

Monticello Airport transformed into auto racetrack

BY DAN HUST

MONTICELLO — The old Monticello Airport is being transformed into something unique to more than just Sullivan County.

"There isn't anything like this out there," proudly asserts Jason Bannerman, Sales and Marketing Director for the Monticello Motor Club.

He's right — a casual Internet search reveals a bevy of tracks across the country open to the public and all sorts of wheeled machines, but nary a one as exclusive as what the Monticello Motor Club (MMC) is planning.

Years back, there was talk of bringing a NASCAR course to Sullivan County, but that never got past the dream phase.

MMC, on the other hand, is already well into the construction phase, as anyone who's driven down Cantrell Road well knows.

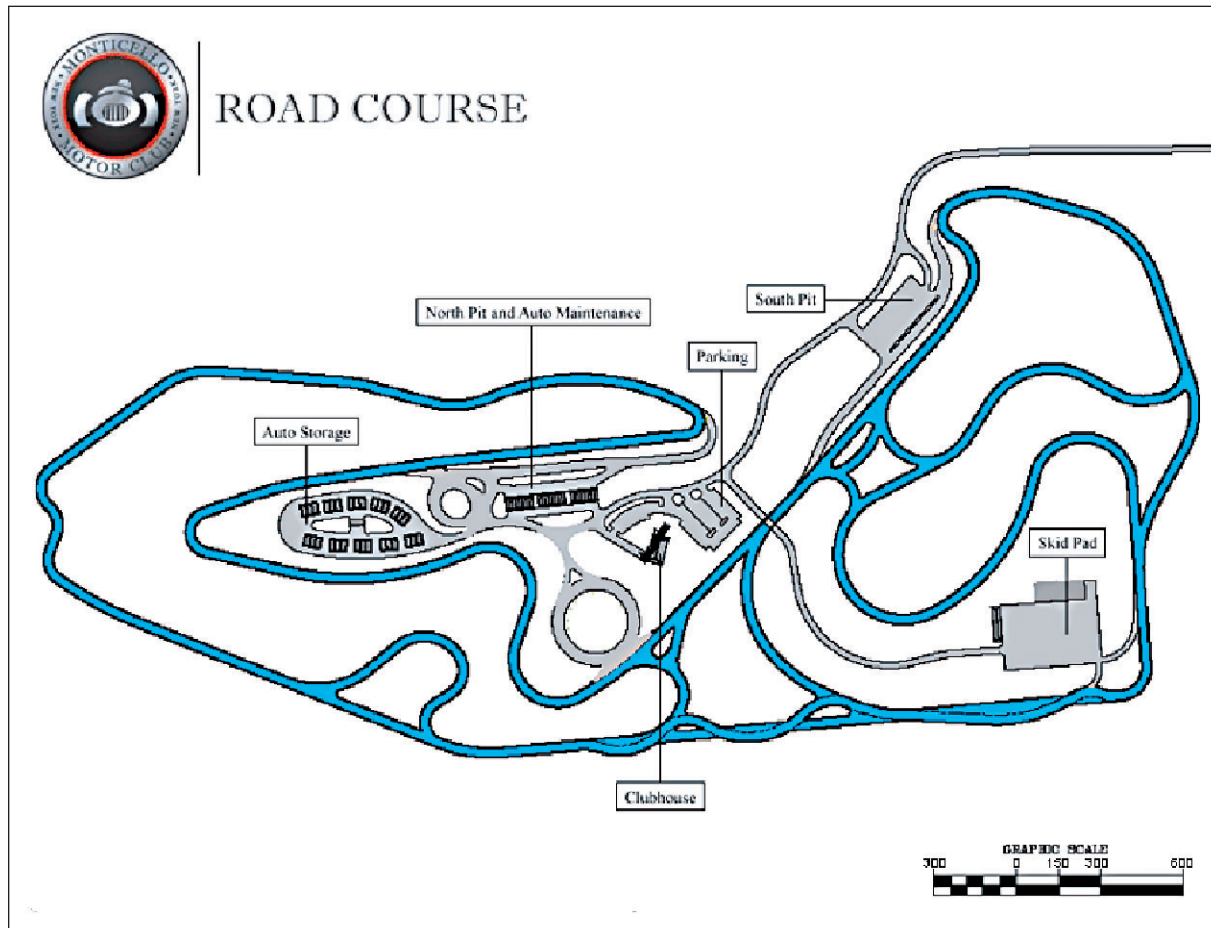
The former Monticello Airport's 175 acres are even now turning into a 4.1-mile curving, hilly track (the main runway will become one of the longest straightaways on the East Coast) that will open next summer.

