

# Oh, those zany flying machines

REC

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Pigs may not fly, but giant lobster, poutine wagons and sushi will soon take wing over False Creek — and promptly belly-flop.

Tomorrow afternoon marks Canada's first Flugtag, German for "flying day." Started in Austria in 1991, the sport crossbreeds the Wright Brothers' shaky flying style with the Marx Brothers' slapstick sensibility. The competition is organized by Red Bull, the energy-drink company that has sponsored Flugtags everywhere from Arizona to the United Arab Emirates. Now, it's Canada's turn.

Teams from across the country have built zany "aircraft" powered by up to four valiant pushers and one intrepid pilot. They must perform a two-minute skit and then launch the contraption off a seven-metre ramp.



JOHN LEHMANN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Sorrel McDonough, centre, gets a push from her teammates in a home-made flying machine inspired by The Dukes of Hazzard's General Lee. From left, brother Seth, Trevor Kwan, sister Tarrin and brother Calum.

Points are awarded for style (ingeniousness, showmanship and, above all, outrageousness) as well as for substance (how far the craft travels before the inevitable wet landing). Winners can hone their aviation skills through prizes of pilot, skydiving or paragliding lessons — or scurry off with cash equivalents.

A merry band of siblings and significant others led by Sorrel McDonough has recreated the General Lee, the iconic car of *The Dukes of Hazzard*, out of PVC piping, zap straps and laundry baskets. "I saw Flugtag on TV and thought, hey, this is the kind of contest I can ac-

tually enter," McDonough says.

"My family was always making weird stuff." They aim to win the contest with a simple strategy: "We're just in it to look as stupid as possible."

Fatherhood drove the Air Hockey team to build their entry: a winged, monster-sized skate. "We don't see each other as much since we had kids," team member Tristan Jackson says, "so this was a great excuse to get together, drink beer and have dumb arguments."

Competition at the inaugural Canuck Flugtag should be as stiff as a drink of caffeine-and-sugar-loaded Red Bull. Crews of glider pilots and

aeronautics instructors will try to best the Flugtag world record flight of 59.4 metres.

As for showmanship, teams paying homage to *Grease*, *Snoopy* and *Magnum P.I.*'s mustache will vie with Canadiana such as *Trailer Park Boys*, the Last Saskatchewan Elevator, Stompin' Tom and Vancouver's own "Flying" 99 B-Line.

Meanwhile, Team Air Guitar hopes to set another world record by getting the entire audience to pseudo-strum along to their launch routine.

It all sounds like harmless fun, and a welcome escape from relentless news of missile attacks and ter-