind of restoration work with the Foundation. Unfortunately, as people aged, this type of volunteer restoration project had faded away. *"These guys have brought back that activity to life and are now an integral and very valuable part of the organisation in Edenvale,"* explains Murray.

But cleaning-up old, rusty engines is not the only activity that the team is concerned with at the hangar. At the back of the hangar is a trailer filled with what looks like toy airplanes. *"This is our 'aircraft carrier',* explains Murray with a smile. The modified trailer carries five small pedal airplanes for kids, ready to go to special events at libraries, fairs, or airshows. According to Murray, these pedal airplanes are used by community groups most weeks during the summer. And they get a lot of attention from the public. *"They're getting our name out in the community"*. Indeed, this outreach activity shines a spotlight on the Edenvale Classic Aircraft Foundation in areas that would not be accessible to the Foundation's real aircraft.

The Foundation counted around 9,000 hours of volunteer work last year. At this time the Foundation maintains four serviceable aircraft, and the team of RCAFA volunteers juggles several restoration projects. Anyone interested in joining the team, please contact Murray Conley at (705) 431-5282, email: [fayeandmurray@gmail.com](mailto:fayeandmurray@gmail.com) Volunteers meet every Thursday to work in the hangar. No experience necessary!



1. Member of 429 Georgina Wing RCAFA, Vern Conklin, works on one of the team's radial engine restoration projects.



2. Some of the Thursday "regulars" at the Edenvale Classic Aircraft Foundation, left to right: Les Ball; Ted Russell; Vern Conklin; Sandy Ellis; Bob Coxon; and Murray Conley.



3. The kids pedal airplanes are now a familiar (and popular) sight at local fairs and community events.