Acres of forest have been cleared and the natural undulations of the landscape reordered (by local contractors) in preparation for a course that will be demanding and challenging to those who have a passion for high-speed thrills.

They'll also have to have the means. Through its extensive website, www.monticellomotorclub.com, MMC is billing itself as a high-end, exclusive, invitation-only club where members will have to pay \$100,000 to be granted access and at least \$7,500 every year thereafter.

What they'll get for that payout, however, will be far more than a 4-mile track off Route 42.

The latest in exotic sports cars will be joined by their vintage



The Monticello Motor Club's 4.1-mile track will sit on the site of the old Monticello Airport along Cantrell Road and will feature 12 customizable configurations for everything from training to racing.

forebears inside a full-service garage at the track, available for qualified members to drive.

Instructors will offer the training necessary to be qualified to drive these powerful, valuable vehicles, supplemented by in-car video and telematics.

Considering it's just 90 miles from Manhattan, the club's members will likely drive to this luxury playground, but a helipad will be available for those seeking a quicker route.

Whether by air or ground, however, the first thing most visitors will see will not be the track,

designed by Motorsports Hall of Famer Brian Redman and race-track architect Bruce Hawkins to feature 12 adjustable configurations.

It will be the five-story, 30,000-square-foot glass-enclosed clubhouse, sitting in the middle of the course.

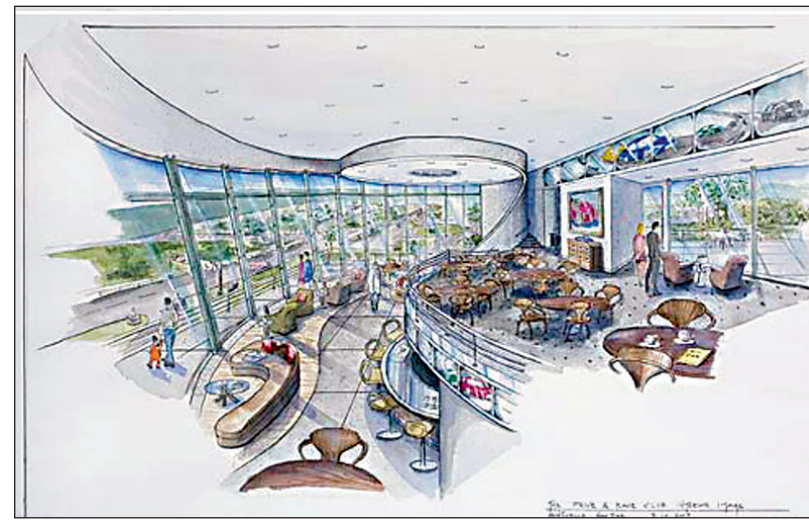
Inside the curving structure will be offices, lounges, exercise machines, luxury rooms for overnight stays, a spa, a restaurant, a pro shop and a "tower room" offering a nearly 360-degree view of the property.

"We're building an exclusive

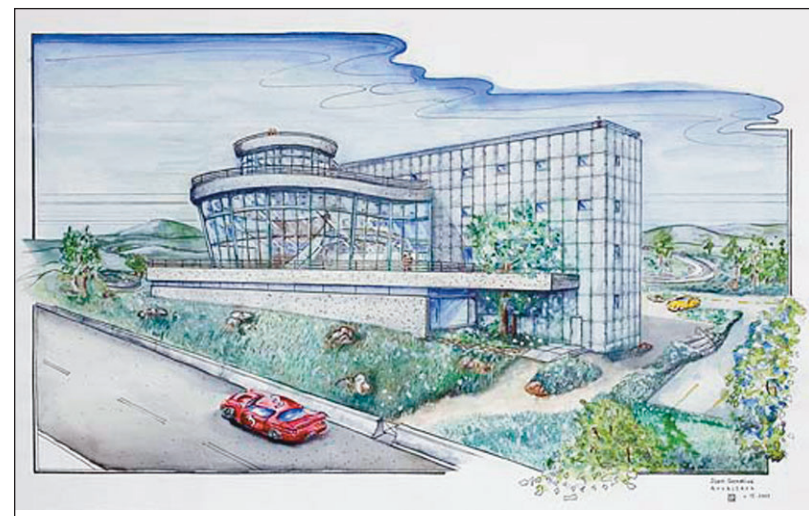
luxury brand," explains Bannerman from inside MMC's well-appointed offices in the Southern Tier Title building on Broadway in Monticello.

