

Rocket, Set, Launch

By Arlene Rains Graber

"Oops, a little early," Mark Weaver murmurs. "It popped (meaning the parachute opened) while it was going up. You want the rocket to go straight up, have the parachute open exactly at the top of the flight without tangles, and have the rocket float back. There goes another one."

Swish, silence, pop and the parachute opens at the top of flight. "That's what you want," he says.

Weaver is just one of the more than 100 club members of K.L.O.U.D. Busters, a group of rocket enthusiasts since 1990. The name stands for Kansas Lower Orbital Unmanned Delegation.

For the fifth time, the club will host the prestigious Large Dangerous Rocket Ships (LDRS) event, Aug. 28 - Sept. 2, on 40 acres of farmland, thanks to seven landowners, near Argonia.

The club has used the same FAA-approved launch site since 1991 and holds monthly fun flies along with three major launches each year.

"Kansas is pretty famous in rocket circles," said Weaver, "because we happen to have one of the best launch systems in the country." He explained that the club's infrastructure boasts state-of-the-art launch control electronics, heavy duty high-power launch pads that handle 64 launches simultaneously, and a high-tech public address system.

"I built my first ever rocket two years ago," said Weaver. "I was hooked, and have already completed the first three levels. I've got this wild idea to do an N motor in a cluster for next year that my friend Chuck will help with. I've already ordered a \$400 nose for it."

Weaver explained that the small rockets have fire cracker-like chargers, while larger motors are set off by electronics.

Rockets are classified by letters, which describe their size, such as E, F, G and on up. The larger the rocket and motor the more they cost and the higher they go. Weaver will launch a category M at the LDRS event.

Lance Lickteig, president of the club, built rockets from kits as a kid. "A lot of us grew up in the moon-landing era, and I remember staying up all night watching Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong on the

moon, thinking I would do something like that one day. Rocketry is just great harmless fun and a great family hobby. A lot of kids earn rocket badges here."

This year's six-day Labor Day event will see between 300-400 flyers and twice as many spectators.

The event is free to the public - check the website for entry fees. Food and beverage vendors are available and you may also bring your own food and beverage.

Plan to arrive by 10 a.m. and stay until 4-5:00 p.m.

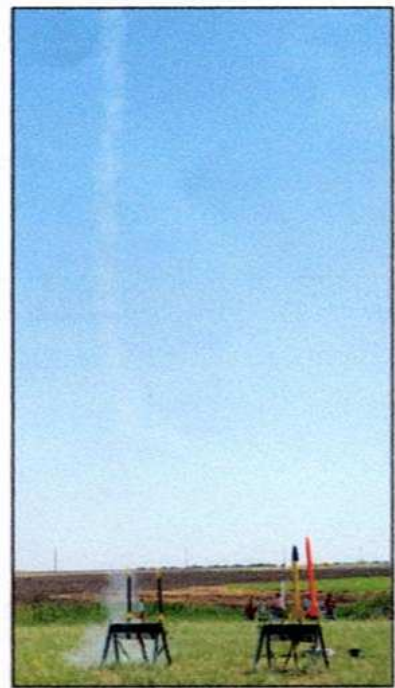
"We have a bunch of campers on fly weekends. We have entries from Australia, Canada and most of the United States," Weaver said.

Labor Day events
316-634-1107
www.ldrs27.org

Club news
www.kloubusters.org

Arlene Rains Graber is an award-winning freelance writer living in Wichita.

All photos by Arlene Rains Graber



Successful launch



Mark Weaver with his rocket



Lance Lickteig displays a small rocket and charger.