

Runway was meant to lure prospective buyers

BY SUSAN QUINLAN

The Lakes of the North Airport was originally used by the developer, American Central, to bring prospective buyers from downstate and show them around. They may have been treated to a round of Deer Run golf and enticed to purchase a lot and build a home.

Ultimately, American Central sold the lots in Lakes of the North and left the homeowners' association with a very nice amenity. It was reclassified as a General Utility airport and the runway was resurfaced in 2012, with the majority of the funding coming from the Michigan Department of Transportation. The Airport Committee has contributed well over \$12,000 towards improvements. At a length of 4,212 feet, the runway is one of the longest paved privately-owned public use airports in Michigan.

Being able to live on, or near, an airport is a private pilot's dream and a lot of new homes and hangars

have been constructed. The airport attracts more pilots and their guests each year who patronize the restaurant and golf course. It's a nice airstrip for the student pilot too.

So why would the state of Michigan invest in our airport? It is available for Homeland security, fighting forest fires and training. The airport is often visited by the Grayling Army Air Force helicopters practicing their maneuvers. The sound of a Blackhawk helicopter touching down on the airstrip in total darkness practicing their night maneuvers is awesome. Don't forget the Coast Guard stationed in Traverse City that also uses our airstrip. In the case of serious medical emergencies, snowmobile, ATV or other vehicular accidents, Life Flight has evacuated patients from our remote area to get critical care.

Dubbed 4Y4 on aviation maps, the airport is located at 8062 Pineview Dr. and is open all year round.



PHOTO BY GRETCHEN COCHRAN BOHNHOFF
Looking down on Lakes of the North in the fall, see Otsego Lake in the distance.



PHOTO BY GRETCHEN COCHRAN BOHNHOFF
Steve Spence has had his 2009 Rans S-7S home-built plane for eight years. It came with the Normandy invasion stripes on the olive drab fabric. It is hangared at Lakes of the North where it takes three minutes to get from his bedroom to the cockpit.