Guests of members will be allowed, but except for special events, the entire property will only be open to those who work and play there.

Future plans include off-road and go-kart tracks that may have a wider audience, but even in the expansion dreams, there is exclusivity: "auto-miniums" where the well-heeled can live trackside, a five-star hotel, a vehicle customization facility and even secure storage. (More than 700 acres are owned in total, much of them across Cantrell Road from the club site.)



The "Tower Room" inside the clubhouse will afford views of the surrounding track and landscape.



The 30,000-square-foot clubhouse will rise five stories at the Monticello Motor Club and serve as the racetrack's signature facility.

For now, the goal of new owner Bill McMichael (he just bought it from original developer Michael Kaplan) and crew is to get the facility running and attract up to 500 members from around the world.

It's a short amount of time to ensure not only buildings and grounds are in place but also luxury items like concierge and valet services, a web-based reservation system, and helmets and uni-

forms. They have an experienced team already working on that.

McMichael is the 40-something owner of several healthcare businesses and an enthusiastic lover of cars. Indeed, he was one of the first to sign up for membership in Kaplan's Drive and Race Club, the precursor to the Monticello Motor Club. When Kaplan sought to sell earlier this year, McMichael bought the land and business from him.

Bannerman, 36, spent 10 years with an industry-leading racing and driving school and still owns a marketing firm geared to that world. He's proficient in driving and training on the fastest cars built by every major automobile manufacturer in the world.

Chief Operating Officer Ari Strauss, 38, "is also a car guy," as Bannerman puts it, who's built and managed many a business. "We're all passionate automotive enthusiasts... [who] want to make sure each and every level of customer interaction is done to convey excellence," says Bannerman. "We want future members' first impression to be of a high-end, premium, first-class environment.

"This will be the Four Seasons of racing."



This is the planned entrance to the Monticello Motor Club farther down Cantrell Road than where visitors used to enter the airport grounds.



The old airport hangars now serve as shelter for the currently-idle heavy equipment, waiting for winter to lose its grip and the ground to thaw.

Coming together to help an infant's cancer battle

BY SHARON SPACE-BAMBERGER

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS — On December 8, hundreds of people attended a spaghetti dinner at the White Sulphur Springs Fire-

house to benefit four-month-old Wyatt Green of W.S.S., who has Retinoblastoma cancer.

Wyatt's right eye was removed when he was one month old, and the rare cancer may affect his left



Wyatt Green with his mother Ashlee and his paternal grandmother Linda De Carlo, the White Sulphur Springs Postmistress.



Carl Veneziano of the Nugget Bar and Grill in Monticello volunteered as chief cook at the Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser for Wyatt Green. Here, he makes balsamic dressing for the salads as Cora George assists.

eye. The benefit was organized by Debbie Lewis, her sister Cora George, Ray Smith and Carl Veneziano of the Nugget in Monticello, who was chief cook. Eric Bressi, a.k.a. Elvis' Lost Brother, volunteered to entertain.

The boy's parents make bi-weekly trips to Sloan Kettering in N.Y.C. for checkups by a pediatric ophthalmologist oncologist, and to Harriman, where an ophthalmologist frequently changes the infant's artificial eye to keep up with his growth.

The family's insurance through father Casey's union, Local 825,

considers Sloan Kettering an "out of network provider" and the family must pay a \$200 deductible and 20 percent of the costs for any visit or treatment. The expenses are mounting up and the Greens do not qualify for Medicaid.

Wyatt Green's treatment at Sloan-Kettering will continue for at least another two years. Insurance will not cover many of the expenses. A special account in Wyatt's name has been set up. Donations may be mailed to Wyatt Green, P.O. Box 123, White Sulphur Springs, NY 12787



Job Corps answers call for blood

Fifty people responded to a call for blood donors under the auspices of the American Red Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania. The blood drive was held in the gymnasium on December 12 at the Delaware Valley Job Corps Center in Callicoon in collaboration with DVJCC Medical Assistant students and Health & Wellness staff. Technicians collected 34 usable pints from donors that included staff and students. Culinary students prepared homemade cookies that were a huge hit, and offered plenty of beverages to keep donors hydrated. Pictured, at left, Yvonne Udzelia, Red Cross Supervisor observing student Tiesha Morky.