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Tuesday, May 13, 2008 2:24 AM EDT

## 'American Heroes' air show displays law-enforcement helicopters

By APRIL DUDASH, Alligator Staff Writer

The Black Hawk's blades remained motionless, and its sturdy, army-green exterior didn't rumble with life. It hadn't been called to duty.

Instead, small children explored the insides of the U.S. Army helicopter, squealing with excitement as their imaginations took flight.

Families and helicopter enthusiasts alike headed out to Gainesville's second American Heroes Air Show on Saturday.

About 20 helicopters, which were showcased on a grassy field at SFCC, came from different agencies in Florida that deal with law enforcement, public safety and national defense.

Parents watched as their children sat proudly in the pilot's seat of a new Bell



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407 helicopter from the Orange County Sheriff's Office.

Orange County's five helicopters are not used exclusively to look for "bad guys," said Master Deputy Bill Snarr, a pilot for the sheriff's office.

They're also used to search for lost children, the elderly and the injured, Snarr said.

Robert McCullough, the chief tactical flight observer for the sheriff's office, also told air show visitors about the helicopter's technologies.

This included an infrared camera, a Skypod that sends video back to the communications center and an advanced GPS.

"We beat patrols now with this system," McCullough said.

As U.S. Army Sgt. Jason Doyon stood next to the Black Hawk, he said he loves to teach people about helicopters.

While Doyon was interacting with families, he said a man managed to pull the emergency lever and pop off the helicopter's door. Repairing it only took about seven minutes.

The Alachua County Sheriff's Office and the Gainesville Police Department were also showing off their joint-aviation unit.

The air show is a great chance for people to come out and ask questions, said Bryan Smith, event coordinator and GPD pilot.

"We've been on some neat pursuits where we have caught somebody who would have otherwise gotten away," Smith said.

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